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PART 1/3

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

**Ex-post evaluation of the 2014-2020 Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
(FEAD)**

{SWD(2025) 190 final}

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Glossary

Term or acronym	Meaning or definition
AIR	Annual Implementation Report
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AROPE	At risk of poverty or social exclusion
BMA	Basic material assistance
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CARE	Cohesion Action for Refugees in Europe
CEA	Cost-effectiveness analysis
CRII	Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative
CRII+	Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus
CSR	Country-specific recommendation
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
EAFRRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ELA	European Labour Authority
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EP	European Parliament
EPSR	European Pillar of Social Rights
EQ	Evaluation question
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF (+)	European Social Fund (Plus)
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPN	European Social Policy Network
EU	European Union
EU SILC	EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived
FEBA	European Food Banks Federation
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
JRC	Joint Research Centre
JTF	Just Transition Fund
MA	Managing Authority
MCS	Management and Control System
MDP	Food Distribution Programme for the Most Deprived Persons
MS	Member State
MSD	Material and social deprivation

NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OP I	Operational programme I
OP II	Operational programme II
PC	Public Consultation
PO	Partner organisation
PPE	Personal and Protective Equipment

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Purpose

This staff working document (SWD) presents the main findings of the ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD or the Fund). FEAD in 2014-2020 helped to address the worst forms of poverty in the EU, such as food deprivation, child poverty and homelessness. It made available a total of EUR 4.5 billion (current prices, including REACT-EU allocation for FEAD), with a total value of the fund at EUR 5.2 billion (including the national allocation). In 2020 and 2021 FEAD helped implement the additional crisis budget made available by REACT-EU, through which the increased levels of precariousness across the EU caused by COVID-19 could be addressed. In 2022, the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) introduced additional flexibilities for FEAD, to allow funding from FEAD programmes to be also used to provide food and basic material assistance to those fleeing Russian military aggression. FEAD distributed food and/ or basic material assistance together with accompanying measures in 23 Member States and run social inclusion programmes in 4 Member States. In the current 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, FEAD is integrated into the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Article 18 of FEAD Regulation (EU) No 223/2014¹ (hereafter also referred to as the FEAD Regulation or the Regulation), which requires the Commission to carry out and complete by 31 December 2024, with the assistance of external experts, an ex-post evaluation, to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Fund and the sustainability of results obtained, as well as to measure the added value of the Fund.

In addition, the Commission had to comply with the provisions of the Better Regulation Guidelines², which foresee an assessment of additional evaluation criteria (such as relevance and coherence) and the addition of other criteria if at all necessary.

In line with the above, the present evaluation analyses the **effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, EU added value and visibility**³ of FEAD, assessing the fund's performance in relation to the objectives set out in the Regulation.

¹ Link to Regulation of the EP and the Council of 11 March 2014: [Regulation \(EU\) No 223/2014 on FEAD](#)

² Link: to [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox](#)

³ The analysis of visibility has been added given the type of intervention requiring the fulfilment of the visibility condition and the timing of the evaluation, c.f. [Tool #47](#) of the Better Regulation Toolbox allowing for additional evaluation criteria beyond the obligatory five criteria if considered appropriate and justified:

In particular, the purpose of the evaluation set out at the start of the process was:

- To take stock of the results achieved by FEAD support;
- To assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, EU added value and visibility of actions funded by FEAD under the 2014-2020 programming period as well as the complementarity and coherence with other funds and policies;
- To provide lessons learned, which can be relevant for the implementation of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) during the programming period 2021-2027 concerning support to the most deprived under Specific Objective (m) and Specific Objective (l);
- To contribute to the design of future programmes beyond 2027.

The present Staff Working Document (SWD) intends to provide evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions formulated. Substantiated replies are provided to each evaluation question distinguishing OP I and OP II, before, during and after the pandemic.

Scope

This evaluation covers all FEAD support, including support provided through the EU crisis response instruments: the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII⁴ and CRII+⁵), REACT-EU⁶ and Cohesion Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE⁷).

FEAD implementation years 2014 to 2022 are considered in the evaluation as well as all 27 Member States⁸ with their 27 operational programmes financed by FEAD, comprising 23 Member States implementing food and/or basic material assistance support to the most deprived complemented with accompanying measures (OP I) and 4 Member States implementing social inclusion support to the most deprived (OP II).

The findings and lessons learned are mainly based on the supporting study ‘*Study supporting the ex post evaluation of the 2014 2020 Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)*’⁹ (hereafter also called the ‘supporting study’ or the ‘study’) that an external contractor¹⁰ was commissioned to do.

Furthermore, important conclusions on the impact of FEAD were drawn from the working paper ‘*An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) 2014-*

⁴ Link to CRII-Regulation : [Regulation 2020/460 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁵ Link to CRII+-Regulation : [Regulation 2020/558 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁶ Link to REACT-EU-Regulation : [Regulation - 2021/177 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁷ Link to CARE – Regulation : [Regulation - 2022/562 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁸ The United Kingdom adopted an Operational Programme for FEAD but did not ultimately deliver the operations and has thus not been included in this evaluation.

⁹ Link: [Study supporting the ex-post evaluation of the 2014-2020 Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived](#)

¹⁰ Carried out by Ecorys/3s and coordinated by the Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, with the support of an Inter Services Steering Group (ISSG) c.f. Annex I.

2020'¹¹ issued by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission¹² (hereafter also called 'JRC's working paper' or 'JRC's report'), which provides a quantitative analysis of FEAD impact on several poverty indicators, such as population at-risk-of-poverty, monetary poverty and its concurrence with material deprivation, income inequality, and the persistence of poverty to evaluate the impact of FEAD on poverty alleviation.

Moreover, the JRC also issued the policy brief '*Understanding Europe's most vulnerable: Socio-economic profiles of FEAD end beneficiaries*'¹³ which draws on the FEAD structured survey data of six countries that provided detailed regional data – Belgium, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Romania – to analyse the socio-economic conditions of FEAD beneficiaries, with a focus on key demographic trends and regional disparities.

1.2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

1.2.1 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used intervention logics – one for FEAD as a whole, and one each for OP I and OP II type support (see section 2.1 below and Annex II.c) – which present the theory of change, combined with the evaluation framework. The intervention logics set out a high-level understanding of the rationale, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts of FEAD and provided a framework for a standardised approach to the evaluation.

The evaluation framework (see Annex II.d) addresses the research questions set out for each evaluation criterion, presents the sub-questions that fall under the headline questions, as well as the judgment criteria, indicators and sources that were used to address these questions. It also provides the elements of the methodology which were used to collect the required evidence.

The range of evidence gathered through the supporting study and outlined in Figure 1 below was assessed in a structured way and was triangulated to assess the degree to which process and outcome causal chains detailed in the intervention logics were supported.

Since isolating the effects of FEAD interventions was impractical, a contribution analysis approach aiming to build a credible 'performance story' was followed, which drew upon the available sources of evidence to test whether the intervention, alongside other factors, contributed towards the observed outcomes and to identify any unintended effects generated.

The supporting study¹⁴ included 12 in-depth case studies; 129 interviews conducted with EU and national level stakeholders¹⁵ between July and October 2023; a public consultation¹⁶

¹¹ Link to publication: [An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020](#)

¹² JRC Unit B7 – Innovation Policy and Economic Impact, Regional Economic Monitoring (REMO) team

¹³ Link to JRC Publication: [Understanding Europe's most vulnerable in six EU Member States: Socio-economic profiles of FEAD end beneficiaries](#)

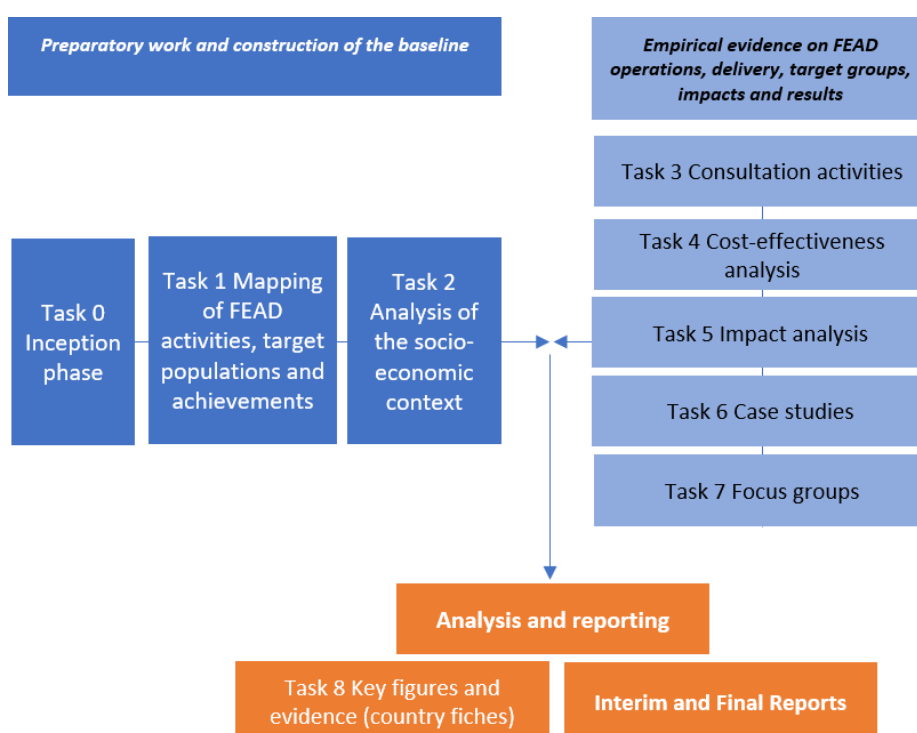
¹⁴ See detailed overview of the methods used in Annex II

¹⁵ EU policymakers, civil society organisations working with FEAD target groups, national authorities, FEAD partner and beneficiary organisations, and academics/researchers working on social inclusion c.f. Annex VI

¹⁶ 408 respondents took part in the PC c.f. Annex VII and Annex VIII

published on Europa “Have your say”, open for 12 weeks from 14 February to 8 May 2024; desk research to collect and analyse Operational Programmes (OPs), evaluations, lists of FEAD operations, monitoring data from SFC2014, Annual Implementation Reports, literature review and results from a structured survey¹⁷; an assessment of the socio-economic context mainly based on the evolution of socioeconomic indicators on poverty and social exclusion during the evaluation period; JRC’s quantitative analysis of FEAD impact as well as a cost-effectiveness analysis¹⁸. Finally, two focus groups¹⁹ with key stakeholders took place on 26th June 2024 (OP II) and 1st July 2024 (OP I) to discuss preliminary evaluation findings and lessons learned (refer to Annex II for further details on the methodology followed by the contractor of the study and by JRC).

Figure 1: Methodology of the supporting study



Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

- ¹⁷ This survey was conducted to partner organisations and end recipients of OP I type support in both 2017 and 2022 and aimed at gaining insights into the end recipients’ socio-economic background, current and past situation and their views on FEAD assistance.
- ¹⁸ C.f. Annex V. Despite efforts to collect the required data, a full cost-benefit assessment was not possible due to the limitation of the monitoring data collected on FEAD, the lack of systematic collection of outcomes and the absence of a reliable counterfactual.
- ¹⁹ A total of 24 participants were present for the focus group on FEAD OP I and 11 participants were present for the focus group on FEAD OP II c.f. Annex XIII.

1.2.2 LIMITATIONS

The evaluation research was subject to several limitations, associated with the scope, research coverage, data availability and data quality. To start with, national evaluations were not available for all Member States, with only 18 national evaluations gathered and analysed. Data on expenditure for specific food or basic material items was not systematically gathered across all EU Member States. Similarly, a limited quantification and assessment of the impact of FEAD support was made at the national level, including no collection of longitudinal data. Additionally, differences in methodologies across structured survey data²⁰ collected by OP-I Member States in 2017 and 2022 to gather needs and feedback from end recipients and partner organisations resulted in comparability challenges. There were also difficulties in accessing raw structured survey data, with only nine Member States providing this information, making it challenging to conduct cross-tabulation analysis. The timing of the evaluation study also posed a limitation, as it could not cover the last year of implementation i.e. year 2023. Furthermore, changes in available socio-economic statistical indicators occurred over the evaluation period. In particular, the AROPE dataset does not include data for the years 2013 and 2014 as the definition of the indicator changed in 2014²¹; the available data from 2015 was used as a proxy. Monitoring data on end recipients relating to vulnerable groups is based on informed estimations by the partner organisations, which may lead to underreporting. Moreover, monitoring data did not gather disaggregated information on all target groups, making it difficult to ascertain the extent to which FEAD reached all sub-groups targeted.

The table below presents an overview of the main limitations of the methodology and how the limitations were taken into account during the study's design and implementation, with mitigation measures introduced accordingly.

Table 1: Overview of limitations identified in the supporting study

Limitation	Explanation	How it has been addressed
National evaluations not available for all Member States	National evaluations have not been carried out for each country or Managing Authorities have been unresponsive to the study team's data requests. This means that granular assessment at the level of operations funded by FEAD in each Member State has not been fully available.	Multiple email requests were sent to Member States, with a total of 18 national evaluations gathered and analysed, which has been triangulated with other data sources to enhance robustness of findings.
Differences in methodologies	Despite the existence of a common template comparability has not always been possible between structured survey data due to	For each structured survey question, percentages were reversed into absolute numbers to obtain the EU

²⁰ MAs of an OP-I had to carry out a structured survey on end recipients and POs in accordance with the template adopted by the EC to gain insights into end-recipient's socio-economic background, current and past situation and their views on FEAD assistance.

²¹ The AROPE and severe material and social deprivation (SMD) datasets providing the most detailed information on gender, age or household composition did not include data for the years 2013 and 2014, which slightly limits comparability and a clear view of a changing socio-economic context from the start of the evaluation reference period (2013).

Limitation	Explanation	How it has been addressed
across structured survey data	countries having used different methodologies and data not being recorded in the same way (e.g. some countries have used percentages of participant responses, whereas others have used actual numbers of participant responses).	averages. EU averages might thus not always be 100% due to the lack of respondent numbers in certain counties, but still provide a relatively sound indication, which has been further triangulated with other data sources to ensure robustness.
Difficulties in accessing raw structured survey data	Despite multiple requests to Managing Authorities, including from the European Commission, the study team only received the raw structured survey data from nine Member States. This has made it difficult to conduct cross-tabulation analysis of structured survey data in the majority of Member States.	Data available has been used as extensively as possible, and fully triangulated with other evidence sources, with caveats added in the analysis where needed.
Timing of the evaluation study	The evaluation reference period covers the period until the end of 2022, whilst FEAD operations were still running until December 2023.	At end of 2022, the FEAD programme had been running for nine years which allows a very strong understanding of its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value, despite the fact that operations are still being implemented.
Differences in socio-economic indicator data available.	The at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) and severe material and social deprivation (SMD) datasets providing the most detailed information on gender, age or household composition did not include data for the years 2013 and 2014, which slightly limits comparability and a clear view of a changing socio-economic context from the start of the evaluation reference period (2013).	As many countries started their FEAD related activities after a period of preparation, the available AROPE data from 2015 has provided a sufficiently viable proxy for the situation before the intervention and has been used as the point of comparison where data from 2013 is not available.
Data on expenditure for specific food or basic material items not systematically gathered across all EU Member States	Such data is needed to understand differences in expenditures between countries. This data was requested of Managing Authorities and was provided in some instances. In cases where it was not provided, reasons for this given were that this was not requested by the Regulation (which only required data on total costs for all products), and that gathering this information now would require collecting information from all invoices from the beginning of the 2014 programming period which was deemed not feasible.	All data sent by Managing Authorities has been fully exploited in the analysis of efficiency and in the cost-effectiveness analysis.
Limited quantification and assessment of the impact of FEAD	Such data would allow for a robust quantitative assessment of the impact of FEAD, comparing the outcomes of FEAD recipients with those of a suitable	All data available has been gathered and fully exploited to understand as far as possible in both qualitative and quantitative terms the impact of

Limitation	Explanation	How it has been addressed
support at national level, including no collection of longitudinal data.	comparator group or allowing observation of the development of a group of recipients over time to yield insights into how FEAD might impact their life. In addition, (quasi-) experimental approaches would allow a more rigorous assessment of causal relationships between FEAD interventions and outcomes.	FEAD support. The JRC report ²² has been used in triangulation with other sources of evidence to provide more quantitative assessments of the impact of FEAD.
Monitoring data on end recipients relating to vulnerable groups is based on informed estimations of the partner organisations.	Data on the characteristics of end recipients belonging to vulnerable groups is based on informed estimations of the partner organisations and it is not required that end recipients are asked for this information. There is thus a high likelihood of underreporting of specific groups such as marginalised communities (Roma) and homeless people in the monitoring data.	Monitoring data on vulnerable groups has been triangulated in the analysis with data available from interviews, socio-economic indicators, secondary sources, case studies and the public consultation to assess the extent to which FEAD support reached these sub-groups.
Lack of monitoring data by specific target group	Monitoring data does not gather disaggregated information on all the groups targeted by FEAD as stated in Member States' Operational Programmes. For example, one indicator covers the participation in FEAD of 'migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)'. As such, it is difficult to ascertain based on monitoring data alone the extent to which FEAD reached all sub-groups targeted. The target groups reported on in the European Commission's monitoring system may also overlap (e.g. a female child, a woman aged 65+ with a foreign background etc.).	Monitoring data on vulnerable groups has been triangulated in the analysis with data available from interviews, socio-economic indicators, secondary sources, case studies and the public consultation to assess the extent to which FEAD support reached these sub-groups. Specific examples of reach of FEAD to known at-risk groups such as Roma, persons with disabilities etc. were identified through the above data sources and have been included in the analysis where relevant.

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

²² Link to publication: [An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020](#)

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION

2.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

This evaluation built on the intervention logics (IL) of the FEAD as a whole and for each Operational Programme type support (see Annex II.c), which set out a high-level understanding of the rationale (needs), operational, specific and general objectives, inputs, activities providing basic needs support to enable end recipients to escape the poverty trap or move towards social inclusion, outputs, results and impacts of FEAD. The operational, specific and general objectives are the core of the Fund's effectiveness and efficiency assessment.

Needs

FEAD is designed to respond to a range of needs. These include the large share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (24% in 2015) and in severe material deprivation (9.8% in 2013), the divergent levels of poverty and exclusion across Member States and the risk that those in poverty and social exclusion are more vulnerable to negative trends brought on by other external factors (e.g. financial, economic etc.).

General objectives

As defined in Article 3.1 of the FEAD Regulation, the Fund aims to promote social cohesion and enhance social inclusion, complementing national policies tackling poverty and social exclusion in Member States and ultimately contributing to the general objective of reducing poverty in the Union and decreasing by 2020 the number of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) by at least 20 million compared to 2008, as set out under the Europe 2020 strategy. The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan in 2021 set a new headline target to further reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030 compared to 2019, including at least 5 million children.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives are defined in article 3.1 and 3.2 of the FEAD Regulation. They include: contributing to the alleviation of the worst forms of poverty and social exclusion; supporting the most deprived persons to improve their living conditions and wellbeing; and contributing to developing and fostering support structures for alleviating poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, OP I aims to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived persons alongside accompanying social inclusion measures, while OP II aims to supporting their social integration through social inclusion activities.

Operational objectives

FEAD operational objectives emerge from these specific objectives, as defined principally in Article 4 of the Regulation. In particular, FEAD aims to stimulate the development of national

strategies and policies for alleviating poverty and social exclusion, support the enhancement of relevant stakeholders' capacity and know-how, promote mutual learning and exchange of good practice, and establish governance systems and processes for the delivery of FEAD support. OP I specifically aims to meet the immediate needs of the most deprived persons by providing them with food and/or basic material assistance and to engage the most deprived persons in social inclusion measures, to start their pathway into social inclusion. OP II in turn operationally aims to support persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion through social inclusion activities that empower them in a sustainable way, as well as to develop a strategy for FEAD contribution to the promotion of social cohesion and poverty reduction objectives in line with Europe 2020²³, defining national needs and priorities to address.

Inputs

FEAD aimed to achieve these objectives with direct financial inputs from the EU initially of EUR 3.8 billion for 7 years (2014-2020), in addition to EUR 0.7 billion of national co-financing. The EU contribution was then increased through crisis response measures from 2020 onwards, making a total of EU and national funding of EUR 5.2 billion. Inputs are also provided by the European Commission, Member States, Managing Authorities and partner organisations in the form of staff and financial resources for coordination and implementation activities.

Activities

These inputs are intended to support the implementation of certain activities: needs assessment, intervention design, governance, capacity building, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation and communication activities. OP I activities include the purchase, transport, and distribution of food and basic material assistance either directly through distribution centres, soup kitchens, or other appropriate channels or indirectly through distribution of vouchers (from 2020). They also include the design and implementation of accompanying measures that support FEAD recipients beyond food and basic material assistance (e.g. counselling and educational activities; information and referral services). Activities under OP II include the delivery of social inclusion activities such as street and outreach work, information and sensitisation, workshops, coaching and counselling activities and awareness-raising campaigns.

Outputs

These activities are then expected to lead to direct outputs which link back to the operational objectives of the intervention. Outputs across both OP-types include processes being in place to identify target groups and their needs, OPs designed to address these needs and infrastructure created or enhanced to provide support to the most deprived persons. The OPs' specific outputs include the quantity of food and/or number of meals/food packages distributed (OP I) and the number of persons participating in social inclusion activities (OP II). These outputs will vary according to the OP in each Member State, as well as the mode of delivery of support (e.g., through vouchers when this was made possible in the Regulation). The separate OP IL provide

²³ Link: [Europe 2020 strategy](#)

more detail on the types of outputs that can be expected to emerge from each intervention type, reflecting back again the operational objectives of each OP type.

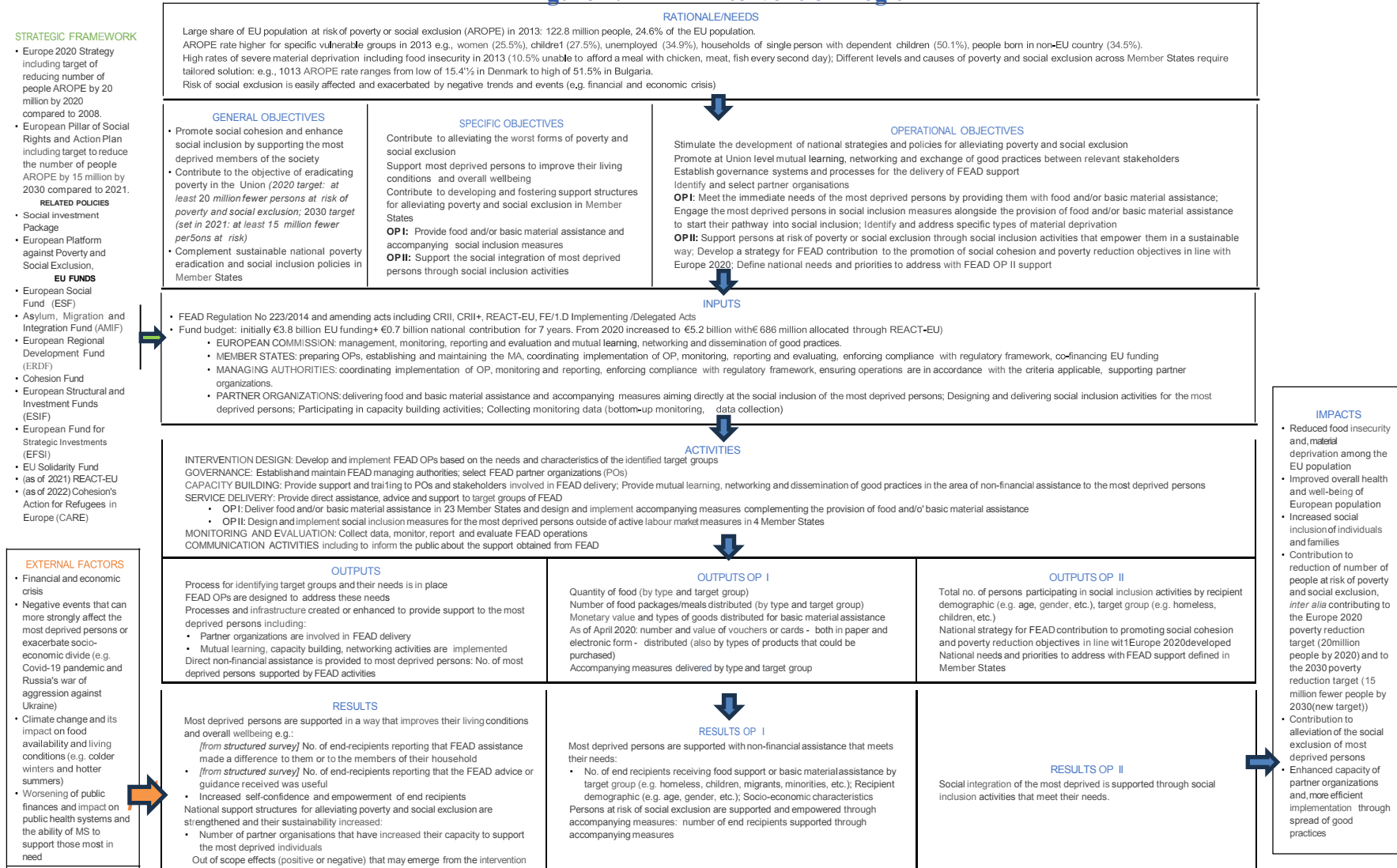
Intended results

The outputs achieved can be expected to lead to a set of intended results that reflect the general and specific objectives of FEAD, i.e. most deprived persons being supported in a way that improves their living conditions and overall well-being, and national support structures for alleviating poverty and social exclusion being strengthened and their sustainability increased. These results are intended to lead to positive impacts in the areas of greatest need, i.e. reducing poverty across the Union, alleviating the social exclusion of the most deprived persons, enhancing the capacity of partner organisations and supporting more efficient implementation through the spread of good practices.

Unintended results

The IL also recognises the fact that ‘out of scope’ effects may also emerge, but it does not specify what these are, as by nature they were not expected at the design of the intervention. Several external factors could affect FEAD implementation and its ability to deliver on its expected outputs, results, and impacts e.g. financial and economic crises, pandemics, or a war (such as the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine that required amendments and allocation of additional funding). Climate change can also be expected to contribute to worsening the condition of most deprived persons through its impact on food availability and living conditions (e.g., colder winters and hotter summers). Finally, the financial and economic crisis left public finances more vulnerable affecting the ability of Member States to support those most in need.

Figure 2: FEAD Intervention Logic



2.2. POINT(S) OF COMPARISON

Expected results and impacts of the intervention as set out in the FEAD Regulation

The evaluation covers the implementation period from 2014 to 2022. The principal points of comparison against which the performance of the Fund was assessed are the expected results and impacts of the intervention as set out when FEAD was being designed and finally adopted in 2013 c.f. FEAD Regulation²⁴. The analysis principally focused on comparing the situation linked to the problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve, as set out in the FEAD Regulation (particularly its preamble), with the current situation.

Drawing comparisons against the baselines of the different scenarios set out in the FEAD Impact Assessment²⁵ was not considered advisable for the reasons explained at the end of the present section 2.2.

Poverty and social exclusion indicators from 2013 and 2019 or proxies

Two points in time were used as points of comparison in relation to the socio-economic data: the point at which FEAD was designed (annual data from 2013), as well as at the point just preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (annual data from 2019). The latter was included due to the impact of the pandemic on the target groups of the fund, so to allow for correct interpretation and sizing of the contextual factors influencing delivery, as well as exploring how changes to the fund through CRII, CRII+, REACT-EU and CARE influenced the effectiveness and relevance of FEAD. Where data was not available for 2013 or 2022 (e.g. comparable AROPE rates only available as from 2015 as the method for calculating the indicator changed in 2014), proxies were used, as set out in the Table 2 below.

The points of comparison provide an indication of the situation in terms of poverty or social exclusion rate and severe material deprivation, thus linking clearly to the objectives of FEAD support, as outlined in the FEAD Regulation. This approach facilitates a comparison with the current situation, covering as far as possible the same parameters and indicators that are used to describe the state of play.

Table 2: Quantitative points of comparison

Point of comparison	Target group	2013 (start of reference period)	2019 (pre- Covid)	2022 (end of reference period)	2015 Proxy for 2013 (where data not available)	2020 Proxy for 2022 (where data not available)
Severe material deprivation rate	Total population	9.8%	5.5%	Not available	-	5.9%
	Children	10.9%	5.7%	Not available	-	6.7%

²⁴ Link to [Regulation \(EU\) No 223/2014 on FEAD](#)

²⁵ Link to [FEAD impact assessment SWD/2012/0350 final](#)

Point of comparison	Target group	2013 (start of reference period)	2019 (pre- Covid)	2022 (end of reference period)	2015 Proxy for 2013 (where data not available)	2020 Proxy for 2022 (where data not available)
Severe material and social deprivation	Total population	Not available	7.3%	7.5%	6.8%	-
	Children	Not available	9.2%	10.3%	8.5%	-
At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate	Total population	Not available	21.1%	21.6%	24%	-
	Children	Not available	22.5%	24.6%	27.3%	-
	65 years or over	Not available	19.4%	20.2%	18%	-
	Non-EU foreign citizens ²⁶	Not available	45.4%	46.2%	49.9%	-
Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	Total population	10.7%	6.8%	8.3%	-	-
	Single person with dependent children	16%	11%	14.8%	-	-
	Households with dependent children	11%	7.7%	8.6%	-	-

Source: Eurostat

FEAD mid-term evaluation

Relevant qualitative and quantitative data from the FEAD mid-term evaluation²⁷ was also used throughout the analysis as a point of comparison. This includes the 2018 monitoring data for FEAD (covering 2014-2016) reported in the mid-term evaluation, as well as the results of the public consultation conducted for that evaluation.

²⁶ Link to Eurostat online data code: ilc_peps05n Non-EU 27 Countries (from 2020) nor reporting country: [Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by group of citizenship \(population aged 18 and over\)](#)

²⁷ Link: [FEAD mid-term evaluation final report VC/2016/0664](#)

Possible points of comparison not considered

Data from the FEAD Impact Assessment was not used mainly because the budget²⁸ and the scope²⁹ of support provided under the proposed FEAD Regulation are very different to that which was finally agreed for FEAD. For these two reasons, the qualitative and quantitative estimations in the Impact Assessment of the expected results and impacts of the fund (Annex 11 of the Impact Assessment) are not appropriate points of comparison. Similarly, points of comparison from the predecessor programme to FEAD, the MDP (the EU's Food Distribution programme for the Most Deprived Persons) were also not used due to the significant differences to FEAD i.e. scope of assistance (only food distribution, not even including warm meals), geographical coverage (only 20 Member States participated) and budget – meaning that it does not either provide relevant points of comparison³⁰.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

3.1. DEVELOPMENT OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The evolution of poverty and social exclusion in the EU was assessed primarily through key indicators i.e. the at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE), the material deprivation rate, the severe material deprivation rate, the material and social deprivation rate as well as the severe material and social deprivation rate (see Annex IX.b).

3.1.1 PERSONS AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The **AROPE rate**³¹ depicts the rate of people who are either at risk of poverty or severely materially and socially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity, measured in relation to the national median income (under 60%) – see evolution over time³². It is the main indicator to monitor the 2030 target on poverty and social exclusion and was the headline indicator to monitor the Europe 2020 Strategy poverty target.

²⁸ The budget is very different to that which was finally agreed for FEAD - the foreseen budget of the fund as envisaged in the Impact Assessment was EUR 2.5 billion for the period 2014-2020 which compares to the finally adopted budget of EUR 5.2 billion (EUR 3.8 billion initial EU funding plus 0.7 billion REACT-EU funding plus EUR 0.7 million national co-financing).

²⁹ The policy option finally selected from the Impact Assessment (policy option 3: Broad Scope) differs from the scope of support provided under the FEAD Regulation as accompanying measures were not envisaged in this policy option, nor was the type of support offered under OP II (social inclusion measures).

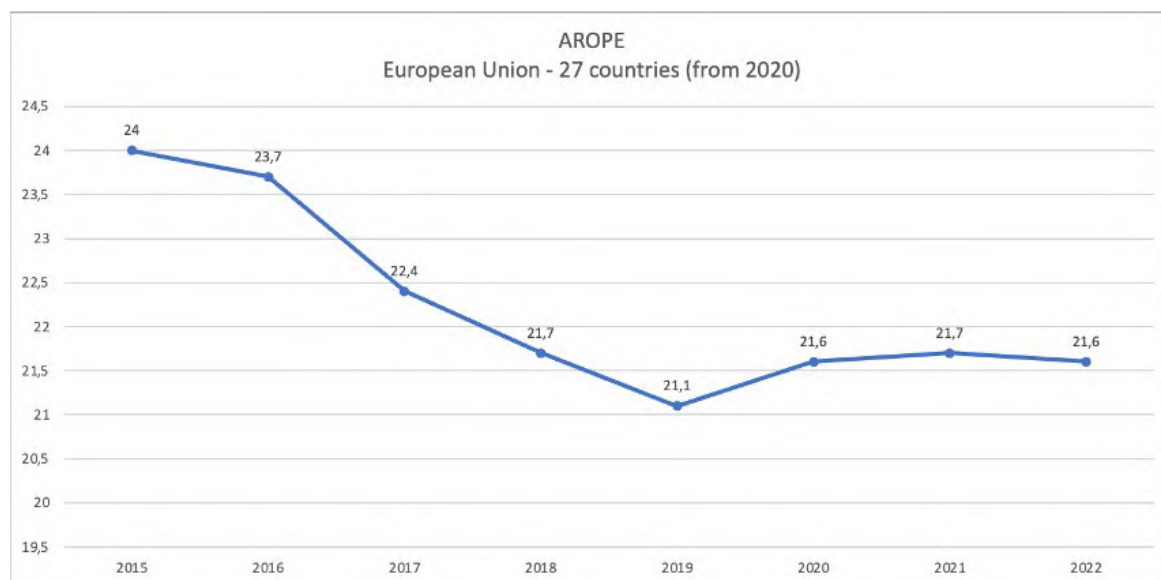
³⁰ A total of EUR 500 million was distributed in 2012 and 2013, the last 2 years of the MPD. It was estimated that over 18 million people per year benefited from support. Successive reforms of the Common Agricultural common agricultural policy led to rather balanced food markets; therefore, the MDP lost its rationale of using surpluses. Aid was also only distributed under specific market conditions: 'until the stocks have been run down to a normal level' rather than being based on the needs of the aid recipients.

³¹ Link: [EU statistics on income and living conditions \(EU-SILC\) methodology - AROPE](#)

³² AROPE rates are only available from 2015 as the method for calculating the indicator changed in 2014. The indicator was revised in 2021, the figure shows the available comparable data from 2015.

In 2015 (the first date from which data on the AROPE rate using the current definition is available), 11 Member States (RO, BG, EL, HU, LV, ES, LT, IT, EE, PT, IE) had AROPE rates above the EU average of 24%. AROPE rates were significantly high in 2015 in Romania (44.5%) and Bulgaria (43.3%).

Figure 3: Evolution of the AROPE rate in the EU27 (2015-2022)³³



Source: Eurostat - People at risk of poverty or social exclusion [TIPSLC10__custom_7566228]

Although the AROPE³⁴ rate declined steadily from 2015 to 2019, it has since increased again likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and remained stable close to 2018 levels up until 2022. Member States with AROPE rates above the EU average in 2022, at the end of the evaluation reference period, were RO, BG, EE, EL, ES, IT, LT, LV. While in most of these countries the rate was only slightly above the average, the situation remained particularly acute in Romania and Bulgaria where, despite a declining trend, the AROPE rates stood at 34.4% and 32.2%, respectively. There are clear segments of the population which are much more severely affected by the risk of poverty than others, such as women, non-EU citizens, and the Roma population.

3.1.2 MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

FEAD addresses material deprivation as outlined in the intervention logic (see section 2.1 and Annex II.c), which Eurostat measures by indicators such as the (severe) material deprivation rate and severe material and social deprivation rate, among others.

³³ See section on limitations concerning AROPE and SMD datasets for the years 2013 and 2014. Although the AROPE rate is available for 2023 it is not shown in the graph as the year 2023 is not part of the evaluation.

³⁴ Same evolution applies to the risk of monetary poverty (AROP).

The *material deprivation rate*³⁵ has declined overall in the EU (from 12% in 2015 to 8.8% in 2022)³⁶ and across most Member States over the evaluation period for which data is available. In 2015, the material deprivation rate in Bulgaria was 41.7% and that of Romania was 37.8%; although these rates dropped respectively to 27.7% and 31.6% in 2022, they remained considerably above the EU average.

Similarly, there is a clear declining trend for almost all Member States as regards the *severe material deprivation rate*³⁷. Bulgaria started the period with extremely high levels of severe material deprivation (43% in 2013, more than four times the EU average, which was reduced by more than half but is still the highest in the EU (19.4% in 2020, the last year for which data is available). Countries with this rate over 10% in 2013 were Hungary and Romania (just below 30% in 2013), followed by Greece (20.3%) and then Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia. Although there is a clear declining trend for almost all Member States, in 2020 Greece and Romania still had rates above 15%, while Croatia, Cyprus, and Hungary experienced rates higher than the EU average.

Among the material deprivation items considered in the indicator, the one reported most frequently is the inability to face unexpected expenses, which was at almost 40% in the EU in 2013 and still at 32% in 2022. The most relevant of these items for FEAD is the inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day. Although, the severe material deprivation rate has overall declined, there are groups of people who in 2021-2022 had a higher inability to afford a healthy meal every second day than in 2013. This included notably single persons with dependent children. The share of older people over 65 unable to afford a healthy meal has reduced over time but was still at around 12% in 2022 compared to 15.4% in 2013. Households without dependent children have experienced a similar trend to the total population figures i.e. an average of 9% between 2013 and 2022.

The *severe material and social deprivation rate*³⁸ also declined over the evaluation period, from 9.7% in 2015 to 6.7% in 2022 in the EU. Again, despite decreases over the period, Bulgaria and Romania have the highest rates of severe material and social deprivation, with a rate of 36.8% in Bulgaria and 34% in Romania, decreasing respectively to 18.7% and 24.3%. The lowest rates of severe material and social deprivation in 2015 were in Finland (1.0%) and Sweden (1.1%). Despite remaining very low compared to the EU average, these rates however rose respectively to 1.9% and 2.1% in 2022.³⁹

³⁵ Percentage of population with an enforced lack of at least three of the following nine items: their rent, mortgage or utility bills; their home adequately warm; unexpected expenses; meat or proteins regularly; holiday; a television set; a washing machine; a car; a telephone (see: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation)

³⁶ EU-SILC indicator tessi080, available from 2015 .

³⁷ Percentage of population with an enforced lack of at least four out of the nine material deprivation items mentioned (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation)

³⁸ It is an EU-SILC indicator, part of the AROPE, that shows an enforced lack of necessary and desirable items to lead an adequate life and is defined as the proportion of the population experiencing an enforced lack of at least 7 out of 13 deprivation items (see [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_\(SMSD\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_(SMSD)))

³⁹ For further details and analysis of the socioeconomic situation of various target groups, including children, homeless persons, and elderly persons refer to Annex IX.b.

3.2. FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF FEAD

3.2.1 FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The *total allocated budget* to FEAD amount to EUR 5.2 billion (EU contributions and national co-financing) by the end of 2022, which includes an additional 0.7 billion made available through the Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe (REACT-EU package), adopted in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and was programmed for 2021 and 2022 by 14 Member States. Previously, as a response to the onset of the global pandemic, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) allowed for flexibilities in using FEAD.

Of the total EUR 5.2 billion, the *total approved expenditures* reached EUR 5.6 billion by the end of 2022, which is equivalent to 109% of the total allocated budget. This value lying above the total allocated budgets is the result of a common practice towards the end of the programming period to ensure full implementation⁴⁰.

The reported annual amounts of *expenditures incurred by beneficiaries and paid for the implementation of operations* in 2022 has increased considerably in comparison to earlier years to EUR 924.9 million, reaching a total EUR 4.2 billion by the end of 2022 (or 82 % of the total budget). The declared expenditures reached EUR 3.8 billion in total, equivalent to 73% of the total allocated budget. One reason why in 2022 there was still quite a discrepancy between approved and actually incurred expenditure lies in the potentially slower uptake of REACT-EU funds that are used to combat the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The table below shows the total amount of eligible expenditure incurred and paid in operations for OP I and OP II respectively (see more detailed information in Annex IX.a). The largest share of funding was dedicated to OP I. Within OP I, funds were mainly allocated to food supply (3.75 billion EUR, 96.2%), with a much smaller share dedicated to the provision of basic material assistance (147.6 million EUR, 3.8%).

Table 3: Total eligible public expenditure (EU + national) incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to OP I and OP II, by country, 2014-2022 (in 1 000 EUR)

Food Supply (OP I)	Basic Material Assistance (OP I)	Social Integration (OP II)	Total
3 755 143	147 642	109 813	4 012 598

Source: SFC2014 data

⁴⁰ The common practice of 'overbooking' aims at compensating for potential reductions.

3.2.2 SUPPORT PROVIDED AND TARGET GROUPS REACHED

Each Member State could select their own priorities when adopting the programme and opt for providing food support and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived persons or contribute to their social inclusion. Food and/or basic material assistance must be complemented, according to the FEAD Regulation, by accompanying measures, which are activities promoting social inclusion and tackling social emergencies in an empowering and sustainable way. By end of 2022, FEAD has delivered assistance in 27 Member States⁴¹.

Overall, most Member States (23 out of 27) decided to distribute food and/ or basic material assistance (e.g. school starter packs, newborn packages, clothing or other essential items for personal use) together with accompanying measures (OP I). Four Member States run social inclusion programmes (OP II).

Table 4: Type of assistance

OP	Type assistance	Member State
OPI	Food	10MS: BE, BG, EE, ES, FI, FR, MT, PL, PT, SI
	Basic material	1MS: AT
	Both	11MS: CY*, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, RO, SK^
OP II	Social inclusion	4MS: DE, DK, NL, SE
*Cyprus completed food assistance in 2019, and since focused on basic material assistance		
^Slovakia provided basic material assistance between 2016-2019, and since only provides food support with FEAD support.		

Source: Annual Implementation Reports 2022 (SFC2014)

The operations funded under OP I and OP II were very diverse and often, especially regarding basic material assistance (OP I) and social inclusion activities (OP II), adapted to the specific target groups they addressed (see in Table 5 an overview of target groups as defined in OPs).

Table 5: Target groups by MS and OP

Target group	OP I	OP II	No. of OPs
Disadvantaged vulnerable individuals (e.g. below a certain income threshold)	BE, BG, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SI, SK		14
Homeless persons	CZ, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, PT, RO, SK	DE, DK	13
Children aged 15 or below	AT, CY, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IE, LV, RO	DE	10
Workless/low work intensity households	IE, LU, MT		3
Migrants or minorities	BG, IE	DE, SE	4

⁴¹ The United Kingdom adopted an Operational Programme for FEAD but did not ultimately deliver the operations and has thus not been included in this evaluation.

Target group	OP I	OP II	No. of OPs
Elderly persons	IE, RO	NL	3
Women	RO		1
Persons with disabilities	IE		1
Other	IE		1

Source: SFC 2014, period 2014-2022

Member States provide annual figures, specifying the number of people receiving assistance each year. It is highly likely that a significant portion of end recipients received support over multiple years. In total, across OP operations, an average of 14.2 million individuals received FEAD support yearly between 2014 and 2022, of which an average of 13.3 million received food support, 0.9 million persons received basic material assistance and 23 thousand persons benefited from social inclusion measures (OP-II) every year (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Number of end recipients for each type of support, 2014-2022 (in 1 000, rounded)⁴²

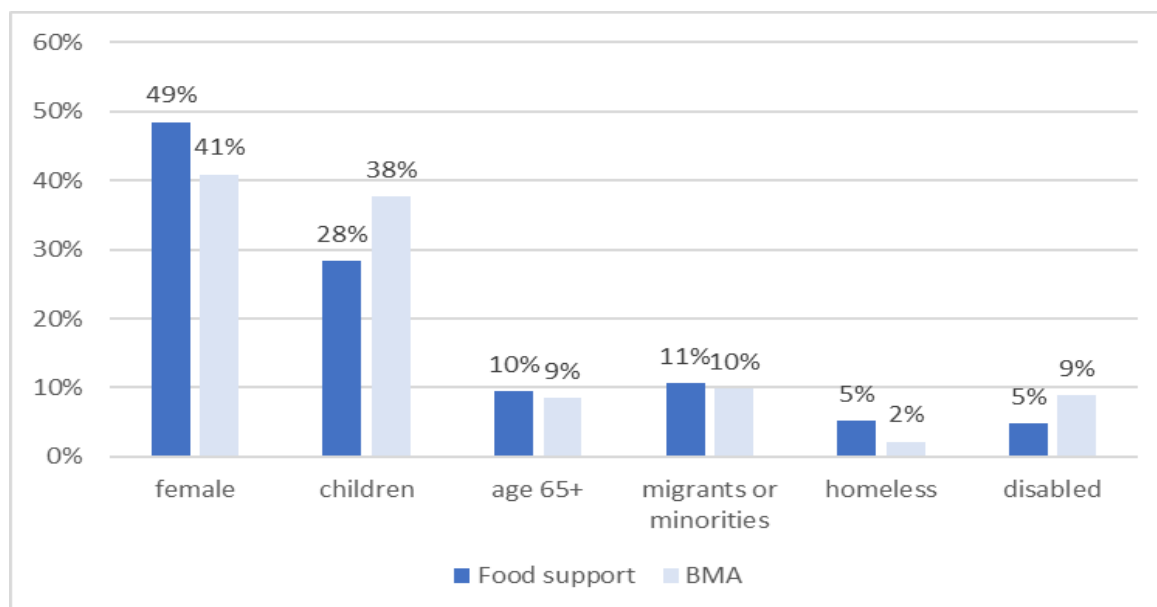
Year	Food support (OP-I)	Basic material assistance (OP-I)	Social inclusion measures (OP-II)
2014	8 190	0	0
2015	13 691	80	31
2016	16 642	662	37
2017	12 581	567	48
2018	12 508	768	39
2019	12 074	790	30
2020	14 984	1 960	30
2021	15 070	2 103	18
2022	14 165	845	9
Total	119 906	7 776	210

Source: Annual Implementation Reports 2022 (SFC2014)

⁴² The monitoring data does not allow for differentiation between individuals who participated in the FEAD only one year vs. multiple years. The number of end recipients is reported on an annual basis, which means that the same individual is counted again if he/she is end recipient in the next year.

The share of OP I end recipients by type of support (food and basic material assistance (BMA) and target group is shown in Figure 4 below (refer to Annex IX.a for further information).

Figure 4: Share of OP I end recipients by type of support and target group, 2014-2022⁴³



Source: SFC 2014 data

Food support (OP I)

The total monetary value of food support in the 21 Member States which have chosen to use the Fund for direct distribution of food, amounted to EUR 4.35 billion (including national co-financing) and reached on average 13.3 million persons per year. On average, 36.2 EUR were spent per person every year. OP I countries distributed around 3.3 million tonnes of food, 554 million meals, and 962 million food packages to the most deprived and vulnerable. Across OP I Member States an average of 0.88 kg of food was distributed for every Euro paid in implementing operations.

Basic material assistance (OP I)

The total monetary value of basic material assistance distributed in the 13 EU Member States amounted to EUR 221.2 million (including national co-financing) and reached on average 0.9 million persons every year. On average, EUR 28 were spent per person every year in 12 of the 13 Member States (excluding Cyprus⁴⁴). The monetary value of provided goods for children across OP I Member States amounts to EUR 110 million and the monetary value of goods provided for other target groups to EUR 97 million respectively. However, the distribution of

⁴³ Note that the same person may be included in several categories, while not all persons receiving support are necessarily to any of the indicated categories.

⁴⁴ In Cyprus, families at risk of poverty received high-quality newborn packs, explaining the comparatively low number of persons and high monetary value of goods per person. As this outlier would significantly distort the average value of goods distributed per person, it has been excluded from this calculation.

basic material assistance delivered to the different target groups varied over time. Especially during the period of COVID-19 and the respective lockdowns, homeless persons were targeted to a larger extent than in the years before and after, when the aid was more often dedicated to children.

The total value of goods for children and the value of goods for ‘other’ target groups, e.g. migrants or people with disabilities, was significantly larger than the value of goods for homeless people. This distribution is also related to the size of the target group, with children comprising a larger share of the overall FEAD target group.

Social inclusion assistance (OP II)

The total monetary value of social inclusion assistance in the four EU Member States amounted to EUR 109.8 million (including national co-financing) and reached on average a total of 23 thousand persons per year. These are, however, very unevenly distributed among the four countries providing it, with Germany showing the highest number of participations by far: 199 308 overall, which equals 95% of all participations. On average, EUR 525 were spent per person every year.

The main focus of the operations under OP II in three of the four countries were migrants, including minorities such as the Roma, and homeless people; while the Netherlands focused specifically on persons aged 65 years or above⁴⁵.

Germany succeeded in reaching more than the targeted participants in each of the programme-specific indicators, far surpassing the initial target for adult non-EU citizens advised (achieved by 623%). Denmark overall reached more than twice as many participants as targeted (215%). In the Netherlands, the target values were not reached, with 3 299 achieved from a target of 5 000 (66%). This was due to the recruiting of participants being more difficult than anticipated and the fact that many participants stayed in the project for longer than expected.

A more detailed description of operations under each OP II country can be found in Annex IX.a and in the case studies in Annex X.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, EU added value and visibility of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) during its implementation from 2014 to 2022. It thus aims (where possible) to draw conclusions about the causal effects of the EU intervention on the desired outcomes. It also looked at the wider

⁴⁵ *Germany* supports newly arrived EU citizens to access early childhood education, as well as homeless people to improve their access to counselling and support measures. In *Denmark*, the intervention focuses on providing support to homeless persons with temporary accommodation, storage facilities, as well as social activities and programmes promoting employability. In *Sweden* FEAD supports socially vulnerable individuals who are not economically active and residing in Sweden for a shorter period than three months. *The Netherlands* assist elderly people with a low disposable income through outreach programmes that take place mainly from local libraries where social activities and programmes are organised.

perspective, seeking to identify (and learn from) any unintended/unexpected effects which were not anticipated.

The evaluation confirms for the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value criteria the overall positive assessment that they obtained in the interim evaluation though with room for improvement in some areas (see in particular section 5 on conclusions and lessons learnt). Additional evidence is provided on the visibility criteria, which was not evaluated in the interim⁴⁶.

4.1. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE INTERVENTION SUCCESSFUL AND WHY?

4.1.1 EFFECTIVENESS

The assessment mainly focused on evaluating whether FEAD successfully met the operational, specific and general objectives in terms of outputs and results, and provided much-needed food, basic material assistance and social inclusion measures to the most vulnerable people in the EU. It also assessed FEAD's ability to adapt to changes and, notably, the responses to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Overall, and based on the available evidence, it can be concluded that FEAD had a very good level of effectiveness, achieving its objectives to a large extent. In view of the limited resources available, FEAD contributed significantly to alleviating the worst forms of poverty, by easing some of the direct effects of poverty, namely material deprivation, food insecurity and social exclusion. The direct involvement of civil society organisations in FEAD was one of the key success factors. FEAD reached the most vulnerable groups at risk of or in poverty and social exclusion across the EU. FEAD was able to adapt to needs as they evolved and changed over the course of the implementation period.

4.1.1.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES⁴⁷

FEAD aimed to promote social cohesion, enhance social inclusion, and contribute to the eradication of poverty in the EU as well as to contribute to alleviating the worst forms of poverty by providing non-financial assistance and social inclusion activities to the most deprived persons (c.f. Article 3(1) of the FEAD Regulation).

The assessment of the contribution of FEAD to its objectives is based on the triangulation of various evidence sources, including monitoring data, Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), Operational Programmes (OPs), national evaluations, JRC quantitative analysis, interviews, public consultation, case study evidence, structured survey results and additional relevant literature (see sources of evidence in section 1.2.1 above and methodology including intervention logics and evaluation framework in section 2.1 above and Annex II).

An analysis of the comparison points (see section 2.2) reveals that the EU's average severe material deprivation rate decreased significantly from 9.8% in 2013 to 5.9% in 2020. While this

⁴⁶ The interim evaluation covered five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, European added value, and relevance. Hence, the visibility criterium was not assessed at the interim stage.

⁴⁷ See answer to evaluation questions 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4 and EU added value in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

decline cannot be solely attributed to FEAD, interview and case study data, particularly from Member States where rates were very high in 2013 and have substantially dropped (e.g. BG and RO), suggest that FEAD contributed to this. Furthermore, qualitative evidence demonstrates that FEAD bolstered support for the most vulnerable groups in European countries, ultimately enhancing social inclusion and contributing to the EU's goal of poverty alleviation.

The indicators (Annex IX.a) point to effective financial implementation of FEAD by the end of 2022 and marginal differences in financial performance between OP types. ECA's 2019 report on FEAD found that approximately one third of food supply of food banks participating in FEAD in 12 Member States was funded from FEAD (in tonnes). Latest data from the 2022 European Food Banks Federation report shows that this share increased during the COVID-19 period. By playing such a key role in alleviating food insecurity, it is clear that FEAD contributed to a large extent to alleviating the worst forms of poverty, as intended by the intervention logic of the fund.

By examining the peak annual figures for each country (indicating the year with the highest number of end recipients), the cost-effectiveness analysis (Annex V) found that a minimum of 20.5 million individuals received food assistance in the EU via FEAD which translates to 4.6% of the population of the EU. The inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day was identified as the most relevant material deprivation indicator for FEAD. Comparing the minimum share of 4.6% of the EU population which received FEAD assistance to the average share of 8.2% of the EU population which can't afford such type of meal between 2014 and 2022 shows that FEAD has reached as an absolute minimum 56% of people which are affected by this type of material deprivation⁴⁸.

Looking at results and achievements of FEAD support, qualitative and quantitative data confirm that FEAD has to large extent achieved many of their operational, specific and general objectives to a high degree contributing to reducing poverty rates, as intended by the intervention logic of the fund.

Results of a Fixed Effects regression model⁴⁹ undertaken by the Joint Research Centre⁵⁰ assessing FEAD impact on poverty across EU regions on the basis of six key poverty measures, including population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), poverty incidence and intensity, income inequality, concurrence, and persistence of poverty estimated that FEAD contributed to reducing poverty rates. According to this study a one-million-euro increase in FEAD expenditure is associated with a reduction of 2 650 people at risk of poverty or social

⁴⁸ This calculation assumes that there is no double-counting within years. It should be stressed that the actual number of individuals which received FEAD assistance will be higher than reported here, however, as it is unclear how large the overlap between different reporting years has been it is not possible to provide a more accurate figure c.f. Annex V on Cost effectiveness analysis.

⁴⁹ While these findings offer valuable insights, they must be interpreted with caution, as the Fixed Effects model establishes correlations not implying causality, and linear interpretation of the results (e.g. scaling up impacts proportionally with expenditure) is not appropriate given the complexities of the relationships involved.

⁵⁰ C.f. Annex III for summary of the results and JRC 'paper (De Quinto) [An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020](#)

exclusion⁵¹, a decrease of 0.002 percentage points (pp) in the poverty incidence⁵² and a 0.005 pp reduction in income inequality⁵³. The analysis reveals significant regional disparities, with Mediterranean and Eastern European countries experiencing higher rates of poverty and income inequality. While notable reductions in AROPE were observed, particularly in less developed regions, improvements in poverty intensity and income inequality remain uneven, with some areas showing worsening conditions.

Results of the Dose-Response Model also carried out by JRC point to an impact of FEAD on these positive outcomes. The results illustrate that higher FEAD allocations (treatment doses) were consistently linked to reductions in poverty rates across all six dimensions studied, suggesting that increasing FEAD funding contributes meaningfully to alleviating poverty and social exclusion across the EU. For the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), the relationship between FEAD expenditure and poverty reduction was non-linear, indicating that the positive effects on poverty become more pronounced at higher expenditure levels. In contrast, the other outcomes—such as poverty incidence, intensity, inequality, concurrence, and persistence—present a linear decreasing trend, suggesting that as FEAD expenditure increases, the reductions in poverty rates occur at a steady, consistent rate⁵⁴.

Furthermore, the JRC also issued a policy brief⁵⁵ which drew on the FEAD structured survey data of six countries that provided detailed regional data based on which JRC analysed the socio-economic conditions of FEAD beneficiaries, with a focus on key demographic trends and regional disparities. The policy brief highlights the significant regional disparities in the support provided, illustrating the localized challenges of poverty and social exclusion, and reinforcing the importance of regionally tailored interventions.

Evidence from interviews, the case studies (Annex X), the public consultation (Annex VII and VIII) and the structured survey results indicate that FEAD supported Member States to respond to the most deprived groups' immediate need for food, basic goods and social inclusion measures. Moreover, FEAD played an instrumental role in addressing immediate effects of poverty and social exclusion specifically food insecurity (OP I) or the provision of accessible social inclusion support to small, vulnerable groups that might have otherwise received limited attention (OP II). In this context, FEAD increased the focus of European, national and regional policy and efforts to address the needs of vulnerable and often marginalised people.

⁵¹ This indicator measures the proportion of households facing monetary poverty. Specifically, it identifies households whose equivalised disposable income falls below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 percent of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

⁵² Incidence of poverty or at-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP) measures the proportion of households facing monetary poverty.

⁵³ Income inequality refers to the unequal distribution of income among households within a society and measures the extent to which income is distributed unevenly across different segments of the population. In the context of this analysis, income inequality is assessed as the disparity between households living below the poverty line and those above it, specifically in terms of equivalised disposable income', *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ The robustness of these findings is confirmed by estimating Dose Response Functions using polynomials of different orders (see further explanations in Annex III).

⁵⁵ The analysis focuses on six countries—Belgium, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Romania - that provided detailed regional data c.f. [Understanding Europe's most vulnerable in six EU Member States: Socio-economic profiles of FEAD end beneficiaries](#)

FEAD played a key role in alleviating food insecurity, contributing so to a large extent to alleviating the worst forms of poverty, as intended by the intervention logic of the fund. 99% (305 of 310) of respondents to the public consultation also reported that FEAD makes a difference to the most deprived groups in their country. The structured survey results further corroborate this finding as they show an equally positive assessment of FEAD by end recipients themselves in both 2017 and 2022. POs and FEAD MAs consulted through the interviews and the case studies reported that FEAD food and basic goods provided under OP I decreased the share that these items take up in household's budget and allowed limited disposable income to be spent elsewhere.

Evidence from the interviews, public consultation, case study research, desk research and the JRC quantitative analysis confirm that the principal impact of FEAD was its ability to support people most in need in dealing with some of the direct effects of poverty such as material deprivation. When it comes to FEAD's role in supporting these individuals in a long-term, sustainable way to escape poverty, however, the evidence is more limited. Food/basic material assistance are insufficient to address the multifaced obstacles faced by vulnerable people.

Moreover, the evidence showed that accompanying measures, when tailored to the target groups, had a more direct impact in addressing the initial obstacles to social inclusion than the distribution of food and basic goods alone and therefore played a role when it comes to the effectiveness of the FEAD in achieving its objectives. Food and basic goods support also played a central role in facilitating the conditions for accompanying measures and other social inclusion measures provided outside of FEAD support to take place.

The stability and regularity of FEAD support, as well as the involvement of civil society organisations, were essential components in achieving these outcomes. FEAD has strengthened the ecosystem of actors providing material assistance and social inclusion measures, with long-term effects on the range and quality of support offered to those most in need. The act of gathering in a physical space, engaging with social workers to receive food/basic material assistance were key in bringing the most deprived persons closer to other types of measures that could more sustainably impact their overall social inclusion.

Evidence across the case study research, the interviews with stakeholders implementing OP II operations and the OP II focus group (see Annex XIII) also indicate that FEAD OP II contributed to increasing the social inclusion of end recipients principally by providing a foundation for further support. However, it must still be noted that FEAD under OP II had a marginal role in increasing social inclusion overall in the countries in which it was implemented, functioning primarily as a complement to other national efforts.

From the public consultation, some obstacles for the effectiveness of the fund also arose. For instance, buying foods/basic goods (e.g. Procurement processes) was seen as an obstacle to a large or moderate extent by 49% of respondents (145 out of 297). This was followed by the quantity of food/basic goods (35% of respondents, 105 out of 299) and the hurdle of determining whether individuals were eligible for support (28% of respondents, 83 out of 296). Additional obstacles included recipients' mistrust towards activities (e.g. what is the purpose and why they should participate) or lack of continuous participation.

Overall, the estimated contribution of the Fund was significant considering the fairly limited budget of FEAD relative to the extent of the problems it sought to address as well as the nature of support provided. There are however opportunities for improvement in certain areas.

Focus group participants expressed uncertainty that FEAD food aid, while helpful and necessary for end recipients, would change their socio-economic standing. However, through interviews, it is acknowledged that FEAD did allow end recipients to free up budget for expenses such as rent and healthcare, which alleviated some other effects of poverty, which could provide initial ways for them to structurally exit situations of poverty.

4.1.1.2 REACHING VULNERABLE GROUPS⁵⁶

Evidence from all data sources analysed in the evaluation showed that FEAD support has reached the most vulnerable groups to a high extent both under OP I and OP II⁵⁷. Analysis of the OPs shows that the most commonly selected target group of FEAD operations as stated in the OPs were ‘disadvantaged vulnerable individuals’ (targeted in 14 Member States)⁵⁸, followed by ‘homeless persons (targeted in 13 Member States)⁵⁹ and ‘children aged 15 or below’ (targeted in 10 Member States)⁶⁰. Other groups targeted in the OPs were ‘workless households’, ‘migrants or minorities’, ‘elderly persons’, ‘women’ and ‘persons with disabilities’. Therefore, overall, all Member States selected groups that faced a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion, or severe material deprivation as intended by the intervention logic of the fund (see Figure 2 in section 2 above).

The question of whether or not these were the most relevant groups to target with FEAD support is assessed in section 4.2 “Relevance” below. The present section summarizes the main findings regarding the extent to which FEAD support reached the vulnerable groups in practice and the factors influencing this reach based on monitoring data (where available for each group), case study and interview findings, public consultation results and secondary sources.

Children were very well reached by FEAD support, making up the largest group of end recipients reached by food and basic material assistance support. Whilst children under 16 years old have faced consistently higher severe material deprivation rates in comparison to the total population throughout the reference period, the rate for children reduced by 2020 (from 10.9% in 2013 to 6.7% in 2020) and the gap between the rates for children and the total population decreased (from 2.9 percentage points in 2013 to 0.8 percentage points in 2020).

Women were reached well, with overall gender parity in the monitoring data confirmed by the consultation evidence. Changes were also made to FEAD operations throughout the programming period to better cater for women as they became a group more in need of support.

⁵⁶ See answer to evaluation question 1b and Relevance in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

⁵⁷ See section 3.2.2

⁵⁸ BE, BG, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SI, SK.

⁵⁹ CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, PT, RO, SK.

⁶⁰ AT, CY, CZ, DE, EL, HR, HU, IE, LV, RO

The group ‘*Migrants, participants with a foreign background and minorities*’ was far better reached by OP II than by OP I operations, according to the monitoring data⁶¹. Despite the lack of explicit targeting in Member States’ OPs, *Roma* were reached to some extent in practice but there was room to increase this through more tailored and targeted measures. *Homeless people* were well targeted by Member States (a defined target group in 11 OP I Member States) and consultation evidence broadly shows that this group was generally reached by FEAD operations but more tailored and targeted support would also increase effective reach of this group. Monitoring data may not accurately reflect the numbers of homeless people reached as it is based on estimates⁶². Evidence also shows that these two groups (*Roma* and *homeless people*) often fell outside social security systems when income-based metrics were used, resulting in such criteria excluding them from support.

Similarly, *elderly people* were only mentioned in four OPs⁶³ as a specific sub-group but were in practice adequately reached by FEAD, although more could have been done if support was tailored specifically to their needs and eligibility criteria were adjusted. *People with disabilities* were well reached by FEAD support despite the fact that according to the OPs, only Ireland specifically targeted this group. *People living in rural areas* were broadly reached by FEAD despite obstacles such as distance and the lack of local organisations which could be overcome with strategies such as home delivery, widening of partner networks or the use of vouchers.

Overall, OP II was very effective in reaching vulnerable groups with specific needs (e.g. homeless people, migrants) due to more focused measures tailored specifically to their needs.

Challenges in reaching the above target groups were identified as follows: eligibility criteria linked to social security systems or practical obstacles (e.g. not receiving communication about FEAD due to not having a fixed address, lack of awareness of support provided amongst the group, lack of explicitly targeted measures, language barriers). The monitoring data also does not capture information on other relevant vulnerable groups (e.g. addicts, sex workers) which makes it very challenging to ascertain whether FEAD reached these groups.

4.1.1.3 ADJUSTMENTS TO NEW NEEDS⁶⁴

FEAD proved able to adapt to evolving needs and new needs such as those emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all Member States⁶⁵ rearranged their FEAD operations (e.g. CRII+ and REACT-EU greatly facilitated these adjustments⁶⁶) to be able to continue providing support to the target groups or to assist to new groups in need.

⁶¹ Common output indicators show that of all recipients reached under OP II an average of 76% fell into this category, compared to 11% and 10% of recipients of OP I food support and basic material assistance.

⁶² Regarding the sensitive data on vulnerable target groups such as homeless, migrants, *Roma* or people with disability, data is estimated by the partner organisations (use of informed estimates).

⁶³ IE, NL, RO and NL.

⁶⁴ See answer to evaluation questions 1c and 1d in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

⁶⁵ Analysis of OP amendments, interview and case study data and findings from the study supporting the preliminary evaluation of the support provided by ESF and FEAD under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) shows that 24 countries adjusted their FEAD operations to better respond to new needs of the target group derived from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶⁶ Confirmed by the [Study supporting the preliminary evaluation of the support provided by ESF and FEAD under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives \(CRII and CRII+\)](#)

Other adjustments to FEAD operations were also implemented, such as changes in delivery methods to allow more widespread use of home delivery (e.g. BG, EE, EL) or allow recipients to receive their FEAD packages from other distribution centres (e.g. HU, LU, MT). Eligibility criteria were also widened to cover new groups of people in need of support; accompanying measures were adjusted with the aim of increasing awareness of new health and safety measures (e.g. AT, BG, LT, LV, SK), as well as to move in-person accompanying measures to an online setting, in respect of social distancing requirements.

Evidence also shows that, where needed, Member States adjusted their FEAD operations directly in response to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine⁶⁷.

Most Member States responded to the energy crisis through FEAD by supporting the increased numbers of people that needed help – with this being possible in part due to the additional funding received from REACT-EU and the in-built flexibility of FEAD (e.g., allowing changes to eligibility criteria). Some small changes to delivery methods and accompanying measures, as well as to social inclusion activities were also implemented at national level⁶⁸.

However, despite the fact that FEAD was adjusted to respond to external events, the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis and resulting high inflation remained significant challenges to FEAD delivery across multiple Member States as seen in increased AROPE rates in several Member States. As a consequence of high inflation, many countries reported not being able to support the increasing numbers of people needing support within available FEAD budgets, even with the increase through REACT-EU, given the extent to which food prices increased, and resultant supply chain issues⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ The FEAD Regulation was amended a third time in April 2022 as part of the CARE (Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe) initiative, which entailed the following key benefits for Member States: Administrative flexibility: alterations of certain components of the FEAD programme can be made based on a sole notification to the EC instead of a preceding approval request; Extension of 100% EU co-financing for the accounting year July 2021- June 2022; Additional liquidity and velocity: the 2021 FEAD tranche of REACT-EU and cohesion policy programmes are topped up with EUR 3.5 billion in pre-financing payments. Therewith, the FEAD could be used in a more efficient and extended manner to provide food and material assistance to people in need. See Regulation (EU) 2022/562 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 223/2014 as regards Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE), 6 April 2022 and European Food Banks Federation (2022) *FEAD, REACT- EU and the European Food Banks Federation 2021 Implementation Report*

⁶⁸ E.g. in Bulgaria POs reported that they started directing FEAD end recipients to social workers in the regional directorates where they could get social support in response to the energy crisis. In Ireland, the MA increased the amount of national funds provided to POs for the delivery of OP I by 9% to better allow them to support increased demand as a result of the energy crisis.

⁶⁹ E.g. in Croatia, advance payments were increased in the fourth cycle of projects from 30% to 80%, to mitigate the increase in costs POs were facing due to inflation. However, this had little impact on facilitating implementation. The rapid increase in prices meant that in 2022, 11 organisations had to cancel their grant agreements from FEAD as they could no longer operate their projects financially (although resources were reallocated).

4.1.1.4 HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES⁷⁰

Article 5 of the FEAD regulation sets out the horizontal principles which must be respected in FEAD-funded operations. These comprise in particular (i) the partnership principle (Article 5.9), (ii) gender equality⁷¹ (Article 5.11), (iii) prevention of discrimination⁷² (Article 5.11) and (iv) respect for the dignity of the most deprived persons (Article 5.14). For food assistance under OP I, other horizontal principles include (v) taking into consideration climate and environmental aspects, particularly with a view to reducing food waste, and (vi) considering the contribution of food distributed to balanced diets (Article 5.13). Aid provided through FEAD must also (vii) comply with Union law on consumer product safety (Article 5.12).

Hence, the FEAD programmes had to be guided by following horizontal principles to ensure that FEAD is implemented in a way that is consistent with the values of the EU:

1. Partnership principle
2. Gender equality principle
3. Non-discrimination principle
4. Food waste principle
5. Principle of balanced diet
7. Principle of respect for the dignity of end recipients

Most POs and public authorities consulted were aware of the above principles, considered that they were important, and found them to be largely well implemented in FEAD operations in their country. While there is broad compliance with all horizontal principles, there is variation in the degree to which individual principles have been achieved.

The main factors facilitating the effective implementation of the principles were: including information on horizontal principles in calls for proposals; monitoring their implementation; certifying POs to deliver FEAD support; targeted training on specific principles; and the requirement to report on the adherence to these principles in the Annual Implementation Reports.

The *partnership principle*, considered to be at the heart of FEAD, brought together stakeholders which did not previously work together. Evidence from the public consultations conducted for both the mid-term and ex-post evaluations shows that stakeholders overall consider that the principle is well implemented⁷³. In targeted consultations, the partnership principle was considered by most consultees a key factor in FEAD effective implementation and in creating dialogue between partner organisations.

⁷⁰ See answer to evaluation question 1e in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

⁷¹ Equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective.

⁷² The prevention of any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation

⁷³ In the ex-post evaluation (see Annex VII and VIII) 88% (274 of 310 respondents) considered that the implementation of the partnership principle was achieved, with 45% (138 of 310 respondents) considering that it was achieved to a large extent. The results show that consultees consider that there is scope for further improvement, for example, through additional and more systematic involvement of relevant stakeholders, since less than half of respondents consider that the principle is achieved to a 'large' extent.

Similarly, the *principle of respect for the dignity of end recipients* was achieved⁷⁴ within the implementation of FEAD and was overall effectively taken into account in the design, implementation and monitoring of the operations. All FEAD stakeholders strongly recognised the importance of the need to respect this principle when delivering aid. Awareness developed positively throughout the implementation of the fund leading to improved and more sensitive practices in food distribution. Effective means to achieve this included avoiding the branding of individual goods provided, allowing end recipients to have the dignity of choice of the products they receive (which may be facilitated by the use of voucher schemes) and ensuring regular communication with end recipients about their needs.

POs and national authorities considered that the principles of *gender equality* and *prevention of discrimination* were well implemented in FEAD. However, these principles were often understood somewhat superficially and implemented passively and in a non-systematic manner (i.e. not based on an in-depth analysis of needs). More effective implementation of these principles could be achieved through additional training and awareness-raising.

Despite an improvement over time in achieving the *principle of reducing food waste*⁷⁵, there is still scope for further improvement⁷⁶. Likewise, even though progress was also achieved over the lifespan of FEAD in terms of the *principle of ensuring the provision of balanced diet*, there is considerable scope for further focus on this principle⁷⁷.

4.1.1.5 FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS⁷⁸

Evidence from the interviews, public consultation, desk research and case study research were the main basis for identifying which factors facilitated or hindered the effectiveness of FEAD operations (in terms of implementation and results).

Facilitating factors:

- Strong collaboration between coordinating organisations (MAs and IBs) and POs in the design and delivery of FEAD enabled better reach to target groups. The willingness of MAs to collaborate with and take on board feedback from organisations working on the ground played a key role in this good collaboration.

⁷⁴ The positive perception of the implementation of this principle was reflected in the results of the public consultation conducted for this evaluation (see Annex VII). 94% (292 of 310 respondents) considered that the principle of respect for the dignity of the most deprived persons was achieved in FEAD implementation, with 74% (229 of 310 respondents) considering that it was achieved to a large extent. This result shows an increase compared to the results of the public consultation conducted for the mid-term evaluation.

⁷⁵ E.g. The provision of vouchers was widely recognised in consultations as reducing food waste, because families were able to buy the food/goods which they prefer and will use. Portugal implemented training programmes to help beneficiaries better understand the way in which food waste could be reduced.

⁷⁶ E.g. A minority of consultees in targeted consultations did consider that there was too much of the same product (e.g. jam) was sometimes distributed which end recipients could not easily consume.

⁷⁷ Despite efforts made to provide a balanced and nutritious diet within the resources available, the evidence shows that this was often challenging to achieve reflected in the results of the public consultation and needs to remain a strong focus for future food aid programmes.

⁷⁸ See answer to evaluation question 2 and Efficiency in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

- POs were able to make use of their existing expertise and knowledge of the most deprived people in their communities to conduct more effective outreach.
- Extensive networks of POs with a broad territorial reach helped ensure the availability of FEAD across the country.
- Efforts to undertake outreach measures to reach target groups in need of support were crucial, particularly in OP II countries, where eligibility was most often determined by existing access to social support services.
- Flexibility of FEAD to adapt operations as needed allowed organisations to accompany end recipients more effectively, and as needs changed over time.
- The possibility for transnational learning, allowing improvement of FEAD processes and better targeting of operations, ultimately improved the impact of operations.

Hindering factors:

- Public procurement processes were deemed lengthy and complicated, at times causing delays in distribution and limiting the type and quality of products available although it brought high efficiency to FEAD⁷⁹.
- Administrative requirements were often considered burdensome, e.g. those linked to additional national monitoring and reporting requirements (gold plating) such as the requirement of a signature from end recipients, and multiple layers of audits on FEAD support⁸⁰ i.e. at EU level, at national level and at regional level.
- Insufficient human resources of POs, including the challenge of relying on untrained volunteers⁸¹ and the financial resources available to cover certain costs in implementation of FEAD that are reimbursed via flat rate and at times considered too low.
- External events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, and the energy crisis affected both OP I and OP II operations, limiting or causing delays in the distribution of food and goods, impacting outreach to end recipients or increasing energy and transport costs.
- The lack of clarity among FEAD stakeholders regarding accompanying measures and how they can be best designed and implemented. This shows that more guidance at EU and/or national level may likely have had a positive impact on the effectiveness of the FEAD-type support given the important role of accompanying measures in bridging the gap between food/basic material assistance and holistic social inclusion measures.

⁷⁹ Public procurement is examined in more detail under the next evaluation criterion i.e. Efficiency.

⁸⁰ Reported in consultations in multiple countries (e.g. BE, BG, CY, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, LV, PL, NL, SI) and affecting different stakeholders involved across both OP I and II.

⁸¹ Whilst POs and MAs alike praised the involvement of volunteers for their crucial role in delivering FEAD support, POs highlighted the challenge of working with non-professional staff (e.g. in ES, FI, RO).

4.1.1.6 UNINTENDED RESULTS⁸²

As per the intervention logics for the two OP-types, the intended results of OP I are that most deprived persons are supported with non-financial assistance and are supported and empowered through accompanying measures. The intended result of OP II is that social integration of the most deprived is supported through social inclusion activities that meet their needs. Evidence from the case studies, results of the structured surveys, interviews and public consultation strongly indicate that FEAD support contributed to other results beyond those intended by the intervention, most of them with positive effects.

Positive unintended results through FEAD activities include:

- Creating a space for interaction between end recipients and providers of support, which contributed to building trusted relationships and had a positive impact on recipients' engagement with social services for other types of support.
- Strengthening of existing relationships and fostering new collaborations among organisations delivering FEAD operations leading to more robust community support.
- Building capacity increased the support offered to the most vulnerable and contributed to "professionalizing food aid" in some cases.
- Increased knowledge of the target groups as regards their degree of vulnerability and particular situation.
- Allowing for synergies with other projects, which ultimately benefited end recipients.
- Raising awareness around food deprivation at both policy and individual/community levels.

Negative unintended results were limited geographically or in scope. The most important one identified was the risk of dependency on FEAD support with concerns that recipients may become too reliant on the support and not address the underlying issues.

4.1.2. EFFICIENCY

Despite efforts to collect the required data, a full cost-effectiveness assessment was not possible. This would have included monetising end receipt outcomes, not just outputs, which were not systematically collected. In addition, significant variance between and within Member States in support models and costs, and a lack of a reliable counterfactual (i.e. what would have likely happened in the absence of intervention) severely hampered the ability to conduct a thorough cost-effectiveness assessment. This is a key limitation of the monitoring data collected on FEAD. Nonetheless, the available evidence indicates that, during the evaluation period, FEAD was cost-effective. FEAD has, to a large extent, implemented its budget and delivered the planned outputs from the operational programme documents, indicating high operational efficiency. FEAD was managed to lower costs through various measures while maintaining the provision of food, goods and services to the most deprived persons.

⁸² See answer to evaluation question 3 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#).

Based on the evidence gathered, the sub-sections below provide the main conclusions regarding efficiency.

4.1.2.1 COST EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES⁸³

Analysis of SFC2014 data showed that for the period 2014-2022:

- Food Support via OP I accounted for 93.6% of all FEAD public expenditure. Food was distributed at an overall cost of EUR 1.13 per kg. The average cost of providing one individual with food via FEAD was EUR 31, with significant variations across Member States. For instance, Finland had an average cost of EUR 13, while Cyprus had an average cost of EUR 137. The disparity in costs can be attributed to the intensity and type of support provided.
- Basic Material Assistance via OP I accounted for 3.7% of all FEAD public expenditure. The cost per person to provide basic material assistance was EUR 19, ranging from EUR 2 in Slovakia to EUR 1 193 in Cyprus. The significant variation in costs can be attributed to the type of support provided.
- Accompanying Measures via OP I: although no data is available on the number of people reached with these measures, stakeholders emphasized their importance and success in having long-lasting effects beyond the duration of FEAD. These measures were delivered in most countries using a 5% flat rate of the overall expenditure.
- Social Inclusion Measures via OP II accounted for 2.7% of all FEAD public expenditure. The average cost per person for OP II was EUR 527⁸⁴, ranging from EUR 472 in Germany to EUR 1 800 in Sweden.

While it is evidently challenging to objectively assess cost-output ratios of activities due to the variety of support models, there was also insufficient data to assess the impact these measures had on end recipients and a lack of reliable counterfactual (i.e. what would have likely happened in the absence of intervention), which made it impossible to monetise the benefits and therefore conduct a traditional cost-effectiveness analysis.

However, when respondents were asked in the public consultation how cost-effective they considered different FEAD activities, food support emerged as the activity which was considered most cost-effective: 65% (176 of 272 respondents) considered it cost-effective to a large extent and 16% (43 of 272) to a moderate extent, followed by material assistance with 35% (95 of 272) to a large extent, 25% (68 of 272) to a moderate extent and accompanying measures with 35% (95 of 272) to a large extent and 22% to a moderate extent (60 of 272)⁸⁵.

⁸³ See answers to evaluation questions 5 in section 4 and Annex 3 ‘Cost effectiveness analysis’ and Annex 2 ‘Overview of costs and benefits’ of the [supporting study](#).

⁸⁴ The cost per person is calculated by dividing the total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to the provision of social integration measures, by the total number of end recipients supported.

⁸⁵ While these results can be indicative of food support having a better perceived cost-effectiveness than material assistance, results of the public consultation regarding accompanying measures and social inclusion activities should be treated with caution as many respondents who assessed these activities were likely not involved in their delivery.

During interviews the importance and success of accompanying measures was also highlighted which can have long-lasting effects beyond the duration of FEAD.

Furthermore, academic research estimated the costs of hospitalisation due to malnutrition between EUR 1 640 and EUR 5 829 per individual, which far exceeds the FEAD average cost per person of providing food support. While the number of hospitalisations prevented by FEAD is unknown, it is estimated (based on a hospitalisation cost mid-point estimate of EUR 3 735) that just one hospitalisation for every 120 supported would need to be prevented for FEAD to be cost-neutral. As such, reducing the risk of hospitalisation and its associated negative outcomes likely represent significant cost efficiencies. Moreover, it derived from the conclusions in section 4.1.1 (effectiveness) that FEAD effectively reached those most in need.

Academic studies also demonstrate excellent cost-effectiveness of free school meal programmes, leading to improved educational attainment and health outcomes. In absence of proper counterfactual studies for such programmes under FEAD, evidence from academic studies (even referring to non-EU countries) can help derive general conclusions. For instance, a UK study⁸⁶ concluded that for every GBP 1 spent on free school breakfasts, the benefits could exceed GBP 50 largely due to higher tax revenues as a result of better educational attainment. Improved learning as a result of better nutrition can have long-lasting effects as shown by a study into the long-term effects of the provision of nutritious breakfast at school in Norway which indicated an increase of education by 0.1 years and earnings by 2–3%. The results of an EU-wide mapping study showed that Cyprus distributed each breakfast at a very reasonable cost. It can therefore be concluded that meal provision in schools as implemented in some countries with FEAD have excellent cost-effectiveness.

During case study and interview research, multiple stakeholders pointed to the interconnectedness of the activities implemented as contributing to cost-effectiveness and considered that the approach of FEAD to not exclusively focus on food support is beneficial. In most cases, food distribution was used to invite end recipients to accompanying measures, which has likely led to a substantially increased take-up of social inclusion offers by people who would not have found out about these opportunities without the food provision. Hence, the combination of both types of activity (provision of food/material support and accompanying measures) was therefore considered to be most effective. Furthermore, it can be inferred that, due to the existence of different forms of support - which do not only aim at the provision of food but also at the provision of other materials, at enhancing social inclusion and combatting loneliness – FEAD support is likely most (cost)-effective for those who are in need of all of those forms of support (food, basic material and accompanying measures), which are often isolated older people without a social network, or people with illnesses or disabilities.

⁸⁶ Link to [The economic cost-effectiveness of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision](#)

4.1.2.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFICIENCY AND GOOD PRACTICES⁸⁷

During interview and case study research the *public and centralised procurement systems* emerged as the first most prominent factor influencing the efficiency of FEAD as it allowed organisations to secure goods at discounted prices, enhancing cost-effectiveness through economies of scale and supplier competition. Challenges such as the need for extensive storage facilities and occasional procurement delays were noted highlighting potential drawbacks.

The second most prominent factor was the *availability of volunteers and food donations*. However, the extent to which FEAD delivery was based on volunteers varied across countries, and difficulties in engaging volunteers were reported in some countries. Investing in the training of volunteers before the start of the project can lead to a more efficient delivery.

The *use of a 5% flat rate*⁸⁸ to cover expenses related to transport, storage, and other administrative processes was the third most important factor that influenced the efficiency of FEAD. This simplified the implementation of FEAD, reduced bureaucracy, and forced partner organisations to plan and forecast strategically and prudently, in order to ensure that all costs would be covered by the restricted budget. The flat rate also led to increased cost-effectiveness, as it forced partner organisations to plan and forecast strategically.

Partner Organisations played a crucial role in the effective and efficient implementation of FEAD, particularly due to their existing on-the-ground knowledge and networks. POs contributed to efficient outreach (as they were able to tap into existing community-level networks and reach the most deprived individuals) while also providing a human touch, including empathy and dignified treatment of end recipients.

The FEAD programme allowed for considerable autonomy in its implementation, resulting in *diverse support models* that catered to the specific needs of each country. Improvements in supply chain management, such as the use of intermediate distribution centres, which reduced transportation costs and enhanced efficiency or the introduction of innovations like drive-through collection points and reduced delivery frequency during the COVID-19 pandemic were retained for their cost-effectiveness as identified in case studies.

Nonetheless, the potential drawbacks of less frequent and less personal support provision resulting in less direct social contact need to be balanced against cost savings. Moreover, different supply chain models across Member States limit the ability to standardise these improvements.

The recent rises in inflation⁸⁹ led to increased prices for food, energy, and petrol, affecting the ability of partner organisations to purchase goods and distribute food, which had also a major impact on the cost-effectiveness of FEAD.

⁸⁷ See answers to evaluation questions 6, 7 and 8c in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

⁸⁸ Article 26(2) of the FEAD Regulation determines that administrative, transport and/or storage costs as well as costs of accompanying measures undertaken by the partner organisations are to be covered with a flat rate of 5% of the costs of purchasing food and/or basic material assistance.

⁸⁹ Prices for food increased dramatically across 2022, with the harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP) increasing by over 9%. Some partner organisations also cited increasing costs for energy and petrol as a major factor which reduced the cost-effectiveness of FEAD delivery.

It is therefore important to ensure that funding takes the level of inflation into account to ensure that end recipients are not negatively impacted by inflation in the form of reduced food delivery.

Some practices hampered the efficiency of FEAD operations. For instance, the widespread use of frozen foods in some countries imposed additional problems on disadvantaged recipients who lacked refrigerators and freezers and created challenges in the supply chain.

In conclusion, the evaluation pointed to the importance to balance cost-effectiveness with the FEAD's mandate of alleviating poverty and social exclusion. Even if some activities are costly like face-to-face interactions, they enable POs to build trust and establish relationships with end recipients, which is essential for providing effective support and addressing the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.

4.1.2.3 THE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL SYSTEM (MCS) REQUIREMENTS⁹⁰

Mixed evidence was gathered regarding the appropriateness of the MCS requirements for FEAD. Given the scope of the fund, a considerable level of administrative procedures and monitoring is inevitable. This however poses challenges for POs, who bear a significant share of the administrative burden of delivering the fund.

Although monitoring the outputs and outcomes of EU funding is crucial, these requirements, including the setup and ongoing collection of data, were among the most burdensome administrative tasks, particularly for POs. Similarly, eligibility requirements for receiving FEAD support were set by Member States. The task of checking these requirements often fell on POs delivering FEAD, imposing an additional administrative activity on these organisations. Respondents to the public consultation (see Annex VII) were asked about the types of administrative requirements which they considered most burdensome. Eligibility rules for FEAD support were mentioned most often (33%), followed by the set-up of monitoring and reporting systems (28%) and the ongoing monitoring requirements (25%). Excessive requirements such as data on the exact composition of food support, was not worth the efforts and may have deterred volunteers from participating in the FEAD support. The suggestion of removing the need to report on quantities of food was made in the mid-term evaluation of FEAD, but this requirement was only removed in the ESF+. Many representatives from POs, in interviews, in the public consultation and during the focus groups expressed the view that the administrative burden was both excessive and often unnecessary⁹¹, with some POs estimating that 30% of relevant NGOs were unwilling to assist in the distribution of food under FEAD due to concerns about documentation and auditing requirements. Another recurring concern identified in the interview and case study data was a certain degree of frustration with the high level of auditing partner organisations underwent.

⁹⁰ See answer to evaluation question 8a in section 4 of the [supporting study](#).

⁹¹ According to the results of the public consultation most MAs (67%; 30 out of 45) spent over 15 hours on average on FEAD administrative requirements. This was also the time selected by the majority of POs (51%, 92 out of 179). On the unnecessary administrative burden opinions of respondents are divided with 46% of respondents saying there was a burden to a large, to a moderate or to some extent while this question was not answered by a considerable number of participants to the survey i.e. 141 persons.

Interviews and national evaluations revealed instances of unnecessary administrative burdens, such as daily signature collection for meal distribution in Bulgaria and stringent enforcement of eligibility rules⁹², leading to stigmatization. Differentiating between national and EU-level requirements proved to be challenging, complicating efforts to streamline administrative processes.

However, several interviewees⁹³ reported a substantial decrease in administrative burden due to digitalisation and improved administrative processes or to the easing of monitoring requirements imposed at national level which were deemed impractical.

4.1.2.4 VOUCHERS, FLAT-RATES, AND POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER SIMPLIFICATION⁹⁴

Vouchers

The small number of Member States⁹⁵ that adopted any form of voucher support, and the fact that the use of vouchers was often limited to specific regions within these Member States, resulted in a limited evidence base to comprehensively assess the cost-effectiveness of vouchers. Nonetheless, an assessment based on triangulation of all available evidence gathered through analysis of Annual Implementation Reports, national evaluations, case study and interview data and the results of the public consultation has been carried out.

Delivering vouchers to end recipients has proven to be faster, cheaper and led to fewer problems than the in-kind form of support in Romania (see case study, Annex X). Improvements in the system included the fact that expenses related to large purchases of products, storage and distribution were no longer needed and a reduction of the work and time previously required to determine the specific needs of end recipients for basic material assistance. The use of vouchers or e-vouchers was seen as a way to simplify the distribution of the assistance, as it allowed end recipients to choose what they wanted to purchase. Multiple stakeholders from Malta, Spain, Greece and Lithuania identified voucher schemes as an opportunity to simplify FEAD delivery. As advantages, stakeholders cited the ability of recipients to make their own choices, cost savings in distribution and storage costs, a reduction of staff requirements and increased anonymity of respondents.

Nonetheless key drawbacks were identified, which were also echoed by representatives in other Member States, particularly by partner organisations e.g. the delivery of accompanying measures was more difficult to achieve or barriers in accessing supermarkets in isolated areas due to distance or lack of transport were noted, the solution to which requires a large network of operators.

⁹² E.g. strict enforcement of income thresholds pointed out by a Czech interviewee described the constant need to assess whether the parents of school children receive certain benefits which makes their child eligible for free school lunches and referred to the process as ‘backbreaking’.

⁹³ E.g. from CZ, IT, LT and RO and from both POs and Managing Authorities

⁹⁴ See answer to evaluation question 8b and 9 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

⁹⁵ According to SFC, only Romania, France and, to a much smaller degree, Hungary and Italy reported having provided vouchers to end recipients. Stakeholders in Estonia and Bulgaria reported on the process of starting to use vouchers introduced for the new 2021-2027 programming period.

Other stakeholders interviewed reported similar efficiency concerns due to perceived cost-effectiveness losses as food would be purchased at market prices by end recipients, instead of at the more competitive prices achieved through bulk purchasing and competition between suppliers. Some Member States highlighted concerns about potential fraud and traceability.

There is therefore a mixed feeling on the benefits of vouchers in terms of cost-effectiveness of FEAD amongst POs and MAs. However, evidence from FEAD recipients themselves suggests that the introduction of voucher-based systems would be favourable to them. While several Member States are considering implementing them (as part of ESF+) to simplify the process, consideration would need to be paid to these potential drawbacks.

Flat rates

The possibility of applying a flat rate for transport, storage, and administrative costs was universally praised as a significant simplification measure. However, evidence from the case studies and interviews shows that the fixed 5% rate was sometimes insufficient to cover all costs, especially for more expensive delivery models (such as for provision of cooked meals), which forced organisations to budget prudently.

Potential for simplifications

Simplifying eligibility verification processes and extending the duration of FEAD operations were considered bearing potential for reducing administrative burdens. Increased use of digital tools for monitoring and streamlined audit processes were also recommended to enhance efficiency as well as more relaxed eligibility rules⁹⁶. Balancing the need for accurate monitoring with reducing administrative burden remains a challenge.

4.1.3. COHERENCE

Evidence from the mapping task such as the analysis of FEAD OPs, AIRs and national FEAD evaluations⁹⁷, the public consultation (see Annex VII), interviews with stakeholders⁹⁸, focus groups, case study research (see Annex X), examination of the legal texts governing FEAD, the ESF, the ERDF and AMIF regulation for the 2014-2020 period as well as the regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) and the Just Transition Fund (JTF) and the survey of MAs carried out by the European Court of Auditors in 2019 was gathered to conclude on the coherence criterium⁹⁹. In analysing the complementarity of implementation, both the FEAD mid-term evaluation and the 05/2019 Special Report of the European Court of Auditors on FEAD were considered as main points of comparison.

Overall, and based on the evidence gathered, it can be concluded that the regulatory framework,

⁹⁶ Several Member States (for example Estonia and the Netherlands) have adapted their eligibility requirements during the previous programming period.

⁹⁷ C.f. eight national evaluations of FEAD (AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, HR, IT, SE), spanning both OP I and OP II.

⁹⁸ C.f. Annex VI related to targeted consultations at both EU and national level with all types of stakeholders (national and EU policymakers, EU and national level NGOs, partner organisations)

⁹⁹ For more details see Evaluation Matrix in Annex II.d

OPs and activities of FEAD were complementary to national and regional actions and policies, with other EU instruments and to the wider EU policies. Moreover, no evidence was found showing there were overlaps or duplications as explained below.

4.1.3.1 COMPLEMENTARITY AND SYNERGIES OF FEAD WITH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS AND POLICIES¹⁰⁰

The FEAD played an important role in alleviating food and material deprivation, reaching out to target groups that would not otherwise be covered by national or local measures.

Overall, FEAD support was found to be complementary to national and regional actions and policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion in several ways:

- Complementing existing poverty reduction and social inclusion programmes.
- Reaching a broader range of target groups such as vulnerable seniors, homeless people, and migrants, who were not covered by national programmes.
- Providing extra services or filling gaps in national policies related to food aid, material assistance and social activation support, which were not provided by national programmes.

However, some limitations to the complementarity between FEAD and national policies have been found in some Member States¹⁰¹, such as constrained coordination between FEAD and national policies; different approaches to poverty reduction and social inclusion; or limited awareness of FEAD support which limited the coherence with other policies.

Synergies between EU support for combating poverty and social exclusion with national and regional policies can lead to many positive effects, including leveraging policy attention on this often-marginalised policy area at national/regional level. The most important factors for ensuring synergies between FEAD operations and other EU, national, and regional interventions were implemented through:

- Fostering close collaboration between the FEAD MAs, POs, and other national and regional stakeholders in the field of poverty reduction and social inclusion.
- Strategic planning to ensure effective synergies with national, regional, and local measures, including services provided by local-level NGOs.

¹⁰⁰ C.f. reply to question 10a in section 4 of the [supporting study](#) and case study on Romania in Annex X.

¹⁰¹ E.g. In Luxembourg national stakeholders underlined that charities offer food at a reduced cost via ‘social groceries’ where individuals choose their own food. So, while FEAD products are added as free items available for those most in need in the social groceries, FEAD remains distinct from national policy. Furthermore, in Sweden, FEAD (OP II) targeted a narrower target group than in other Swedish poverty reduction strategies, which meant FEAD was less complementary. In Estonia, national stakeholders considered that FEAD remained separate from other policy measures at national level, however underlined that there was complementarity at local level, where FEAD support served as an additional resource for local administrations providing food aid. In Romania, coordination with national and local initiatives was also considered to be weak, missing opportunities for synergies which could have increased the impact of FEAD support, as shown in the case study on Romania in Annex X.

- Awareness raising to ensure that national and regional stakeholders were informed of the availability and benefits of FEAD support.
- Focusing on specific target groups such as older people or homeless people, which can be more easily aligned with national support for these specific groups.
- Using FEAD as an entry point to access other national measures including labour market or social inclusion programmes.

4.1.3.2 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER EU INSTRUMENTS¹⁰²

FEAD operations were largely complementary to support provided by other European Union instruments, such as the ESF.

The legal texts governing the instruments, including the Common Provisions regulation, ESF regulation, ERDF regulation, and FEAD regulation, demonstrate a good degree of complementarity, with specific provisions designed to ensure complementarity between these funds or to prevent overlaps or duplication. The FEAD regulation also states that the EC should seek synergies with any exchanges of best practices taking place under related Funds, particularly the ESF. Moreover, evidence gathered for this evaluation showed that there has been an improvement in the complementarity between FEAD and ESF over time.

Examples from the case studies highlight good practices in several Member States in terms of complementarities between FEAD and the ESF such as: designing ESF and FEAD operational programmes to complement each other; actively informing and supporting food aid recipients to access ESF-funded training and employment measures including via helpdesks and teams of professionals delivering accompanying measures; or using ESF-funded measures to support specific target groups for training or other labour market-related operations.

Good complementarity was also found in the texts underpinning the funds with the EU instruments introduced in response to the crises linked to COVID-19, the impacts of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and climate change i.e. the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the Just Transition Fund (JTF). There were also examples of complementarities in implementation with CRII+ leading to an increase in the number and type of end recipients, adaptations of delivery mechanisms and purchase of personal protective equipment. However, no specific examples of complementarities in practice with the RRF and JTF were found.

Similarly, as regards the ERDF and other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) (e.g. EAFRRD, EMFF), there is complementarity in the legal texts with FEAD. However, no concrete examples of synergies in implementation were found in the research, which indicates that synergies in practice have been limited.

Although the AMIF regulation makes no direct reference to ensuring complementarity and/or avoiding overlaps with FEAD, AMIF's specific objectives target different types of support than

¹⁰² See answer to evaluation question 10b in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

those of FEAD and target groups that would not be eligible for FEAD support, showing good complementarity in the support available. Evidence from existing evaluations and interviews with stakeholders also underlines the overall good complementarity between FEAD and the ESF and AMIF on the ground.

4.1.3.3 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH WIDER EU POLICIES¹⁰³

Overall, the FEAD support was highly complementary to the wider EU policies, including the European Semester and EU policies in the five key policy areas identified in the 2012 FEAD impact assessment:

- (i) reduction of poverty and social exclusion (e.g. the Europe 2020 strategy headline target on poverty reduction, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness and the European Child Guarantee)
- (ii) fundamental rights (e.g. the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child)
- (iii) public health (e.g. Union initiatives in the field of public health and against food waste, Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues)
- (iv) agricultural policy and
- (v) relevant food legislation (e.g. to ensure that food products distributed to the most deprived persons were in conformity with Union law on consumer product safety)

FEAD is clearly aligned with the priorities of the European Semester, particularly in relation to the competitive sustainability dimension of ‘fairness’, which is also aligned with the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals. Although no country-specific recommendations (CSRs) directly target food poverty, several address the policy area of poverty, social inclusion and social protection.

Some interviewees from EU-level NGOs however considered that there could be a more coherent, holistic and joined-up EU strategy to tackle poverty, similarly to the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness or the European Child Guarantee.

4.1.3.4 OVERLAPS AND DUPLICATION¹⁰⁴

Despite initial concerns before the introduction of FEAD about the potential for overlaps or duplication between FEAD - particularly in relation to the accompanying measures under OP I and the social inclusion measures under OP II - with ESF-funded or national/regional actions, there is no evidence of overlaps or duplication.

¹⁰³ See answer to evaluation question 10c in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

¹⁰⁴ See answer to evaluation question 10d in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

None of the national evaluations of FEAD highlighted any overlaps or duplication, and the legal texts regulating FEAD and other EU funds included clear dispositions to avoid overlaps.

FEAD was also overall complementary to – rather than overlapping with – national and regional actions, allowing greater territorial coverage of support across the Member State, access to support for wider target groups and a larger number of end recipients, and sometimes introducing new measures for food and/or material assistance to deprived groups which had not previously been covered. Cases of potential overlap or duplication were closely examined by Member States, for example in Austria.

For the most part, FEAD and ESF targeted complementary target groups. FEAD targeted the most deprived individuals (with food and material assistance, accompanying measures, and social inclusion actions) who are further away from the labour market than those of ESF (e.g. homeless, persons with disabilities, children and older people), whereas ESF targeted individuals already employed or covered by national labour market policies.

To avoid potential overlaps, several Member States (e.g. Germany and Denmark) used strict eligibility criteria, and some countries had the same national body overseeing the implementation of both FEAD and ESF (e.g. Greece and Romania).

4.2. IS FEAD STILL RELEVANT?

This chapter examines the relevance of FEAD by looking at the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the intervention. It considers whether there is any mismatch between the objectives of the intervention and the (current) needs or problems. The main point of comparison used were the problems and needs that the intervention was intended to alleviate relevant to the most vulnerable groups in 2013¹⁰⁵.

Based on the analysis of Operational Programmes and AIRs, national FEAD evaluations, end recipient structured surveys results, socio-economic data related to poverty and social exclusion and Eurostat statistics, the public consultation and particularly the sub-survey of partner organisations (see Annex VII), case study research (see Annex X), interviews with different stakeholders, focus groups and secondary sources¹⁰⁶, it can be concluded that FEAD was relevant as explained below.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. Severe material deprivation rate of children, 2013: 10.9%, Severe material and social deprivation of children, 2015 (proxy year): 8.5%, AROPE rate for 2015 (proxy year), inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. C.f. [European Court of Auditor Special report No 05/2019: FEAD: Valuable support but its contribution to reducing poverty is not yet established](#); [European Court of Auditor Special Report 20/2020: Combating child poverty](#), Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe”, European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies, European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding

4.2.1 RELEVANCE TO THE NEEDS OF THE MOST DEPRIVED¹⁰⁷

FEAD support and the design of FEAD operations were very relevant to the needs of the most deprived, namely, immediate poverty relief and mitigation of social exclusion.

At a strategic level, the vast majority of Member States defined specific sub-groups of vulnerable populations as the target of their OPs, while seven Member States¹⁰⁸ only defined the broad group of 'disadvantaged vulnerable individuals'. The target groups selected in the OPs were largely the most relevant groups in need of support from the FEAD, as they were those with a particularly high risk of poverty and social exclusion or facing higher rates of severe material deprivation. However, it is worth noting that no Member State specifically mentioned Roma as a target of their FEAD operations, despite this group consistently having a high rate of poverty and social exclusion.

Additionally, at an operational level, target groups defined in OPs were often further specified through eligibility criteria, such as income-based eligibility criteria, to increase the relevance of FEAD support as individual or household income is a key indicator of relative poverty. Income-based eligibility criteria under OP I were effective in ensuring that the most relevant groups were targeted from the outset. However, evidence also shows that the most deprived in society (e.g., homeless, Roma) often fell outside social security systems when income-based metrics were used, resulting in such criteria excluding them from support.

Targeting relevant groups was also ensured by giving partner organisations the flexibility to tailor the selection criteria and establishing expert advisory committees to identify target groups most in need. This practice was praised by POs as it gave providers of the support on the ground the chance to flexibly respond to evolving needs of the target groups. Hence, a more flexible and local¹⁰⁹ approach to eligibility criteria and target group-setting may better reach those most at risk of poverty and can ensure a high degree of relevance in defining FEAD target groups and addressing their needs.

4.2.2 TARGET GROUPS NOT REACHED AS EFFECTIVELY AND ROLE OF ACCOMPANYING MEASURES¹¹⁰

Target groups not reached as effectively

Although homeless people, migrants and minorities, including Roma (particularly under OP I), elderly and people living in rural areas were reached, the scope of support was limited. The following groups presented challenges both in reach-out and ensuring that the support was actually relevant to their needs:

- (i) Homeless people: The contents of food and basic material assistance packages needed to be tailored to their specific needs.

¹⁰⁷ See answer to evaluation question 11a in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

¹⁰⁸ BE, EE, FI, FR, LT, PL and SI

¹⁰⁹ Based on guidance from local organisations that work with the individuals in need

¹¹⁰ See answer to evaluation question 1a, 11b and 11c in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

- (ii) Migrants and minorities, including Roma: Outreach and adaptation of communication strategies to better reach these groups needed to be tailored.
- (iii) The elderly: The content and delivery of food and basic material assistance packages needed to be tailored to their needs, and outreach efforts could be improved including communication on FEAD support.
- (iv) People living in rural areas: Geographical disparities in support were identified, with some areas receiving less frequent assistance due to remoteness and limited resources.

However, it is noted that Member States made efforts to address these gaps, and by the end of the programming period, some of the identified issues had been largely addressed.

Role of accompanying measures

Accompanying measures were used by Member States to provide additional tailored services relevant to the most vulnerable in their national context (e.g. redirection to competent services), which allowed social services to better identify the specific needs. Accompanying measures were also crucial in building trust between end recipients and social workers and thus highly relevant to the needs of these groups that are often distant to social services and therefore unable to access support. The implementation of accompanying measures was however uneven across Member States. To be relevant and effective, accompanying measures need to be carefully tailored to the needs of end recipients by the POs working with them.

4.2.3 NEW TARGET GROUPS AND FUTURE TRENDS¹¹¹

New target groups

New target groups with increased material deprivation emerged as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the associated energy crisis and rising prices (notably of food, basic goods, transportation and storage):

- (i) More people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to 2019
- (ii) Single persons with dependent children faced a significant spike in need (from 11% in 2019 to 14.8% in 2022) and
- (iii) More individuals with stable housing and income were struggling to make ends meet due to the economic context, having to choose between paying bills or buying food (working poor).

As a result of these external factors, adjustments to FEAD support were introduced in 2020, 2021, and 2022 to respond to these changes, with a focus on supporting single parents and the working poor.

¹¹¹ See answer to evaluation question 11d and 11e in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

Given the flexibility of the criteria defining target groups in FEAD OPs, many countries were able to adjust the support so that it remained relevant.

Future trends

The following four trends have been identified that will likely affect the future relevance of FEAD-type EU support to the most deprived:

- The cost-of-living crisis and inflation triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has increased the number of people requiring non-material assistance but also expanded the 'most deprived' target groups themselves, with the working poor emerging already as a new target group, although national measures appear to have been more important in mitigating their economic circumstances than FEAD¹¹².
- Changes to demography due to an ageing population will likely also require this form of support to be better targeted towards elderly people and tailored to their needs¹¹³.
- Increased migration flows¹¹⁴ have and will continue to affect the size and nature of FEAD target groups. This is not just limited to the effects of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, with migratory flows increasing in general into the EU, and being necessary for some EU countries due to ageing populations.
- Climate change will also influence the future design and relevance of EU support to the most deprived. This is particularly relevant to the provision of food aid, as changes in the climate affect agricultural conditions and food production, leading to food insecurity, especially in southern Europe (ES, PT).

Overall, there is some concern amongst FEAD stakeholders that the resources for EU support to the most deprived under the current ESF+ programming period will be insufficient given this increase in need across the EU. There is thus a clear need for continued (and increased) EU support to the most deprived in the future while Member States adjust national social systems to better deal with new needs of target groups in crisis situations.

¹¹² More people were at risk of poverty compared to 2019, before the start of the pandemic. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of people using FEAD support in 2020, 2021, and 2022, according to majority of stakeholder interviews, including MAs and POs and case studies (BE, CZ, EE, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, PT, RO, SI) as well as by the increase in the AROPE indicator by 0.5 percentage points between 2019 and 2022 from 21.1% to 21.6% after a steady downward trend since 2015. This increase in poverty is also evident in the European Anti-Poverty Network's (EAPN) EU Poverty Watch 2022 report, which highlights COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as key factors in increasing inequalities (see <https://www.eapn.eu/eapn-eu-2022-poverty-watch/>).

¹¹³ Mentioned in a third of Member States in interviews: BG, CZ, HU, LV, MT, NL, PO, PT, RO) and also visible in the socio-economic data which shows a steady increase in the number of people over the age of 65 at risk of poverty and social exclusion. As a point of comparison, the AROPE rate for over 65s was 18% in 2015 and increased to 20.2% in 2022. While FEAD activities under OP I tend to use broad income criteria to determine eligibility of participants, this has been cited as an exclusionary factor of elderly people receiving support due to their pension often placing them just above the poverty threshold in several countries.

¹¹⁴ This has been particularly relevant in Central and Eastern European countries such as BG, CZ, EE, HR, PO, SK, as well as BE, DK, FI, IT among others. Adapting FEAD programmes to include more recipients in times of crisis is crucial to the continued relevance of EU support to the most deprived.

The relevance of EU support to the most deprived was consistently identified as high across the majority of Member States stakeholder in the interviews and case studies (BE, CZ, EE, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, PO, PT, RO, SI, SK), with Managing Authorities and partner organisations in agreement on this.

4.3. DID FEAD MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND TO WHOM?

Overall, and based on the evidence gathered, it can be concluded that FEAD operations provided EU added value to their stakeholders and were visible as explained below:

4.3.1. EU ADDED VALUE

Like the mid-term evaluation¹¹⁵, the present evaluation found that FEAD continued to bring unique value and produced several beneficial effects that would not have taken place in its absence.

4.3.1.1 ADDED VALUE OF FEAD: VOLUME, SCOPE, ROLE AND PROCESS EFFECTS¹¹⁶

The added value of FEAD can be reflected in terms of four different effects:

Volume effects:

FEAD made a significant difference in terms of volume effects, allowing Member States to reach more end recipients and provide a greater volume of aid (under both OP I and OP II) than would have otherwise been possible.

The impact of FEAD was also evident in the significant increase in support provided by charities and organisations. For instance, in Ireland, 97% of charities surveyed reported that they delivered far more support than they would have without FEAD support. Similarly, in Croatia, stakeholders implementing FEAD operations stated that EU funds enabled them to support three times more people than what would have been the case otherwise. FEAD also enabled the expansion of existing services, such as the provision of warm lunches, which was expanded beyond the winter period in Bulgaria. Additionally, FEAD operations in Belgium represented added value in their ability to support, upscale, and start new food aid operations throughout the evaluation period, with a 99.2% increase in end recipients between 2014 and 2022.

FEAD's impact was not limited to food aid, as it also provided additional resources for staff and activities under OP II. This contributed to an overall increase of take-up within the target group. Moreover, FEAD complemented existing policies on poverty reduction in many countries, providing support for more people facing deprivation. 88% of respondents (272 of 310) to the Public Consultation, as well as FEAD Managing Authorities interviewed agreed or strongly agreed that FEAD complemented social inclusion policies.

For example, in Spain, a FEAD Managing Authority representative highlighted that, without FEAD, many people would not have been able to receive the same amount of food,

¹¹⁵ See European Commission (2017) [FEAD Mid-term evaluation report](#)

¹¹⁶ See answer to evaluation questions 1a, 3, 12 and 13 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

as autonomous communities would have had more limited resources. Overall, FEAD's volume effects were substantial, allowing Member States to provide more support to more people than would have otherwise been possible.

Scope effects:

FEAD operations under OP I broadened the range of services available to end recipients, adding value to existing policies by enhancing the social dimension of food aid and other poverty reduction strategies (OP I), and addressing new target groups that were not targeted and/or adequately covered by national policies (OP I and OP II). In all Member States implementing OP II, FEAD resources enabled partner organisations to reach groups for which there was no or limited dedicated support at national level.

For example, in Bulgaria, 215,806 end recipients (47% of the total) received individual and/or group consultations under the accompanying measures, with 89% reporting positive outcomes and impact. In Portugal, 1,230 training actions were carried out as accompanying measures, covering 60,239 end recipients. Additionally, FEAD played a key role in developing the national coverage of food aid, helping to expand and structure national food aid systems. In Estonia, for instance, food aid was not delivered at national level before FEAD, and thanks to the programme, it started to cover the whole country. FEAD also allowed Member States to reach target groups that were not reached through existing national social policy measures, such as homeless people in Denmark, new immigrants in Germany, and migrants without entitlements to ordinary welfare support in Sweden. In Czechia, FEAD enabled the inclusion of children aged 3-15 years within the target groups of the country's poverty reduction strategy, while in Hungary, it expanded the scope of support for the most deprived persons and the range of products available. Overall, FEAD's scope effects were significant, allowing Member States to provide more comprehensive support to a wider range of end recipients.

Role effects:

Under both OP I and OP II, FEAD has allowed the testing and mainstreaming of innovative social activities to alleviate poverty and social exclusion. Notably, FEAD has supported the development of efficient and innovative procedures for material support to deprived people, as seen in Greece, where the use of tablets for identification of end recipients at delivery points streamlined the process. In Estonia, FEAD funding led to significant development of the Estonian Food Bank, making their work operations more efficient. This effect was also confirmed by the results of the public consultation which showed that 80% of respondents (260 of 310) agreed or strongly agreed that FEAD provided added value in terms of experimenting with new ways of delivering support to the most deprived.

FEAD has also enabled the mainstreaming of innovative approaches linking food aid and social inclusion. For example, a Greek NGO created a one-stop shop providing access to several support services, including psychosocial support and job counselling. Similarly, in Poland, workshops were organised to help children cope with stress through physical activity, and in Portugal, accompanying measures were used to train end recipients on topics like family budget management and healthy diet choices.

Additionally, FEAD has allowed for the testing and mainstreaming of innovative social inclusion activities, such as the pilot projects in Denmark, which were maintained after EU support ended. In Germany, FEAD operations were able to secure funding from

municipalities or regions to continue their work, with 21 out of 79 operations examined continuing their work initiated through FEAD funding. These examples demonstrate FEAD's role in promoting innovation and mainstreaming new approaches to alleviate poverty and social exclusion.

Process effects:

FEAD operations under both OP I and OP II have also had a range of positive process effects on stakeholders and organisations involved. These included:

- Intensifying collaboration between actors at different levels; leading to increased partnerships and cooperation. For example, in Luxembourg, FEAD allowed the Managing Authority to collaborate with two partner organisations that it would have otherwise not contacted. Stronger collaboration has also produced additional benefits in Member States such as fostering efficiency and innovation.
- Improving administrative capacity and knowledge of EU programme management of partner organisations. This is particularly evident in OP I countries (e.g. EL, HR, IE, LV, PL), where partner organisations reported improved skills and knowledge in managing EU projects.
- Better structuring of food aid and basic material assistance policy thanks to FEAD's stability of support over the programming period. FEAD ensured continuity, which allowed partner organisations to plan in advance and develop both staff and systems, as seen in France, Belgium, and Czechia, among others.
- Providing partner organisations and Managing Authorities with access to national and/or an EU wide community of practitioners to exchange on challenges and solutions to tackling poverty and social exclusion. The FEAD Network is a prime example of this, facilitating the exchange of best practices and discussion of pertinent issues among representatives from national agencies, public entities, and civil society organisations.

4.3.1.2 KEY RESULTS OF FEAD SUPPORT THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE AND TO WHOM¹¹⁷

There are three key aspects in which FEAD support made a difference:

The *principal benefit of FEAD* is that it alleviated some of the direct effects of poverty for 14.2 million individuals per year between 2014 and 2022, by providing them with food and basic material assistance. FEAD food support in particular played an essential role in addressing one of the most basic facets of poverty: food insecurity. Discontinuing FEAD-type support would significantly reduce the resources available at national level to provide food and basic material assistance to the most vulnerable. FEAD made up a large share of the non-financial support provided by Member States to the most vulnerable. In 2021, the 10 members of the European Food Banks Federation implementing FEAD received quantities of FEAD/REACT-EU food ranging from a share of 1% to 57% of all the food they provided.

¹¹⁷ See answer to evaluation questions 13, 14 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

Consulted stakeholders during the interviews from several Member States (e.g. BE, BG, FR, SI) shared additional data on the contribution of FEAD to overall budgets for food and material aid, in all cases highlighting that this was one of the key benefits of the fund. The *second key result* of FEAD that made a difference is its impact on strengthening community-level structures for supporting the most deprived, with long-lasting positive effects on the ecosystems of actors providing support to the most vulnerable groups of European society. FEAD was instrumental in strengthening existing relationships and/or fostering new collaborations among organisations delivering FEAD operations locally. The vast majority (89%, 275 of 310) of respondents to the public consultation agreed that FEAD contributed to creating partnerships among social inclusion stakeholders. FEAD allowed partner organisations to increase their support offers by freeing up financial resources of these organisations for other types of support to the most vulnerable groups in society. The stability of FEAD funding has been a key aspect of this, with positive results on both the resources available to crucial local-level organisations, as well as to end recipients themselves.

The *third key result* of FEAD that made a difference is its role in providing a low-threshold access point to the most vulnerable groups of society to further social inclusion measures. Whilst the provision of food and basic material assistance alone cannot bring people out of poverty, the role of FEAD in bringing vulnerable groups into contact with professionals that can help them cannot be overestimated. The simplicity of providing food, of gathering in a physical space or engaging with volunteers or social workers to receive food or other support, were key in bringing the most deprived persons closer to other types of measures that could more sustainably impact their overall social inclusion and in turn lift them out of poverty.

Overall, FEAD support has made a significant difference to various groups of end recipients, particularly the most deprived individuals in European societies, including target groups who would otherwise not have received specific, targeted support (see the *Scope effects*). 17 out of 27 EU Member States evaluated their delivery of FEAD, with most evaluations focusing on outputs rather than broader impact due to limitations such as the complex nature of FEAD, difficulty in reaching target groups, and lack of reliable data.

4.3.2. VISIBILITY

4.3.2.1 VISIBILITY ACTIONS TOWARDS THE GENERAL PUBLIC¹¹⁸

All Member States implemented visibility and awareness-raising activities on the EU's involvement in FEAD activities. A range of approaches were used across OP I countries to promote information on FEAD to the general public including traditional press (e.g. Cyprus) and media (e.g. Belgium or Portugal) or websites and social media posts (e.g. Slovakia or Bulgaria).

In OP II countries, visibility and communication on FEAD to the general public was less widely undertaken. The case studies for all OP II countries found that limited focus had been placed on the visibility of the fund. Visibility actions were left to the beneficiaries (DE) or were restricted to posters at the site of delivery of social inclusion measures (NL).

¹¹⁸ See evaluation question 15 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

However, focus group participants highlighted that more targeted visibility actions including radio campaigns and YouTube videos to attract participants were undertaken (e.g. NL), though noting that these had to be balanced with the need to avoid any stigmatisation against participants in OP II measures.

Visibility actions towards the general public were effective to some extent in influencing the knowledge of the general public on FEAD and EU support. In Bulgaria, each partner organisation could decide on the best approach to local communication and active, localised awareness campaign were implemented greatly increasing end recipients' awareness of FEAD aid and other social services in their municipalities. However, despite some positive examples, case study, interview and public consultation data overall show that even though there is at least some awareness amongst the general public of the EU's role in FEAD implementation, this remains limited. Only 24% of public consultation respondents held the view that the general public was aware that support came from FEAD and the EU to a large extent.

4.3.2.2 VISIBILITY ACTIONS TOWARDS END RECIPIENTS¹¹⁹

In terms of visibility actions towards end recipients, evidence shows that these have been more effective in ensuring that receivers of support are aware that it comes from the EU. The vast majority of public consultation respondents indicated that end recipients were aware that support came from FEAD and the EU to a large or moderate extent (75%, 234 of 310), which is a much higher share than those which responded positively when asked about the general public's awareness (47%, 145 of 310).

Member States across both OP I and II shared information during the distribution of FEAD products (OP I) or the delivery of FEAD social inclusion activities (OP II). These activities included: the use of posters and leaflets in distribution centres or centres where social inclusion activities were carried out, the use of EU logos on the packages provided, information on FEAD shared directly with end recipients via text message (e.g. Greece).

Nonetheless, evidence shows that there is room to further increase the visibility of FEAD to end recipients/final beneficiaries. Their low level of awareness in some Member States has been attributed to several factors, including using technology-based channels which may not be accessible to certain target groups (e.g. older persons, homeless people); a lack of language skills due to migrant populations; low levels of literacy of the target population; lack of interest of end recipients, volunteers/staff and/or delivery organisations in where the food/ material support comes from.

In addition, there is a risk associated with activities aiming to showcase FEAD and EU's role in the support provided, which is the stigmatisation of end recipients. Making branding too obvious, having separate delivery points for FEAD products (OP I) or identifying potential beneficiaries of aid as 'most deprived' were all identified as risky actions. Thus, any efforts to increase visibility require a very careful balancing act to avoid this.

¹¹⁹ See evaluation question 15 in section 4 of the [supporting study](#)

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED?

In this section, we set out the conclusions and lessons learned deriving from the evidence gathered and reflected in previous section. Lessons learned are presented in boxes after each set of conclusions.

5.1 EFFECTIVENESS

Achievement of objectives

Based on the available evidence, FEAD operated effectively during the 2014-2022 evaluation period to alleviate poverty and social exclusion of the most deprived across the EU. Overall, FEAD achieved to a high degree its general, specific and operational objectives¹²⁰ as expected in the intervention logic. The evaluation nonetheless points to opportunities for improvement in certain areas (see Lessons learnt at the end of this section).

FEAD funding together with staff and financial resources from the European Commission, Member States, and partner organisations allowed for the implementation of food distribution, basic material assistance, and social inclusion activities or for the creation of capacity to support the most deprived.

FEAD could effectively address immediate effects of poverty, such as food insecurity and social exclusion of vulnerable groups and strengthen the ecosystem of actors providing food and material assistance as well as social inclusion measures.

As shown by the analysis of the Joint Research Centre,¹²¹ FEAD contributed effectively to reducing poverty rates and income inequality. The estimated contribution is significant considering the relatively limited budget of FEAD relative to the extent of the problems it sought to address as well as the nature of support provided. The largest share of FEAD was dedicated to food/basic material assistance, which is inadequate to address the multifaceted obstacles faced by vulnerable people. However, the act of gathering in a physical space, participating in low threshold inclusion measures, or engaging with social workers to receive food/basic material assistance were key in bringing the most deprived persons closer to other types of measures that could more sustainably impact their overall social inclusion.

The evidence gathered indicated that accompanying measures, when tailored to the target groups, had a more direct impact in addressing the initial obstacles to social inclusion than the distribution of food and basic goods alone. However, despite FEAD's successes, there are areas for improvement, particularly in addressing the multifaceted obstacles faced by vulnerable people (see below).

Reaching vulnerable groups

All Member States selected groups that faced a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion or severe material deprivation, as intended in the intervention logic of the fund. The FEAD effectively reached the most vulnerable groups, in particular children and women.

¹²⁰ See section 2.1 of the present report.

¹²¹ See summary under Annex III or JRC's report (De Quinto 2024) of [An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020](#), which assessed FEAD impact on poverty across EU regions on the basis of six key poverty measures, including population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), poverty incidence and intensity, income inequality, concurrence, and persistence of poverty.

Roma were reached to some extent through operations targeting the most deprived communities, and homeless people¹²² were well-targeted by 11 Member States whereas in other cases tailored and targeted support to increase effective reach of these two groups was missing.

Elderly people were in practice adequately reached by FEAD operations, despite being less frequently mentioned in OPs.

Overall, OP II was more effective in reaching vulnerable groups with specific needs such as homeless people and migrants, due to more focused measures tailored specifically to their needs. The target groups of OP II were also more narrowly defined, as was the type of support provided, thus further supporting reach of specific communities.

Challenges in reaching vulnerable groups included eligibility criteria linked to social security systems¹²³, practical obstacles such as lack of fixed addresses, limited awareness of support among the target groups, lack of explicitly targeted measures or language barriers.

Adjustments to new needs

FEAD proved to be adaptable in responding to emerging needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Most EU Member States adjusted their FEAD operations to continue supporting target groups and assist new ones in need. Additional funding from REACT-EU and FEAD's flexibility allowed for changes in eligibility criteria and delivery methods. However, despite these adjustments, the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis, and high inflation still posed significant challenges to FEAD delivery, resulting in increased poverty rates in several Member States.

Horizontal principles

Most POs and MAs are aware of the horizontal principles, consider them important and found them to be largely well implemented in FEAD operations in their country. The partnership principle and respect for dignity of end recipients have been particularly effectively implemented.

A number of key factors facilitate the effective consideration of the horizontal principles such as including information about the principles in calls for proposals; monitoring implementation; certifying partner organisations; targeted training and reporting adherence in Annual Implementation Reports.

However, challenges in reducing food waste, ensuring balanced diets, and implementing gender equality and non-discrimination principles more systematically have been identified. In this context, stakeholders emphasized the importance of respecting the dignity of end recipients and consider as effective methods to achieve this avoiding branding, offering choice through voucher schemes, and promoting regular communication with recipients.

Facilitating and hindering factors

The most important facilitating factors for effectiveness included: strong collaboration in the design and delivery of FEAD between MA and partner organisations (POs); extensive network of POs to reach vulnerable people all over the country; efforts by POs in conducting outreach

¹²² Monitoring data may not accurately reflect the numbers of homeless people reached as it is based on estimates.

¹²³ Evidence also showed that these two groups often fell outside social security systems when income-based metrics were used, resulting in such criteria excluding them from support (c.f. section on Relevance).

measures to make people aware of the support; flexibility of FEAD to adapt operations as needed and the possibility for transnational learning to improve processes and better targeting of operations.

Some factors hindered the effectiveness of the fund, such as: lengthy and complicated public procurement processes, causing delays and limiting product availability; administrative requirements, such as additional national monitoring and reporting requirements, causing unnecessary burdens; limited resources at POs, including untrained volunteers and financial resources; external events like the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, and the energy crisis; lack of clarity among stakeholders regarding accompanying measures and how they can be best designed and implemented.

Unintended results

FEAD activities had several positive unintended results, notably creating a space of interaction between end recipients and providers of support enhancing trusted relationships between them, which increased engagement with social services for other types of support; fostering new collaborations among organisations leading to more robust community support; increasing capacity to support vulnerable groups with more professionalized food aid or social inclusion activities beyond FEAD; improving knowledge of target groups' vulnerability and situations; creating synergies with other projects. On the negative side, the risk of dependency on FEAD support, where recipients may become too reliant and not address underlying issues, could arise in certain circumstances or geographical areas.

Lessons learned on 'Effectiveness'

- Food/basic material assistance is a successful, easy-to-access type of support that can bring the most vulnerable into contact with social services to eventually guide them into more holistic and long-term support. As such, maintaining funding for this purpose remains important to the provision of food and basic material assistance for vulnerable groups under the ESF+ Specific Objective (m) remains important.
- Bringing people together in one physical space is an important factor in combatting social exclusion and demonstrated to be a valuable approach that could be followed in future FEAD-type support.
- As providing food/basic material assistance alone is not enough to lift people out of poverty, emphasis could be placed on designing and implementing long-term, tailored social inclusion measures *alongside* the provision of this assistance such as through:
 - Combining food and basic material assistance with well-designed, tailored social inclusion measures, under *the same* programme and *same* operation, to ensure real on-the-ground synergy between the two types of support;
 - Providing additional guidance/resources to organisations delivering accompanying measures;
 - Monitoring how many individuals participate in the accompanying measures.
- Eligibility criteria of funding for the most deprived could go beyond income-based criteria, by allowing organisations delivering the support some flexibility to help individuals that fall just outside the criteria but are clearly still in need and by

consulting these organisations when defining eligibility criteria at the start of the operation.

- More explicit targeting of marginalised groups, including Roma, could be applied by managing authorities when designing FEAD-type of operations e.g. by consulting expert organisations to get their advice on how best to tailor support to the specific needs of these groups.
- The monitoring indicators could differentiate between ‘participants with a foreign background’ and ‘minorities’ to better understand whether the most vulnerable groups such as Roma are actually reached.
- Member States could also be asked to define the *most* relevant *sub-groups*, to allow for a more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the funding.
- Continuing ensuring sufficient flexibility would allow managing authorities the opportunity to change operations swiftly to respond to changes, particularly in light of future trends showing an increase of groups requiring this type of support.
- Although the horizontal principles are relatively well integrated in FEAD implementation, national authorities could establish more robust monitoring of their implementation and appropriate follow-up.
- The development of a compendium of good practices at EU level, showcasing innovative approaches to implementation of each horizontal principle in Member States could further strengthen their effective implementation.
- More effective implementation of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination could be achieved through training/awareness-raising of MAs and POs.
- The ecosystems of actors involved in addressing specific societal challenges could be more systematically mapped by managing authorities and intermediate bodies, to ensure that all key stakeholders are involved and engaged in problem-solving and building/strengthening community resilience.
- Organisations which have in-depth knowledge of target groups, community networks and the specificities of different territories could be more intensively assisted e.g. by providing dedicated resources to strengthen the competences of staff/volunteers working in POs. When organising EU support for the most deprived POs could be more systematically and meaningfully consulted.

5.2 EFFICIENCY

Overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD

Despite efforts to collect the required data, a full cost-effectiveness assessment, which would include monetising end recipients’ outcomes (not just outputs), was not possible due to significant variance between and within Member States in support models and costs, and a lack of comprehensive outcome data and a reliable counterfactual (i.e. what would have likely happened in the absence of intervention). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that FEAD was overall cost-effective.

Academic research indicates that the costs of hospitalisation due to malnutrition far exceed the

FEAD average cost per person of providing food support. While the number of hospitalisations prevented by FEAD is unknown, it is clear that FEAD effectively reached those most in need. As such, reducing the risk of hospitalisation and its associated negative outcomes likely represented significant cost efficiencies.

The cost-effectiveness of FEAD is further supported by academic studies on free school meals, which demonstrated excellent cost-efficiencies, leading to improved educational attainment and health outcomes.

Factors influencing efficiency and good practices

Centralised procurement systems allowed organisations to secure goods at discounted prices, enhancing cost-effectiveness through economies of scale and supplier competition. However, potential drawbacks such as the need for extensive storage facilities and occasional procurement delays were noted.

The availability of volunteers was found to be a crucial factor for cost-effectiveness, significantly reducing costs of implementation of the fund.

There were important improvements in practices over the implementation period of the fund which increased efficiency. For example, improvements in supply chain management, such as the use of intermediate distribution centres, reduced transportation costs and enhanced efficiency. Different supply chain models across Member States however limited the ability to standardise these improvements. In some cases, innovations like drive-through collection points and reduced delivery frequency during the COVID-19 pandemic were also retained for their cost-effectiveness. However, the potential drawbacks of less frequent and less personal support provision need to be balanced against cost savings.

The management and control system requirements

Monitoring the outputs and outcomes of EU funding is crucial. However, some challenges related to high administrative burden emerged: monitoring requirements, including the setup and ongoing collection of data, such as data on the exact composition of food support, the stringent eligibility rules set by certain Member States for FEAD support and the related documentation and auditing requirements bore the most burdensome administrative tasks. Nonetheless, several Member States reported a substantial decrease in administrative burden due to digitalisation and improved administrative processes (e.g. streamlined eligibility verification and audit processes).

Vouchers and flat-rates and potential for further simplification

The main advantages of voucher support identified included simplification of the distribution, cost savings (deriving from the reduction of distribution, storage and personnel costs) as well as increased anonymity, flexibility and autonomy of end recipients.

However, several key drawbacks were associated with voucher support, including: difficulties in delivering accompanying measures (such as counselling or training, that are often essential for addressing the underlying causes of poverty); barriers to accessing supermarkets in isolated areas (due to distance or lack of transport); perceived cost-effectiveness losses (as recipients may purchase food at market prices rather than at the more competitive prices achieved through bulk purchasing and competition between suppliers) and potential for fraud and difficulties in tracking the use of vouchers. Despite these drawbacks, recipients themselves generally view voucher-based systems favourably, and several Member States are considering implementing

them as part of the ESF+ to simplify the process.

Overall, careful consideration of the potential benefits and drawbacks of voucher support and careful planning and implementation to address potential challenges should be considered.

Partner organisations universally praised the introduction of a 5% flat rate for transport, storage, and administrative costs as a significant simplification measure. However, the fixed 5% rate was sometimes insufficient to cover all costs, especially for more expensive delivery models, which forced organisations to budget prudently.

Increased use of digital tools for monitoring and streamlined audit processes have proved to enhance efficiency. Similarly, simplifying eligibility verification processes and extending the duration of FEAD operations have borne the potential to reduce administrative burdens.

Contribution of partner organisations

The involvement of POs likely reduced the costs of setting up new structures and networks of support and increased the ability of the support to reach the most deprived, both with a positive impact on cost-effectiveness overall. This is due to PO's local knowledge of the target groups and existing community-level networks, experience and good levels of trust developed with MAs as well as their 'human touch' in delivery of services, respecting the dignity of end recipients. The professionalisation of POs over the FEAD implementation period has led to increasing efficiencies in delivery.

Lessons learned on 'Efficiency'

- The provision of food or other forms of material assistance could be complemented with other support services (training, guidance, financial advice, etc.) under the same operation, for example requiring only one application by the end recipient (instead of multiple applications to multiple providers), and/or accessible in the same location (e.g. one-stop-shop bringing together different providers).
- To adequately assess cost-effectiveness¹²⁴, data on the actual impact of FEAD-type operations on end recipients (for example in the form of improved employment outcomes, health or wellbeing) is needed. The collection of a limited number of additional result indicators for actions targeting the most deprived (e.g. 'recipients receive support from social services after intervention') would help gather more information on the impact of this type of support. To not impose too much administrative burden on POs, the collection of longitudinal impact data could also be required only for one or two carefully selected operations or locations.
- At the same time, balancing the need for accurate monitoring with reducing administrative burden remains a challenge. Monitoring requirements of the support to the most deprived could be more frequently reviewed by the EC in consultation with both MAs and POs and revised throughout the course of the programming period in cases where data is proving particularly burdensome but providing little added value.

¹²⁴ See section 1.2.2 and 4.1.2 on Efficiency e.g. limited quantification and assessment of the impact of FEAD support at national level, including no collection of longitudinal data. Longitudinal data is data that is collected sequentially from the same respondents over time.

- Conducting quasi-experimental studies¹²⁵ by linking outcomes of recipients to outcomes of a comparator group using administrative data from Member States could also be considered by the EC and/or individual Member States¹²⁶.
- MAs could consider increasing competition among suppliers, by for example targeting suppliers from other Member States in the public procurement process.
- Administrative burden makes volunteering unattractive, potentially reducing the willingness of people to participate, which bears a potential risk as volunteers are key to the cost-effective delivery of FEAD-type operations (for further analysis refer to next point on MCS requirements).
- Where efficiency measures (e.g. drive-through collection points for food packages) that risk reducing personal contact between providers and end recipients are introduced, complementary measures could be implemented to ensure that these important inter-personal interactions are conducted in other ways (e.g. regular catch-ups via telephone/videoconference or active encouragement for end recipients to take part in other services or activities offered like training).
- Member States could consider a more flexible approach to eligibility that allows local discretion on deciding whether a person needs this type of assistance. This would ease administrative burden on POs (see also lessons learned on Relevance).
- Capacity issues of POs to fulfil requirements properly could be better addressed, e.g. to set up and maintain digitalised systems for monitoring and reporting (ideally these systems would be interconnected with those used by national authorities responsible for the overall monitoring of EU funding and reporting to the European Commission, though with due consideration given to data protection legislation) or to use digital tools such as electronic tablets at delivery points to gather immediate data on number of end recipients supported.
- While evidence suggests that vouchers are favourable to simplify the distribution process by eliminating the need for storage and large purchases, consideration would need to be paid to their potential drawbacks or concerns about accessibility (for example, in more isolated areas) or their effect on the delivery of accompanying measures as well as about potential fraud related to traceability obstacles.
- In order to continue simplification efforts, the EC could facilitate mutual learning opportunities on vouchers between Member States implementing ESF+ SO(m).
- Simplifying eligibility verification processes or increasing the use of digital tools for monitoring and streamlined audit processes could reduce administrative burdens and enhance efficiency.

¹²⁵ A quasi-experimental design aims to study the cause-and-effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable. However, unlike a true experiment, a quasi-experiment does not rely on random assignment. Instead, subjects are assigned to groups based on non-random criteria.

¹²⁶ See also lesson learned under EU added value under point 5.5 of the present report.

5.3 COHERENCE

Complementarity and synergies of FEAD support with national and regional policies

Overall, FEAD support under both OP I and OP II was complementary to national actions and policies for poverty alleviation such as food aid programmes and social inclusion. While recognising that FEAD is not able alone to solve poverty, it provided an important contribution to national policies and actions and shone a spotlight on the need for - and benefits of - a greater policy focus at national and regional level on tackling poverty and social exclusion.

Synergies between EU support with national and regional policies for combating poverty and social exclusion led to many positive effects including leveraging policy attention on this often-marginalised policy area at national/regional level; providing stability and continuity of supply; extending the support available to a greater number and broader range of individuals; ensuring tailoring of support to specific target groups and their needs; structuring and reinforcing support for the most deprived; and, creating bridges and pathways for end recipients into other relevant national measures on social inclusion and/or labour market integration.

Effective means of promoting complementarity with national actions and policies included: fostering close collaboration between MA, POs and other relevant stakeholders; choosing POs that align with the fund's objectives; raising awareness about the support and its benefits; strategic territorial planning; focusing on specific target groups (particularly in social inclusion) and using the fund's activities as a bridge to other national measures, such as labour market activation or social inclusion programmes.

Complementarity with other EU instruments

FEAD operations were complementary to support provided by other EU instruments, in particular the ESF and AMIF. In terms of implementation of synergies on the ground between the ESF and FEAD a good degree of complementarity was found¹²⁷, which improved over time. Evidence also underlines the overall good complementarity between FEAD and the ERDF and other ESIF (e.g. EAFRRD, EMFF) in implementation.

Examination of the legal texts governing FEAD, the ESF and the ERDF for the 2014-2020 period confirms that there was a good degree of complementarity between these instruments, with specific provisions in the legal texts designed to avoid overlaps or duplication.

Good complementarity was also found in the legal texts between FEAD and the EU instruments introduced in response to the crises linked to COVID-19, the impacts of the Russia' war of aggression against Ukraine and climate change: the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the Just Transition Fund (JTF). However, no specific examples of complementarities in practice with the RRF and JTF were found.

¹²⁷ Examples of good practices were found in several Member States in terms of complementarities between FEAD and the ESF e.g. designing ESF and FEAD operational programmes to complement each other; actively informing and supporting food aid recipients to access ESF-funded training and employment measures; teams of professionals delivering accompanying measures; or using ESF-funded measures to support specific target groups for training or other labour market-related operations.

Complementarity with wider EU policies

Overall, the FEAD support was highly complementary to the wider EU policies, including the European Semester and EU policies in the five key policy areas identified in the 2012 FEAD impact assessment: (i) reduction of poverty and social exclusion; (ii) fundamental rights; (iii) public health and (iv) agricultural policy and (v) relevant food legislation.

FEAD is clearly aligned with the priorities of the European Semester, particularly in relation to the competitive sustainability pillar of ‘fairness’. Although no country-specific recommendations (CSRs) directly targeted food poverty, several addressed the policy area of poverty, social inclusion and social protection.

Some interviewees however considered that there could be a more coherent, holistic and joined-up EU strategy to tackle poverty, similarly to the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness or the European Child Guarantee.

Overlaps and duplication

There is no evidence of overlaps or duplication between FEAD and other EU or national support measures (e.g. none of the national evaluations of FEAD highlighted it and the legal texts regulating FEAD and other EU funds included clear dispositions to avoid overlaps). For the most part, FEAD and ESF targeted complementary target groups. FEAD target groups tended to be further removed from the labour market than those of ESF, with a greater proportion of end recipients compared to ESF who were either homeless, children or older people.

Lessons learned on ‘Coherence’

- Complementarities and synergies with national and regional policies and measures shall continue being implemented and further prioritized, proactively sought, strategically planned and regularly monitored.
- MAs could be required to map their national, regional and local ecosystem of stakeholders in the field of poverty and social exclusion. Relevant members of the fund’s monitoring committee (e.g. ministries or NGOs) could be associated to help conduct this mapping.
- POs could be actively encouraged to develop synergies with existing national, regional and local activities by requiring applicants to provide certain information¹²⁸.
- To ensure effective synergies with national/regional policies and actions, MAs and those implementing national/regional actions in the field of poverty and social exclusion could further establish close working relationships from the start¹²⁹.

¹²⁸ In the rationale for the funding application, a specific sub-section could be introduced, requiring applicants to set out the existing relevant national/regional/local activities in relation to their proposed activities, describe how they would be complementary and set out how they concretely intend to implement synergies (e.g. creating bridges into other measures, involving the actors managing the other activities to be part of a steering committee, etc.).

¹²⁹ This could include establishing formal mechanisms (e.g. national/regional advisory/monitoring committees, local or regional platforms against poverty, etc.), organising regular meetings, implementing structured mutual learning opportunities (e.g. EU, national, regional or local networks, events, online networking and exchange platforms, etc.) and careful selecting partner organisations.

- Clearer communication and awareness-raising on the benefits of EU funding, and how it can complement and reinforce (rather than supplanting or competing with) national/regional actions and established stakeholders could be conducted¹³⁰.
- MAs and IBs could actively foster synergies with other EU instruments to ensure that people affected by poverty and social exclusion are able to access follow-on support and complementary forms of assistance¹³¹.
- Authorities managing and implementing other EU funds or programmes (e.g. AMIF for migrants) could actively ensure that participants are also able to access EU support for food and/or basic material aid and social inclusion measures¹³².
- To accelerate and facilitate synergies between EU instruments, especially when managed by different authorities and with differing rules/processes, ongoing cooperation and dialogue in both design and implementation could be further instigated between those responsible for the instruments, both at EU level and national level. It can be particularly effective for the same national/regional authorities to manage, or oversee, the implementation of different EU instruments.
- More specific monitoring could be implemented of the way in which FEAD-type support is being used to address the country-specific recommendations issued that target improvements in poverty, social inclusion and social protection.
- It could be beneficial to further explore whether the different EU policy measures could be brought together in a more comprehensive EU strategy to tackle poverty and social exclusion, as for example the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness and the European Child Guarantee.

¹³⁰ Examples of inspiring practices, where synergies have been effectively established could be developed and shared among the participating organisations managing and implementing actions or initiatives to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

¹³¹ E.g. housing, financial, training, health which can help bring them closer to economic independence and social inclusion notably for facilitating access to training and labour market integration measures via the ESF.

¹³² Ensuring the provision of holistic support is essential for groups facing a wide range of challenges and can amplify the impact of EU support. This could be achieved by organising regular meetings, both prior and during implementation of funds, between the authorities responsible for other funds and those for ex-FEAD support. Such meetings could establish the concrete ways in which participants of one programme are able to benefit from other complementary programmes to meet their holistic needs (e.g. one-stop-shops, clearer timelines, provision of information on complementary sources of support), and regularly monitor the degree to which this is happening in practice to identify and eliminate any barriers.

5.4 RELEVANCE

Relevance to the needs of the most deprived

FEAD support and the design of FEAD operations were very relevant to the needs of the most deprived (namely, immediate poverty relief and reducing social exclusion).

At a programming level, target groups defined by Member States were highly relevant: the vast majority of Member States defined specific sub-groups of vulnerable populations as the target of their OP, which were part of the population considered most at risk of poverty and social exclusion and thus in line with the intervention logic of FEAD.

Target groups defined in OPs were often further specified through income-based eligibility criteria to identify eligible recipients of FEAD support which from the outset ensured that FEAD targeted the most relevant groups in need of FEAD support, as individual or household income is a key indicator of relative poverty. However, evidence also showed that the most deprived in society (e.g., homeless, Roma) often fell outside social security systems when income-based metrics were used, resulting in such criteria excluding them from support.

Accompanying measures worked as a key entry point for target groups to activities outside of FEAD provided by both POs and social services alike and were crucial in building trust between end recipients and social workers. They were thus highly relevant to the needs of these groups that are often distant to social services and thus unable to access support. The practical implementation of accompanying measures was however uneven across Member States, with some evidence showing that they were not tailored to the needs of end recipients and that organisations were unable to implement them systematically.

New target groups and future trends

Overall, Member States were successful in adapting FEAD operations to account for new needs and target groups, thanks to the adaptability of the fund. Given the flexibility of the criteria defining target groups in FEAD OPs, many countries were able to adjust the support so that it remained relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the energy crisis.

There are several trends that will likely affect the future relevance of FEAD-type EU support to the most deprived increasing the size and nature of 'most deprived' target groups. These trends are i.e. the cost-of-living crisis and high inflation triggered by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; changes to demography due to an ageing population; increased migration flows and climate change, the latter affecting food insecurity. Hence, there is some concern amongst FEAD stakeholders that the resources for EU support to the most deprived under the current ESF+ programming period will be insufficient given these trends across the EU.

Lessons learned on 'Relevance'

- A local, flexible approach to target group-setting, based on guidance from local organizations that work with the individuals in need, could ensure a high degree of relevance in defining FEAD target groups and addressing their evolving needs. This could take the form of using general income-based criteria at national/regional level as a guidance, but then allowing partner organizations to tailor this further based on the specific needs of the people that come to them for support.

- More concerted outreach efforts (by the Member States?) to reach groups that are reluctant to engage with social services but often face the highest poverty risk could increase relevance and take-up of support¹³³.
- MAs and the EC could examine successful social innovation examples of structured and systematic involvement of end recipients themselves in the design of FEAD-type support. This can ensure that they have a greater say in what kind of support is provided, both in terms of types of products distributed and types of activities, in turn increasing relevance and take-up of support.
- On accompanying measures, please see lesson learned under effectiveness.
- MAs and POs could reflect on how to better take into account different dietary requirements and needs of other religions and cultures in food and basic material assistance provided, particularly in light of increased migratory flows into EU Member States. Due to an ageing population FEAD-type support could also be better targeted towards elderly people and tailored to their needs¹³⁴.
- Regarding the impact of climate change, Member States could be requested to consider this impact for their region when designing accompanying measures.
- Consulting end recipients when designing FEAD-type measures could aid this process.

5.5 EU-ADDED VALUE

Added Value of FEAD: volume, scope, role and process effects

The evaluation of FEAD has demonstrated that the programme has produced significant beneficial effects, which can be expressed in terms of volume, scope, role, and process effects.

- Volume effects: FEAD increased the volume of support provided to those in need (both under OP I and OP II), allowing Member States to reach more end recipients than would have otherwise been possible.
- Scope effects: FEAD broadened the range of services available to end recipients, enhanced the social dimension of food aid and other poverty reduction strategies, and addressed new target groups that were not targeted and/or adequately covered by national policies.
- Role effects: FEAD enabled the testing of innovative social activities to alleviate poverty and social exclusion, mainstreamed innovative approaches linking food aid and social inclusion, and experimented with social inclusion activities (e.g. one-stop shops, workshops on stress management for children). Accompanying measures under OP I played an important role in complementing food aid delivery with training and support measures including family budget management, food waste prevention and healthy diet choices.

¹³³ E.g. Street outreach by local NGOs that are familiar with the most marginalised groups in their communities, and/or efforts to consult meaningfully with the target groups in the process of designing support.

¹³⁴ E.g. Home delivery instead of collection.

- Process effects: FEAD intensified and broadened collaboration between actors at different levels, improved administrative capacity and knowledge of EU programme management, and improved the quality and structuring of support for target groups.

In terms of quantification of FEAD impacts, Member States show willingness to evaluate and learn from the experience of the support. However, this is difficult due to: the complex nature of FEAD support, which encompasses various forms of assistance and diverse target populations; the fact that most deprived people are often ‘hard to reach’ and their involvement in evaluations is usually difficult; limited resources and capacity constraints within Managing Authorities; and finally an inherent difficulty in capturing the multifaceted impacts of social assistance programmes, such as changes in well-being, community cohesion, and economic outcomes.

Key results of FEAD support that made a difference

The evidence gathered shows that FEAD support has alleviated some of the direct effects of poverty for a significant number of most deprived persons¹³⁵ in the EU, by providing them with food, basic material assistance or social inclusion support. The key results of FEAD support that made a difference include:

- Alleviating the effects of poverty: FEAD provided essential support to address food insecurity, a basic facet of poverty, and discontinuing this kind of support would significantly reduce resources available at national level to provide food and basic material assistance to those most in need.
- Strengthening community-level structures: FEAD strengthened existing relationships and/or fostered new collaborations among organisations delivering FEAD operations locally, freed up financial resources of partner organisations, and had positive results on local-level organisations working closely with the most deprived.
- Providing a low-threshold access point to further social inclusion measures: FEAD played a crucial role in bringing vulnerable groups into contact with professionals that can help them, providing a simple yet effective way to reach the most deprived persons and bring them closer to other measures that could lift them out of poverty.

Lessons learned on ‘EU-added value’

- FEAD has allowed structured support to reach target groups that were rarely or not at all previously covered by either national or EU mechanisms. Going forwards, there is continued relevance to ensure that these vulnerable groups continue to receive appropriate and joined-up support.
- FEAD has provided an impetus to national authorities to work closely and systematically with civil society organizations and local actors working with the most deprived. Future EU and national policies and funding for vulnerable groups could focus on maintaining these increased collaborations and further developing them. One possible way to achieve this that is worth considering could be (for the Member States?) to providing civil society organizations involved in delivering EU social

¹³⁵ An average of 14.2 million individuals received FEAD support yearly between 2014 and 2022, of which an average of 13.3 million received food support, 0.9 million persons received basic material assistance yearly and 23 thousand persons benefiting from social inclusion measures (OP-II) every year.

possible way to achieve this could be for the Member States to provide civil society organisations involved in delivering EU social inclusion funding programs with specific resources earmarked for their own capacity-building.

- Linked to this, it would be important to tap into these strengthened community-level networks supporting the most deprived to experiment further with socially innovative approaches to tackling poverty. This could be done by allowing for experimentation with socially innovative approaches, to continue to explore the most effective means to serve the complex and evolving needs of FEAD target groups.
- To arrive at more reliable impact estimates for future FEAD-type interventions, enhanced support to Member States to conduct rigorous evaluations is essential. This would have to be commissioned before the start of the intervention. The choice of Member States could be guided by the availability of outcome data on end recipients collected by state entities which likely varies heavily depending on the national degree of digitalization and applicable data protection rules. Observing the development of a group of recipients over time would yield insights into how FEAD-type support, might impact their lives. In addition, (quasi-)experimental approaches would allow for a more rigorous assessment of causal relationships between FEAD interventions and outcomes.

5.6 VISIBILITY

Visibility actions towards the general public

All Member States implemented visibility and awareness-raising activities on the EU's involvement in FEAD activities. A range of approaches were used across OP I countries to promote information on FEAD to the general public including traditional press and media or websites and social media posts. In OP II countries, visibility actions have been taken, while trying to keep a balance with the need to avoid any stigmatisation against participants of OP II measures.

These visibility actions towards the general public were effective to some extent in influencing the knowledge of the general public on FEAD and EU support. However, despite some positive examples, case study, interview and public consultation data overall show that even though there is at least some awareness amongst the general public of the EU's role in FEAD implementation, this remains limited.

Visibility actions towards end recipients

In terms of visibility actions towards end recipients, evidence shows that these have been more effective in ensuring that receivers of support are aware that it comes from the EU. Member States across both OP I and II shared information during the distribution of FEAD products (OP I) or the delivery of FEAD social inclusion activities (OP II). These activities included: the use of posters and leaflets in distribution centres, the use of EU logos on the packages provided, information on FEAD shared directly with end recipients via text message.

Nonetheless, evidence indicates that there is room to further increase the visibility of FEAD to end recipients. End recipients' low level of awareness in some Member States has been attributed to several factors, including using technology-based channels which may not be

accessible to certain target groups (e.g. elderly persons, homeless people); a lack of language skills due to migrant populations; low levels of literacy of the target population; lack of interest of end recipients, volunteers/staff and/or delivery organisations in the origin of food and or material support donations. It is clear as well that there is a risk associated with activities aiming to showcase FEAD and EU's role in the support provided i.e. the stigmatisation of end recipients.

Lessons learned on 'Visibility'

- National authorities could increase their efforts to undertake communication and information activities around EU support for the most deprived. Gathering and sharing best practices in communicating about this type of support whilst avoiding the stigmatization of recipients could be organized at EU level.
- Information to potential end recipients about the support available is crucial in ensuring they can benefit from support. In order to be effective, information needs to carefully take into account specific difficulties which certain target groups may face including lack of access to digital information (by providing information in paper format or orally), low levels of literacy (by providing information orally through social workers, community actors) or difficulties in understanding the national language (by providing information in multiple languages).

6. ANNEXES

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Annex II:	Methodology and analytical models used
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ANNEX I: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead DG, Decide Planning/CWP references

The evaluation was led by the Directorate-General for Employment, Inclusion and Social Affairs, with a Decide planning reference PLAN/2023/172.

Organisation and timing

An *Inter-service Steering Group (ISG)* was set up, coordinated by the Directorate-General for Employment, Inclusion and Social Affairs (represented by staff from the Better Regulation unit) including members from the Secretariat-General (SG), and the Directorate-Generals for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC); Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO); Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE); Budget (BUDG); Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI); Migration and Home Affairs (HOME); Justice and Consumers (JUST); and the Joint Research Centre (JRC-Seville).

The ISG also acted as steering group for the external study supporting the evaluation, which was carried out by Ecorys and 3s (contract awarded VC-2023-0152 with tender VT-2022-051) within the multiple framework contract VC/2021/0336 (EMPL/2020/OP/0016). The contract VC/2021/0336 started on 17.02.2023.

On 24 May 2024 the contractor sent the draft final report (Ares(2024)3775114) and some annexes. Annex 1 Methodology and Annex 6 Factual Summary Report were submitted on 10 June 2024. Annex 4 Consultation synopsis report was not submitted as focus groups had not yet been conducted and in agreement with us needed to be submitted only with the final report mid-July. On 31 May 2024 the contractor sent concept note and discussion paper for focus groups (Ares(2024)8386797).

On 15 July 2024 the first revised final report was sent by contractor (Ares(2024)8387677). On 22 July 2024 the second revised final report was sent by contractor (Ares(2024)8387728) with annexes (except annex 9 on country fiches).

On 09 August 2024 Annex 9 concerning country fiches was submitted by the contractor (Ares(2024)8387927).

On 10 and 11 October 2024 the contractor submitted a third revised final package (FEAD final report, all its annexes and for the first time the executive summary) (Ares(2024)8388718 and Ares(2024)8388839).

On 15 November 2024 the fourth revised final package (FEAD final report, all its annexes and executive summary with translations in FR and DE) was sent by contractor (Ares(2024)8389310).

On 28 November 2024 the fifth and final revised final package sent by contractor (Ares(2024)8483240). On 3 December 2024 a minor issue - Figure 25 – was corrected.

The **call for evidence** published on 13/02/2024 explained the context, purpose and scope of the evaluation and informed stakeholders that an external evaluation study was being carried out, supported by a public consultation. The **public consultation** was open for 12 weeks from 14 February until 8 May 2024. The factual summary was published on 18/06/2024.

Targeted consultations were carried out mainly within July and October 2023. See Annex V for further details on the stakeholder consultations carried out.

Exceptions to the better regulation guidelines

All Better Regulation requirements were fulfilled.

Consultation of the RSB (if applicable)

The evaluation was not selected for the scrutiny of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

Evidence, sources and quality

The evaluation was based on the evidence collection and analysis carried out by external experts (contract with Ecorys/3s to carry out the supporting study, see above)

Annex II provides additional information on the methodological approach taken. To ensure quality, the ISG provided feedback throughout all steps of the evaluation process and ensured accuracy of the factual information and data in each study deliverable.

Table A. 1 – Chronological overview of the evidence collection process

Date	Type of activity
20.01.2023	ISG meeting to discuss the Tender specifications
27.02.2023	Launch Request for services
27.3.2023	Offers received
16.05.2023	Signature of Contract
22.05.2023	ISG meeting: kick-off meeting with external contractor
30.06.2023	ISG Meeting: Inception external evaluation report and discussion about the consultation strategy and public consultation
July-October 2023	Targeted consultations
13.02.2024- 14.2.2024	Publication of Call for Evidence and Public consultation
21.02.2024	ISG Meeting: Interim external evaluation report
24.5.2024	Draft final report
20.6.2024	ISG meeting: draft Final external evaluation report
15.07.2024	Revised draft Final external report (see further revisions above)
03.12.2024	Receipt of final version of external report supporting the evaluation
07.03.2025	ISG meeting on the draft Staff Working Document

ANNEX II: METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

1. Overall Approach to the evaluation work.

The main objective of this ex-post evaluation is to provide an assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value, relevance and visibility of FEAD for the period 2014-2022.

DG EMPL took a mixed approach to this evaluation, by relying on the work of external evaluators to (i) collect and analyse the relevant evidence (including consultation work); (ii) provide initial answers to all evaluation questions; and (iii) present evidence-based conclusions and lessons learnt. The supporting study followed a mixed methods data collection approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research tools and sources to collect wide evidence on FEAD performance. The evaluation did not assess the performance of the fund in each individual Member State but focused on evaluating the performance of FEAD at a broader EU-level.

The external contractor collected and examined evidence covering 2014-2022 for the supporting study and performed a prospective analysis of the Fund's future implementation. Data from this study have been updated in this staff working document on the basis of the 2017 annual implementation reports that Member States had to submit to the Commission by 30 June 2018 and on the basis of the latest available Eurostat statistics.

Specifically, the intervention logics – one for FEAD as a whole, and one each for OP I and OP II type support set out a high-level understanding of the rationale, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts of FEAD and provided a framework for a standardised approach to the evaluation. The intervention logics formed the foundation of the evaluation's analytical framework encompassing the evaluation inquiries. To conduct the evaluation, the supporting study team completed six tasks (see Figure below).

Moreover, JRC carried out a quantitative analysis to assess the impact of FEAD expenditure on poverty during the 2014-2022 implementation period and provided a detailed profile of FEAD beneficiaries across six countries using data from the FEAD End-Recipient Surveys carried out in these countries in 2017 and 2022.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Evaluation questions set out in the tender specifications to be answered were the following:

To what extent was the FEAD support successful – or not – and why?

Effectiveness

1) To what extent has the FEAD support contributed to achieving the objectives set in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014?

- How and to what extent did the FEAD support delivered contribute to the achievement of these objectives by type of assistance?
 - Food distributed, including those related to indirect support through vouchers or cards or food donations (OP I)
 - Basic material assistance delivered, including those related to indirect support through vouchers or cards or food donations (OP I)
 - Accompanying measures (OP I) delivered
 - Social inclusion activities (OP II) delivered
- To what extent has FEAD support reached the most vulnerable groups (homeless, children at risk of poverty, Roma and other marginalised groups, etc.)? How well were women reached? Is there other evidence on achievements by other characteristics such as geographical characteristics (rural vs. urban)?
- To what extent were adjustments made when needs changed or new needs emerged, e.g. deriving from the covid-pandemic or the energy crisis?
- To what extent have the operations introduced by CRII+, REACT EU and CARE under FEAD mitigated the negative social effects of the COVID and energy crises in terms of poverty and social exclusion, and allowed to test new ways of working and delivery?

- How well were horizontal principles¹³⁶, such as reducing food waste, achieved?
- 2) *Which factors, whether unintended or not, facilitated or hindered the effectiveness of FEAD operations (in terms of implementation and results)? Rank these factors by order of importance and justify your ranking. What difficulties were met by partner organisations and how did they overcome them?*
- 3) *Were there unintended results that have occurred, and which hindered progress or facilitated it? If so, which were those unintended results?*
- 4) *What socio-economic impacts can be identified from FEAD support, both at micro-economic and, if possible, at macro-economic level?*

Efficiency and simplification

- 5) *What types of activities and for which target group were the most/least cost-effective? Why?*
- 6) *Are there any examples of good practices implemented to improve the efficiency of FEAD operations? Were there any bad practices that hampered the efficiency of FEAD operations?*
- 7) *Which are the factors that influenced the efficiency of FEAD? Rank these factors by order of importance and justify your ranking.*
- 8) *To what extent were the elements of Management and Control System (MCS) requirements¹³⁷ in FEAD set appropriately to minimise the administrative burden¹³⁸? Did they allow effective and efficient implementation? Did those elements protect the dignity of FEAD end recipients while avoiding stigmatisation?*
 - To what extent was there unnecessary administrative burden, in particular gold plating¹³⁹, at MS level in implementing the FEAD?
 - To what extent did the use of flat rates or the introduction of vouchers/cards under OP I simplify the implementation of operations by partner organisations?
 - How have partner organisations contributed to *effective and efficient implementation*?
- 9) *To what extent can FEAD processes be simplified at the national level? And at EU level? Are there (other?) areas where simplification could be pursued further?'*

Coherence

- 10) *To what extent were FEAD operations coherent with other interventions? How have complementarity and synergies been ensured?*
 - How complementary was FEAD support with the national actions and policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion? How have synergies between FEAD operations and other EU, national and regional interventions been ensured?
 - To what extent were FEAD operations complementary to support provided by other European Union instruments, in particular the ESF and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund?

¹³⁶ Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014

¹³⁷ As defined in Title V of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (c.f. Art. 28 to 37)

¹³⁸ Administrative burdens should encompass the entire lifecycle of operations, specifically

- Set-up of FEAD regulatory framework at EU level, approval of OP and guidance provided by EC
- Designation and set-up of MCS including Information systems;
- Appropriateness of the eligibility requirements for partner organisations and end recipients;
- Project selection;
- Requirements for implementation by project partners (e.g. public procurement, use of flat rates);
- Reporting, evaluations and audit;
- Level of the technical assistance and its use

¹³⁹ Gold-plating is an expression which refers to Member States going beyond what is strictly required by EU legislation when they implement it at national level. This may enhance the benefits but can also add unnecessary costs for businesses and public authorities which are mistakenly associated with EU legislation.

- To what extent was the FEAD support complementary to the wider EU policies including the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights?
- Were there cases of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication and if so, which?

Is FEAD still relevant?

Relevance

11) *How relevant was the support to the needs of the most deprived?*

- To what degree were the most relevant groups targeted?
- Which target groups were not reached, and why? Were there any gaps in the support provided?
- What role did accompanying measures play in addressing these needs?
- Were there any new target groups, needs and/or activities that have emerged in consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine?
- What are the future trends that could affect the future relevance of this EU support to the most deprived? Why and how? To what extent is the design of FEAD still relevant?

Did FEAD make a difference and to whom?

EU-added value

- 12) *Overall, what and how significant has been the added value of the FEAD support in producing beneficial effects that would otherwise not have taken place? This question shall be addressed by assessing volume, scope, role and process effects¹⁴⁰.*
- 13) *Were there attempts in MS to quantify and assess the impact of the FEAD support?*
- 14) *What are the key results of FEAD support that made a difference? To which group(s) of stakeholders did FEAD make a tangible difference?*

Visibility

- 15) *To what extent are the general public and end recipients aware that support comes from FEAD and the EU? Please specify differences by MS and by target group.*

¹⁴⁰ Definitions of the four effects are provided in section 2.5 EC's evaluation/studies above

EVIDENCE

Evidence gathered from different sources were gathered and triangulated to conclude on the different evaluation criteria (see examples below).

Secondary sources in particular:

- Impact Assessment Accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the FEAD (2012)
- Regulation (EU) No. 223/2014 on the FEAD (2014)
- FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019)
- FEAD Network input papers and meeting reports
- Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ (2023)
- FEAD country fiches from the Mid-term evaluation
- Deliveries of the FEAD Network including FEAD case studies
- ESF 2007-2013 Ex post Evaluation
- European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report 05/2019
- European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/ 2020
- Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe”
- European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies
- European Parliament, 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding
- Strategic Studies such as Employment and Social Developments in Europe, Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee etc.
- Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)
- E-Vouchers for the most deprived: A study complementing the ESF+ impact assessment
- Investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds

T1 Mapping

- SFC monitoring and financial data
- Screening of AIRs
- National FEAD OPs
- Analysis of end recipient surveys
- Analysis of national evaluations
- National ex ante evaluations
- Financial data on share of FEAD funding for food support by OP I Member State and target group, the share of payments incurred (spent by beneficiaries) over approved expenditure (committed by Managing Authority)

T2 Socioeconomic analysis

- Evolution of main indicators on poverty and social exclusion including on poverty, child poverty and homelessness
- Policy expenditure data

T3 Consultations

- Interviews
- Public consultation (MAs, end recipients, partner orgs)

T5 Impact analysis

- Evidence from existing evaluations/studies
- Results from JRC study

T6 Case studies

- Qual./quant. evidence on achievement of objectives

T7 Focus groups (including representatives of different stakeholders)

- Views on degree of achievement of objectives

ANNEX II.A: METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED BY EXTERNAL CONTRACTOR

1. Approach to the evaluation

The objectives and purpose of the study indicated the necessity of a theory-based evaluation approach using mixed-method data collection approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods within an overall analytical approach guided by a comprehensive evaluation framework.

1.1. Articulation of the intervention logic.

During the inception phase, we further developed the intervention logics that we articulated in our original tender. Specifically, the intervention logics – one for FEAD as a whole, and one each for OP I and OP II type support – set out a high-level understanding of the rationale, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts of FEAD and provided a framework for a standardised approach to the evaluation. The intervention logics as an analytical basis for the evaluation, combined with the evaluation criteria specified in the technical specifications, provided an important underpinning to the required consideration of process-related themes as well as those more concerned with outcomes. The intervention logics are included in the main report in **section 2.1.**

1.2. Assessing processes and outcomes

Exploration of processes were linked to the earlier parts of the intervention logics, for example in exploring the degree to which inputs supported the range and quality of actions to implement FEAD and led to the expected outputs in terms of enhancing processes and infrastructure to provide support to the most deprived to enhance their social inclusion. Assessment of outcomes and impacts focused on the later stages of the intervention logics, exploring how and the extent to which the actions supported by FEAD led to the intended outputs, results, and broader long-term impacts articulated in the model.

Our analysis also identified and explore the unintended effects (outputs, results and impacts) of FEAD implementation, as well as the conditions which led to these unintended consequences. The intervention logics include these unintended effects in the ‘results’ of the intervention but did not detail what they are as by nature ‘unintended effects’ were not defined or expected to occur in the initial design of the intervention.

The different methodological approaches including secondary data analysis (Task 1 – Mapping, Task 2 – Analysis of the socioeconomic context, Task 4 – Cost-effectiveness analysis, Task 5 – Impact analysis, Task 6 – Case studies) and the consultation activities (Task 3) (all described in section 2 of this Annex) provided a range of evidence that was triangulated to assess the degree to which process and outcome causal chains detailed in the intervention logics were supported.

1.3. Establishing causality

The evaluation made use of a theory-based approach to assessing outcomes, underpinned by the intervention logics. The intervention logics also provided a way to contextualise the evaluation and ensure that it is rooted in an understanding of FEAD implementation and its challenges.

FEAD sought to contribute to a set of high-level objectives yet operated through a relatively broad range of tools and mechanisms, with a long and indirect causal chain, in which external factors are present. For that reason, we did not expect to uncover evidence that FEAD has generated uniform results and outcomes across all Member States, regional and local contexts and OPs, as well as FEAD stakeholders and target groups. Instead, we anticipated that specific types of results or impacts are more strongly associated with specific mechanisms or contexts.

To test this, we carried out a robust assessment of causality – i.e., the degree to which FEAD has in reality led to the outcomes it intends to support, and the extent to which FEAD (as opposed to other factors) can be said to have been the *cause* of them. A range of other factors (external to FEAD) influenced the results and impacts of the implementation of the fund, including the economic context and external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

A robust evaluation methodology must go beyond simply establishing whether the intended outcomes have been achieved (or avoided in the case of negative outcomes), to consider whether these effects would have

happened in the absence of the intervention, and to address wider issues of causality. This is necessary to avoid over-claiming or double counting, which are common pitfalls of evaluations. It is possible to distinguish between two main forms of causal analysis, as shown in Table A. 2 below¹⁴¹.

Table A. 2 – Options for measuring causality within evaluations

Analysis of causal <i>attribution</i>	Analysis of causal <i>contribution</i>
Using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to test an explicit counterfactual, through a process of direct comparison. This approach is best suited to discrete interventions that have very specific results, and where the theory of causation can be expressed singularly ¹⁴² .	Using iterative theory-building and testing, critical comparisons and predictions. This approach is best suited to complex and 'dynamic' interventions that involve multiple elements delivered in multiple locations and over a wide timeframe, and where the counterfactual situation is more implicit.

Source: Ecorys, 2024, drawing on Mayne, J (2001) Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly. Canadian Journal of Programme Evaluation

Reflecting on these two approaches, FEAD presents several challenges for undertaking an analysis of causal attribution, notably because its outcomes are heterogeneous, diffuse, will vary in different contexts, and are subject to a wide range of contributory factors.

Taking these considerations into account, a contribution analysis approach was taken specifically for assessing the extent to which FEAD has achieved the desired effects, over and above what would have been achieved anyway. We operationalised the contribution analysis approach through collating and assessing, in a structured way, the range of evidence gathered from the range of methodologies deployed for the key study tasks outlined in detail in section 2 of this Annex.

Theory-based evaluation and contribution analysis were developed specifically for situations where definitive causal attribution is impractical¹⁴³ and its use allowed us to ensure that the study maintains a consistent focus on causality and attribution. Rather than setting out to isolate the effects of a single intervention, contribution analysis aims to build a credible 'performance story'¹⁴⁴, drawing upon the available sources of evidence to consider whether the intervention, alongside other factors, contributed towards the observed outcomes. Situated within a wider theory-based evaluation approach, this is ideal for FEAD, as it provided a mechanism for reflecting on the assumptions within the intervention logics and testing with key stakeholders the extent to which these assumptions have held true throughout implementation. This approach also allowed the identification and exploration of any unintended effects generated.

1.4. Evaluation framework

Drawing together our thinking in designing the initial intervention logics and approach to the evaluation, we developed an overarching evaluation framework which guided the evaluation. The draft evaluation framework was revised following feedback received from the ISG at the kick-off meeting and on our draft inception report. The evaluation framework addresses the research questions set out in the technical specifications for each evaluation criterion, presents the sub-questions that fall under the headline questions, the judgment criteria and indicators that were used to address these questions and the elements of our methodology which provided the required evidence.

¹⁴¹ NONIE Sub-group 2: Impact Evaluation Guidance (2008) [Online] Viewed 26.03.18.

¹⁴² An example of a singular causal claim is that "Event c caused event e", with the counterfactual conditions presented as "If c had not occurred, e would not have occurred" (Menzies, 2001)

¹⁴³ Mayne, J (2001) Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly. Canadian Journal of Programme Evaluation [16]; p.1-24

¹⁴⁴ Mayne John (1999)" Addressing Attribution through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly", discussion paper, Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

1.5. Points of comparison

The study covered the implementation period from 2014 to 2022. The principal points of comparison against which the performance of the Fund was assessed in the study are the expected results and impacts of the intervention as set out when FEAD was being designed and finally adopted in 2013.

At the request of the Inter-service steering group for the study, our analysis principally focused on comparing the situation linked to the **problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve**, as set out in the FEAD Regulation, particularly its preamble, with the current situation. We summarised the problems and needs which FEAD intended to address in the intervention logics of the Fund.

In general, as set out in Tool #46 of the Better Regulation toolbox¹⁴⁵, the main source of points for comparison should be the expected results and impacts of the preferred policy option outlined in the Impact Assessment (in this case, the FEAD Impact Assessment of 2012, policy option 3¹⁴⁶). However, for this study, the Inter-service steering group requested that we do not use data from the FEAD Impact Assessment for the following reasons:

1. The budget is very different to that which was finally agreed for FEAD - the foreseen budget of the fund as envisaged in the Impact Assessment was EUR 2.5 billion for the period 2014-2020 which compares to the finally adopted budget of EUR 5.2 billion (EUR 3.8 billion initial EU funding plus 0.7 billion REACT-EU funding plus EUR 0.7 million national co-financing);
2. The policy option finally selected from the Impact Assessment (policy option 3: Broad Scope) differs from the scope of support provided under the FEAD Regulation as accompanying measures were not envisaged in this policy option, nor was the type of support offered under OP II (social inclusion measures).

For these two reasons, the qualitative and quantitative estimations in the Impact Assessment of the expected results and impacts of the fund (Annex 10 of the Impact Assessment) are not appropriate points of comparison. At the request of the Inter-service steering group, we also did not use any points of comparison from the predecessor programme to FEAD, the MDP (the EU's Food Distribution programme for the Most Deprived Persons). The MDP had significant differences to FEAD – including the scope of assistance (only food distribution, not even including warm meals), geographical coverage (only 20 Member States participated) and budget – meaning that it does not either provide relevant points of comparison.

For quantitative points of comparison, we therefore principally drew throughout the analysis on the data set out in the state of play section (section 19.1 of the main report). This principally comprises socio-economic data, providing an indication of the situation in terms of poverty and social exclusion and severe material deprivation, thus linking clearly to the aims and objectives of FEAD support, as outlined in both the Impact Assessment and the FEAD Regulation. This approach facilitates a comparison with the current situation, covering as far as possible the same parameters and indicators that are used to describe the state of play.

The principal points of comparison are set out in Table A. 3 below. Two points in time were used as points of comparison in relation to the socio-economic data: the point at which FEAD was designed (**annual data from 2013**), as well as at the point just preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (**annual data from 2019**). The latter was included due to the impact of the pandemic on the socio-economic context in which the fund was being delivered, and its significant impact on the target groups of the fund. This allowed for correct interpretation and sizing of the contextual factors influencing delivery, as well as exploring effectively how changes to the fund through CRII, CRII+, REACT-EU and CARE were used under effectiveness and relevance where data was not available for 2013 or 2022 (e.g. AROPE (at risk of poverty and social exclusion) rates are only available from 2015), proxies were used, as set out in the table.

Throughout the analysis, we also used where relevant qualitative and quantitative data from the **FEAD mid-term evaluation**¹⁴⁷ as a point of comparison. This includes the 2018 monitoring data for FEAD (covering 2014-2016) reported in the mid-term evaluation, as well as the results of the public consultation conducted for that study. We purposefully did not include a wider range of points of comparison which could endanger the consistency of findings.

¹⁴⁵ “Where there is a prior impact assessment, the expected results and impacts of the preferred policy option should be the preferred point(s) of comparison.” Better Regulation toolbox 2023, Chapter 6, Tool 46 p.397

¹⁴⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012SC0350>

¹⁴⁷ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/51421b36-54f8-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Table A. 3 – Quantitative points of comparison

Point of comparison	Target group	2013 (start of reference period)	2019 (pre- Covid)	2022 (end of reference period)	2015 Proxy for 2013 (where data not available)	2020 Proxy for 2022 (where data not available)
Severe material deprivation rate	Total population	9.8%	5.5%	Not available	-	5.9%
	Children	10.9%	5.7%	Not available	-	6.7%
Severe material and social deprivation	Total population	Not available	7.3%	7.5%	6.8%	-
	Children	Not available	9.2%	10.3%	8.5%	-
At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate	Total population	Not available	21.1%	21.6%	24%	-
	Children	Not available	22.5%	24.6%	27.3%	-
	65 years or over	Not available	19.4%	20.2%	18%	-
	Non-EU foreign citizens	Not available		50%	45%	-
Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	Total population	10.7%	6.8%	8.3%	-	-
	Single person with dependent children	16%	11%	14.8%	-	-
	Households with dependent children	11%	7.7%	8.6%	-	-

Source: Eurostat - People at risk of poverty or social exclusion [TIPSLC10_custom_7566228]; Eurostat - Severe material deprivation rate by NUTS regions [ILC_MDDD21_custom_7420160]; Eurostat - Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day - EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03_custom_7420371]

2. Detailed methodology

In this section, we set out in detail the methodological approach used in undertaking the evaluation study. We begin with an overview of our methodology, followed by a detailed presentation of the methods and tools implemented for each Task.

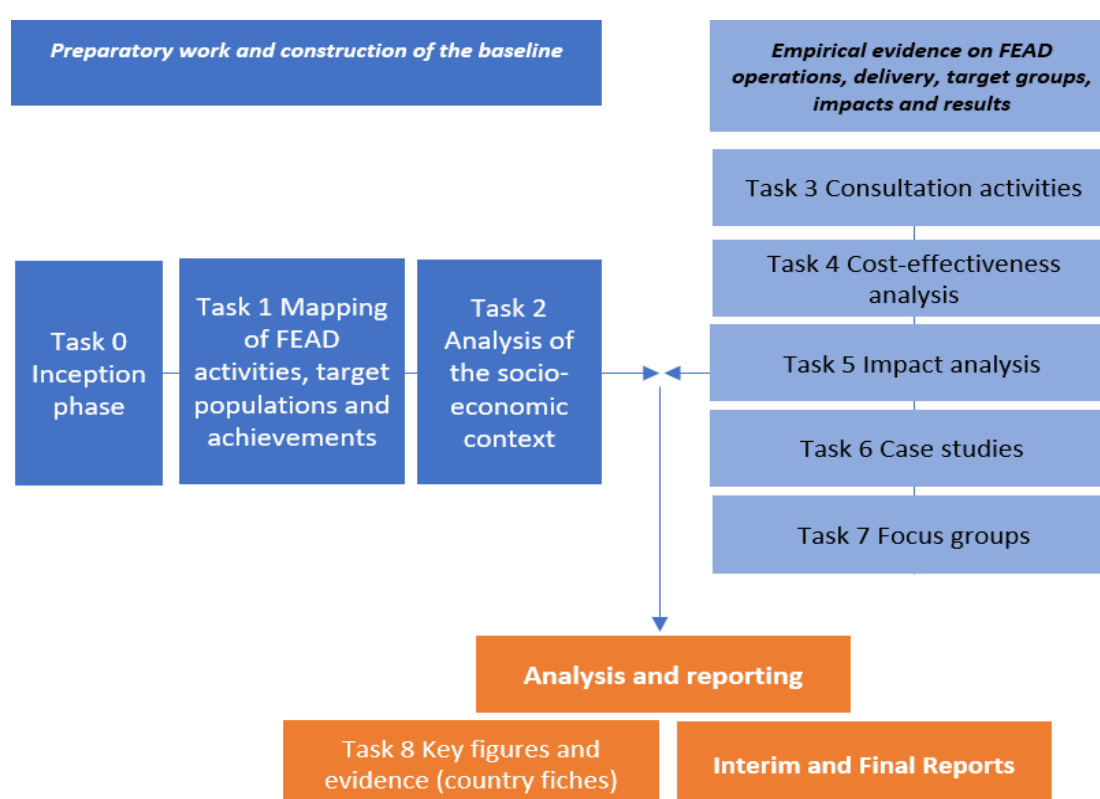
As outlined above, this study is about the effects and the success of FEAD, but also about learning and understanding (insights) from different angles. In order to understand these elements, the study needed to set out firstly what the expected outcome of FEAD was when it was designed and came into force. It then needed to outline how the situation in the area the FEAD was addressing, namely poverty and social exclusion evolved over the evaluation period across the EU and in each Member State examining the changes that took place since the point of comparison and the reasons for them. The evaluation findings then addressed the following questions to assess the effects and success of FEAD:

- To what extent was the intervention successful and why?
- How did the EU intervention make a difference and to whom?
- Is the intervention still relevant?

In essence, the need was to understand what happened and why, in specific contexts, so that conclusions and lessons learned could be drawn for both Member States and the European Commission to inform future policy making and fund design to alleviate poverty and tackle social inclusion.

The methodological approach was thus aimed at finding the right balance between these different entry points and combining appropriate methods to ensure the robustness of results. The figure below presents an overview of the evaluation process and the role of the different tasks in this whilst also clearly showing the way in which we conceived the interconnections between the tasks to ensure gathering all the complementary evidence needed, both qualitative and quantitative, to provide comprehensive answers to the full range of evaluation questions.

Figure A. 1 – Overview of study methodology



2.1. Task 0 Inception phase

2.1.1. Kick-off meeting and inception meeting

The kick-off meeting between the study team and the Inter-service Steering Group (ISG) took place on 22 May 2023. During the kick-off meeting, the ISG provided detailed feedback on the study method. DG EMPL also confirmed the areas in which they would be able to support the study team in accessing information and contacting relevant stakeholders.

The inception meeting took place on 30 June 2023. The ISG provided the study team with detailed comments on the inception report following revisions made during the inception phase. Following the meeting, DG EMLP provided the study team with detailed written comments which were all addressed in the revised inception report.

2.1.2. Preliminary desk research

During the inception phase, we mapped and reviewed the list of sources presented in our technical offer. We also researched additional sources by targeting gaps in our initial selection. The systematic review we carried

out helped refine the evaluation framework and research questions and foresee any gaps in the data needed for the study. The systematic review laid the foundations for the subsequent Tasks of the study, with the following specific purposes:

- To support with the identification of sources for Task 1 (Mapping of FEAD-related activities, target populations and achievements) and Task 2 (Analysis of the socio-economic context)
- To finetune the data collection tools, ensuring in particular that the interview guides and public consultation questionnaires ask specific questions on aspects which are not sufficiently covered by existing literature
- To assess the availability and quality of quantitative data on FEAD for Task 4 (Cost-effectiveness analysis) and Task 5 (Impact analysis)
- To assist the research on the national level to be undertaken across Task 3 and Task 6 in particular.

We reviewed a total of 85 documents with the use of a purpose-designed Excel screening tool. The screening tool helped us categorise the sources according to author, type of source, geographical scope, year of publication and years covered (if applicable). The review excluded sources stemming from Eurostat, the Cohesion Open data platform, the SFC 2014-2020 database and the FEAD Annual Implementation Reports 2014-2023 as these were mapped and analysed under Tasks 1 and 2. It also excluded national level evaluations and studies as these were mapped and analysed through the national level research undertaken under Tasks 1, 2 and 6. Sources were further categorized according to whether they presented information on the following aspects:

- FEAD-specific information or information on the broader socio-economic context
- The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (including specific measures put in place like the CRIIs, CARE and REACT-EU)
- Evidence of the FEAD's impact on the ground
- Strong quantitative data
- Data on specific target groups relevant to FEAD

The overall relevance of each source to the objectives of the study was rated across a scale of low-medium-high based on the above criteria. A source was also considered highly relevant if it contained reliable quantitative data which could be used for Tasks 4 and 5, and quality insights into the impact of FEAD on the ground. 'High' relevance sources were a key input into all research activities.

2.1.3. Refinement of methodology and task preparation

Based on the discussions at the kick-off meeting, the inception meeting, and the preliminary desk research, we refined the study methodology and tools and included the updated versions in the revised Inception Report. The main changes made are indicated in the table below.

Table A. 4 – Main revisions undertaken during the inception phase

Section-task	Main methodological changes
Evaluation framework	• Evaluation framework revised, adding additional sources of evidence and sub-questions where needed, and reviewing the judgement criteria and indicators (Annex 1)
Intervention logic	• Intervention logic revised, adding additional details on the specific and operational objectives by OP and on the results and impacts of FEAD
Mapping tools (Task 1)	• Increased emphasis given to the screening of OPs as well as structured survey results

Section-task	Main methodological changes
Analysis of socioeconomic context (Task 2)	Additional indicators for the task related to context analysis identified for analysis
Consultation strategy and tools (Task 3)	- Research tools revised, and two interview guides (EU and national) developed, with additional OP-specific questions in the national interview guide - List of interviewees updated, and details of contact persons added - Public consultation questionnaire shortened as per feedback and revised to include additional specific questions to partner organisations (linking also to Task 5 needs)
Cost effectiveness analysis methodology (Task 4)	- Method updated taking into account Tool 57 and 58 of the Better Regulation Toolbox - Additional questions added to the research tools to better capture the administrative burden of FEAD implementation for the stakeholders
Impact Analysis methodology (Task 5)	- Follow-up meeting with JRC held on 6 June where methodology was clarified - Task updated fully to align with the revised requirements - Research tools (Task 1 and Task 3) revised to integrate additional data needs under this Task
Case studies methodology and tools (Task 6)	- Additional criteria used in the selection of case studies (e.g. implementation rate, number of POs and beneficiaries involved in the distribution of support); - The rationale for the selection of certain case studies (BG, EE; EL, RO, PT) further clarified
Focus groups methodology (Task 7)	Stakeholder groups refined and timeline further specified
Country fiches tools (Task 8).	Example of designed country fiche provided (Annex 6)
Analysis and reporting	Structure of draft interim report reviewed
Work plan and quality assurance	- Work plan updated to reflect dates agreed at the kick-off meeting - Data protection arrangements clarified - Quality assurance arrangement clarified (including in the relevant sections across individual Tasks)

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

As part of the inception phase, we also organised an online meeting with our Thematic Experts to discuss the revised evaluation framework and methodology. The thematic experts for the study were:

- Dr Timo Weishaupt (Professor of Sociology at the University of Göttingen, Germany)
- Marili Parissaki (independent expert with specific knowledge on FEAD)

- Dr Anna Tengqvist (Coordinator of the Forum for Social Innovation, Sweden)
- Nigel Meager (Principal Associate Fellow of the Institute for Employment Studies).

Their comments and insights are summarised below.

- In assessing the effectiveness of FEAD in reaching target groups, it will be important to understand how Member States have *designed* the programme i.e. how they selected the types of activities to support with FEAD, how they selected the target groups of FEAD activities etc. We have added several questions in our research tools to better capture this.
- A key challenge is that FEAD monitoring data, in particular, results indicators, are not disaggregated by specific target group in SFC and in the AIRs. Managing Authorities may have this information and should be asked to share if possible, so as to better understand the impact of FEAD on specific groups of vulnerable people.
- The importance of capturing the views and experiences of end-recipients was stressed – for example, through the structured surveys which were completed for all OP I countries – whilst the challenges in doing so were also acknowledged. As such, the methodology proposed in the study to reach end recipients via the views of representative organisations and partner organisations was welcome. In some Member States, for example, Germany, vulnerable groups such as Roma and homeless people have formed representative bodies. It would be important to reach these groups where they exist during the national level consultations as they will be best placed to provide the views of end recipients of FEAD support
- The work of the FEAD Network (now Community) provides a rich source of information and best practices on FEAD from stakeholders involved in delivery and implementation. The outputs of the FEAD Network ([thematic dossiers](#), [event reports](#), [case studies etc.](#)) will be a very useful source for identifying in particular innovative approaches to delivering FEAD support and best practice examples to feature in the study.

The above insights were taken on board in the methodology of the study.

2.2. Task 1: Mapping of FEAD-related activities, target populations and achievements

The objective of this task was to collect, analyse, synthesise, and map programming and monitoring data (financial, output and result indicators), FEAD support activities and national evaluation and structured survey (OP I) information.

The quantitative programming and monitoring data were extracted from SFC2014 and collected in an offline database. The qualitative information was collected in a screening tool filled in by the Core Research Team and the National Experts. The detailed methodology for this Task and the research tools to conduct it are described in the following sections. While the information collected through this tool formed the basis for the preparation of Task 1 deliverables, the information was used throughout the study to feed into analysis of all evaluation questions. As such this data collection was instrumental to all tasks.

2.2.1. Collection and analysis of quantitative monitoring data from SFC2014

FEAD performance monitoring is built on a set of Common Input indicators for OP I/II, and specific output and result indicators per OP. This quantitative information about the financial and physical progress of the implementation of FEAD is provided by the Member States in the SFC2014 database in the framework of the Annual implementation reports (AIRs).

During the inception phase, the Core Research Team received a first extract of the AIR data from the SFC2014 database from DG EMPL, containing the quantitative data of all Member States for each year from 2014 to 2022. Data from the Cohesion Database (<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/tdry-xg55>) was extracted, in order to download the additional REACT-EU allocations to FEAD and the most recent payment data for calculating the progress in financial implementation of FEAD at EU-level and in the Member States. In addition, financial planning data was extracted from the OPs (from SFC2014) to map the changes in the financial allocations over the programming period.

In addition to the SFC data, the Core Research Team gathered complementary national data (for instance, data at regional level, raw data of the structured survey) provided by the monitoring systems (and databases) of FEAD Managing Authorities where available. As discussed with DG EMPL, a central request for data to the MAs was sent out, detailing the required datasets (also linking to the needs of the JRC as outlined in Task 5).

During the inception phase, the team built the offline database of FEAD monitoring data which was used to assess the financial and physical progress in implementing FEAD at Member State level and aggregated for the EU27 as well as by programme type. Aggregated values gave a first quantitative insight on the contribution to achieving the specific and global objectives of FEAD. The database covered both cumulative and yearly values reported in the AIRs, as defined in the Regulation (EU) No 1255/2014 as well as OP data (such as financial allocations), as this was particularly relevant in the event of changes and amendments of OPs (for instance the additional allocations of REACT-EU funding). The database was fully searchable by Member State, OP type, indicator and year and made use of the Pivot table function in Excel. Common and Programme specific indicators were separated into two different sheets, as the given structure of the tables in SFC varies between these two types of indicators (e.g. specific indicators used in OP II include a baseline and a target column).

The AIRs 2023 reporting on the implementation of FEAD until the end of 2022 were to be submitted by the Member States until 30 June 2023. This means that by the end of August 2023 most AIRs were adopted by the Commission and ready to use for the study. As agreed in the inception phase, an updated extract of the monitoring data was shared by the Commission at the beginning of July as preliminary data for 2022. This preliminary data was updated with final 2022 data extracted just before the drafting of the draft final report in April 2024.

Additional data collected by the Core Research Team and national experts was also stored centrally in additional sheets of the database to provide a comprehensive database of all relevant quantitative monitoring data related to the financial and physical progress of the implementation of FEAD.

Once the database was complete and data quality checked, frequency tables and visually attractive figures were prepared, ready to be used for the other tasks and for responding the evaluation questions. This included charts and tables illustrating both the development over time (from 2014 to 2022) and cumulative figures. We also included figures and tables illustrating the role and volume of REACT-EU funding in the Member States. These figures and tables were used in the final report of the study, namely in outlining the state of play (section 3 of the main report).

2.2.2. Collection and analysis of qualitative information

The qualitative information included in the AIRs was key for getting a more accurate understanding of the implementation and performance of FEAD, its underlying reasons and the implemented operations. During the inception phase, we developed a screening tool in Excel to systematically capture the qualitative information in the AIRs.

The screening tool which was approved by DG EMPL contained the following sheets filled in by the Core Research Team:

- **Review of programme documentation and AIRs:** this collected, summarised and categorised the qualitative information on both the implementation of FEAD in general and FEAD operations in particular, including the accompanying measures. This sheet was piloted with data from Austria. The tool collected both information at the level of the OP (for instance contribution to horizontal principles, challenges and success factors in implementation, etc.) and at the level of FEAD operations (for instance, target groups, description of FEAD operations, accompanying measures, etc.) with the objective of systematically collecting and categorising the information included in the AIRs. Therefore, it largely followed the structure of the AIRs, but also contained additional elements, such as:
 - the description of good practice examples
 - success factors
 - contribution to horizontal principals
 - information on the implementation of FEAD
 - its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and measures related to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, if applicable.

Pre-defined categories were used to systematically collect and categorise information, which facilitated the analysis at a later stage. The categorisation of the FEAD mid-term evaluation and the FEAD monitoring reports were used as a starting point for developing the tool.

- **Amendments – changes to OPs:** This sheet collected the data on changes in the OPs, including number of formal amendments, type of change, reasoning and change in financial allocation from the first adopted version of the OP to the last adopted version of the OP.
- **National evaluations:** this sheet collected the data from the national evaluations (where available) conducted by Member States on FEAD support. It provided an overview of the scope of the evaluation followed by details relevant to each evaluation criterion, as available in each evaluation.
- **Data from the CRII Evaluation:** this sheet collected all references to FEAD operations made in the evaluation report of the CRII.

To ensure homogeneity across screening categories, the screening was done by the Core Research Team, starting in July 2023, after having received feedback from DG EMPL and was finalised after the inception meeting. Researchers working on this task were briefed and assisted throughout the screening by the Task Lead. To this end a guidance note was prepared explaining: the rationale of the exercise; the steps to be undertaken and responsibilities; the information to be collected and where to look for it; and, most importantly, a list of categories and an explanation of their interpretation.

In a separate file, the results from the structured survey were summarised: evidence from the structured surveys conducted to partner organisations and end recipients of OP I type support in both 2017 and 2022 was collected. The surveys are not available in excel form, so the Core Research Team manually input answers from available pdfs into the excel tool to allow for a categorised and systematic presentation of the data.

Once all information was collected by the beginning of October 2023 the Task Lead quality checked and validated the data collected. This was done by screening through the results, checking that the open texts were in line with the categorisation and running random checks on the original texts of the AIRs. In case of data gaps, National Experts were contacted to complement the screening tool with information collected from national documents and the interviews (see Task 3).

Based on the validated information, basic frequency tables and graphs were generated to further test the quality of results (and spot any unusual/unexpected results). The collected qualitative information from the AIRs was analysed and, where relevant, linked to information in the Excel offline database as well as to socio-economic context factors (Task 2), and type of OP. This meant that information which was already categorised and assessed by the experts was analysed following the categorisation and synthesised by the evaluators to be included as key evidence in the interim and final reports as well as provide the national level data to be included in the case studies per Member State (Task 6) and the country fiches (Task 8).

2.2.3. Collection and analysis of evaluation information

As stipulated in Art. 17(1) of FEAD Regulation 223/2014, Managing Authorities (MAs) for OP type II were requested to carry out at least one evaluation before 31 December 2022 assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the operations supported. MAs for OPs type I were not obliged to conduct an evaluation, but a structured survey on end recipients in 2017 and 2022.

We screened the national evaluations and included them in the screening tool described above, in a separate worksheet. The aim of this screening tool was to provide a physical inventory of the evaluations (in the national language) and to gather all evaluation findings (in English). The structure of the screening tool followed the evaluation criteria, but in addition included specific questions based on the evaluation questions and sub-questions. Since national evaluations can very much differ from each other in terms of methodology and scope we included additional dimensions to those presented in the table below (see Annex 3) to better capture differences across countries. The additional dimensions are:

- scope of the evaluation – this dimension provided insights on the number of projects included in the evaluation main topics
- years covered
- Information on MAs and partner organisations
- link to the publication if available in the web.

Some of the evaluations were available in the national languages only. In these cases, our team of National Experts were involved in completing the screening tool for their respective countries.

2.3. Task 2: Analysis of the evolution of the socioeconomic context

This task aimed to allow us to identify the main trends, challenges and needs related to FEAD support at the time the intervention was addressed, feeding into establishing the points of comparison for the study. The same information also served accountability purposes, as it fed the country fiches (Task 8) and the case studies (Task 6) showing the role played by FEAD in each Member State. Furthermore, by analysing the evolution of the socio-economic context and by borrowing from, again, the results of the mapping activity (Task 1) and the insights from case studies (Task 6), we were able to investigate the flexibility of FEAD and its capacity to adapt to changing needs and challenges.

At the beginning of the 2014-2020 programming period (i.e., at the time of programming of FEAD) the EU was still dealing with the long-term effects of the Great Recession of 2008-2012. After several years during which figures concerning employment and poverty improved, in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic was a watershed, causing structural changes in social conditions of European people, deeply affecting the implementation of FEAD. The same is true for the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences on the global economy, especially high increases of energy and crop prices, leading to inflation in almost all economic sectors, and as such to an increase of cost of living. This increase, especially regarding basic consumption goods such as food and energy, impacted FEAD target groups more negatively than other parts of the population. EU countries and regions were affected in different ways by the above-mentioned external factors, due to specific contextual elements, which in some territories magnified the effectiveness of FEAD, while in others constituted an obstacle to FEAD implementation, despite the efforts of policy makers. The financial crisis, the pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine are the most relevant factors that affected the implementation of FEAD.

The socio-economic context was thus analysed as follows:

- **Defining the points of comparison:** the principle point of comparison for the analysis is the situation in 2013, as explained in section 1.5 of this annex. The socio-economic analysis used data from 2013 or 2015, when some indicators, such as the severe material and social deprivation rate, were newly introduced, to enable the study team to construct the point of comparison and identify overarching change dynamics and the relative progress or regression in the contextual indicators related to FEAD-type support in Member States until the end of 2022 (end of the reference period of the evaluation). The analysis also distinguished two periods, 'before and after' 2020 (i.e. programming changes carried out before, compared to after 2020), as requested in the technical specifications, enabling an analysis of challenges stemming from the COVID-19 crisis and to a lesser extent also Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (2022). These served as another point of comparison against which progress in implementation of FEAD was assessed
- **Taking into account differences across Member States** and identifying the main features of socio-economic contexts.

The variety of FEAD support and the different target groups made it necessary to collect and analyse data that covers the different dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, and that distinguishes between target groups and type of support.

The main sources of information identified and collected in this sub-task were from Eurostat, in particular the EU statistics on income and living conditions (**EU-SILC**). The analysis also relied on statistics included in the **Social Scoreboard**, which is used to monitor the implementation progress of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Non-standardised data, where available, was also included in the analysis, such as **data related to homelessness** gathered by EU level networks and organisations (e.g. FEANTSA) as well as **data related to other vulnerable groups** such as Roma (gathered principally by the Fundamental Rights Agency).

The table below sets out the relevant indicators we used. Many of these, as said, refer to the Social Scoreboard and the EU2020 strategy (e.g., the AROPE rate). It is important to bear in mind that indicators for social deprivation changed in 2015 and the AROPE indicator was changed in 2021, when it was aligned with the Europe 2030 targets. Nevertheless, AROPE is a crucial indicator specifically related to the context of FEAD implementation, as it aims to reflect the multifaceted nature of poverty, including three different dimensions (monetary poverty, (severe) material deprivation, or 'very low work intensity'). There are also other important indicators, specifying the situation of specific target groups (e.g., child poverty) which were used where available disaggregated by characteristics of the individual.

Table A. 5 – Indicators mapped for Task 2

Indicator	Source
Individuals at risk of poverty	
At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE)	Eurostat / Social Scoreboard / poverty and social inclusion indicators related to Europe 2020 / EPSR 2030 targets
At-risk-of-poverty rate or exclusion of children % of population 0-17	Eurostat
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)	Eurostat
Severe material deprivation rate (SMD)	Eurostat / Social Scoreboard / poverty and social inclusion indicators related to Europe 2020
Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day - EU-SILC survey	Eurostat
Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROPE	Eurostat
Housing cost overburden	Eurostat
Self-reported unmet need for medical care % of population 16+	Eurostat
Households with very low work intensity	Eurostat / Social Scoreboard / poverty and social inclusion indicators related to Europe 2020
Population in the EU could not afford unexpected financial expenses	Eurostat
Share of total population having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling	Eurostat
Share of total population not having indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household	Eurostat
Persons who cannot afford a telephone	Eurostat
Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out clothes	Eurostat (EU-SILC ad-hoc module 2014)
Persons who cannot afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month	Eurostat (EU-SILC ad-hoc module 2014)
Persons who cannot afford internet connection for personal use at home	Eurostat (EU-SILC ad-hoc module 2014)
In-work-at-risk-of-poverty rate	Eurostat
Long-term unemployment rate	Eurostat / Social Scoreboard / poverty and social inclusion indicators related to Europe 2020
Employment rate	Eurostat / Social Scoreboard / poverty and social inclusion indicators related to Europe 2020 / EPSR 2030 targets
Child poverty	
Children living in a household with a very low work intensity	Eurostat
At-risk-of-poverty rate for children	Eurostat
Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children	Eurostat
Homelessness	

Indicator	Source
National statistics on homelessness collected in reports	Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021), Overview of housing exclusion in Europe, European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies[1] Data from the European Observatory on Homelessness

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2023

The analysis of these datasets was complemented by **data gathered from the desk research** including:

- Employment and social developments in Europe (several years)
- Study supporting the preliminary evaluation of the support provided by ESF and FEAD under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) (carried out by Ecorys and 3s)
- Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021), Overview of housing exclusion in Europe
- European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies
- Roma in 10 European countries (Roma Survey 2021 – main findings) by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2023
- Reports of the FEAD network meetings
- Reports of the FEAD community peer exchanges
- Data from the European Observatory on Homelessness

The analysis was undertaken at national level but included statistics at regional level in case of region-specific FEAD support in a Member State. It reported indicator trends from 2013 to the most recent year available. Moreover, the analysis was carried out taking into account age (children, youth, elderly), gender and non-discrimination dimensions (persons with disabilities, migrants, asylum seekers, homeless and other vulnerable groups such as Roma), as well as other characteristics, where available (such as type of household).

Operatively, the analysis focused on the evolution of the main indicators from 2013 (=point of comparison) to 2019 and from 2020 to 2022 for each type of FEAD support (e.g., the number of people unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day in relation to FEAD food support). This resulted in the identification of the main trends in the countries and the effects of the crises, differentiating between outperforming and underperforming countries.

In this way, we were able to:

- Identify the main trends in the fields of poverty at EU-27 level and between countries, especially those resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Identify the role played by FEAD in each Member State by linking context statistics with FEAD indicators through the calculation of coverage rates.
- Identify the relevant contextual factors that can explain the observed differences in effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of FEAD support.

The Core Research Team carried out the analysis over the summer and autumn 2023. This resulted in a key dataset that was used by the study team throughout the analysis of the final report, the national experts as part of their work on the case studies (Task 6) and which also informed the cost-effectiveness analysis (Task 4). Relevant indicators were disaggregated by socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, household composition and other variables where available. Furthermore, an overview of the indicators used by country was prepared (specifically used by national experts as part of Task 6).

[1] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8243&furtherPubs=yes>

The challenges in collecting the indicator data were related to the details available for the different indicators and how comparable they were between countries. Furthermore, the AROPE and severe material and social deprivation (SMSD) datasets providing the most detailed information on gender, age or household composition did not include data for the years 2013 and 2014, as they were introduced/changed in 2015, which slightly limited comparability and a clear view of a changing socio-economic context from the start of the evaluation reference period. However, as many countries started their FEAD related activities after a period of preparation, the available AROPE data still proxies the situation before the interventions.

2.4. Task 3: Consultation activities

2.4.1. Consultation strategy

Stakeholders were a key source of evidence for the study. We developed a consultation strategy at inception phase which defined the consultation activities to be carried out, the stakeholders consulted, and the activities through which their views were obtained. As outlined in the evaluation framework, the consultation activities intended to provide evidence and insights to answer evaluation questions under all evaluation criteria, and across all steps of the study.

The consultation strategy was implemented with the following principles in mind:

- **Maximising the depth and breadth of existing evidence:** We ensured that the consultation activities implemented for this study built on the existing evidence already available from key stakeholders involved in the management, delivery and monitoring of FEAD. In particular, the consultation activities were further complemented and strengthened by the results of the surveys targeting end recipients carried out by FEAD Managing Authorities in 2022, as foreseen under FEAD Regulation¹⁴⁸, as well as on the extensive range of outputs produced by the stakeholders involved in FEAD Community¹⁴⁹, former FEAD Network and Expert Group.
- **Ensuring the views of organisations working directly with end recipients of FEAD support are included:** As end recipients of FEAD support often are part of hard-to-reach groups, ensuring that the consultation activities included a strong focus on partner organisations (through the targeted interviews and public consultation), paired with the analysis of the end recipient surveys conducted at national level by FEAD Managing Authorities, was crucial for a thorough assessment of the short and medium term impacts of FEAD operational programmes and activities which are a key aspect of the evaluation.
- **Using existing EU level structures/communities of stakeholders as multipliers:** We leveraged our existing contacts and built on our experience with the FEAD communities of stakeholders, in addition through our high-level team of Thematic Experts, to ensure that they acted as multipliers for our consultation activities (e.g., to increase the outreach of the interview programme and the public consultation).

2.4.2. Targeted interview programme

Through in-depth interviews with the relevant stakeholders, we gathered information which could not be easily acquired through other research methods. Specifically, the interviews provided evidence to further develop the points of comparison for the evaluation and understand the extent to which FEAD support contributed to providing non-financial assistance to the most deprived persons and enhancing their social inclusion at the EU, national and regional level. In addition, the qualitative evidence from the targeted interviews informed the design and delivery of the case studies under Task 6, by providing information on which issues to explore and which stakeholders to further consult for the in-depth case studies. They also helped to identify key stakeholders to involve in the online focus groups to be carried out under Task 7. The interviews thus aided in the investigation of all evaluation criteria – effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, EU added value and visibility.

Interviewing is well-suited to gathering detailed information on policy and practice. However, some potential limitations of this method were duly considered:

¹⁴⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex:32014R0223>

¹⁴⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1207&langId=en>

- To ensure that respondents felt free to express their perspectives, we did not attribute specific viewpoints to individual stakeholders when reporting.
- We also compared information between the different interviewed stakeholders and triangulate it with data or information obtained through all other research methods. This ensured that the evidence collected allowed us to formulate robust and balanced conclusions.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, to allow for prompting and probing on key topics. The topic guides were structured in line with the evaluation criteria and closely followed the evaluation questions and sub-questions. This ensured that the interviews could directly feed into the responses to the key evaluation questions of the study and facilitated triangulation of sources during the analysis. The guides were further adapted by our national experts as needed, for example according to the various roles, governance levels, and areas of expertise of the stakeholders consulted.

The interview programme was launched in early July 2023 and interviews were completed by November 2023. We conducted a total of 11 interviews at EU level. The list of organisations interviewed is included in the Annex VI

We conducted a total of **118 interviews** with stakeholders at national level. The list of organisations interviewed by Member State is included in the Annex VI

The interviewers wrote the summary notes from the interviews within a template structured around the main headings from the topic guide, which was used as the basis for subsequent analysis.

To bring together the findings, we firstly aggregated the sets of interview write-ups. To this end, we created an Excel spreadsheet, mirroring the topic headings from the interview topic guide (in line with the evaluation framework). The data was then imported to the master file from the individual sets of write-ups, adding one respondent per row.

Having populated the master file, we undertook a **thematic analysis**, drawing out key issues and findings under each of the main topic headings corresponding to the six evaluation criteria and the questions outlined in the interview topic guides (effectiveness, efficiency and simplification, relevance, coherence, EU added value and visibility). Coding of the themes encountered in the interviews allowed for filtering and searching, to compare and contrast the views of stakeholders and to distinguish areas of consensus from areas where there are marked differences in opinion. These comparisons explored the degree of concurrence in viewpoints between different types of stakeholders (EU, national level public authorities involved in the management of FEAD and related EU funding programmes; EU and national level organisations representing FEAD partner organisations; EU and national level non-governmental actors working with or representing the interest of end recipients), and whether any country differences emerge from the qualitative data.

The findings from the interviews were used to draft the preliminary answers to all evaluation questions presented in the Interim report and the final answers to all evaluation questions and all analysis presented in the Final report, complementing the research conducted in Task 0 (inception phase), Task 1 (mapping exercise), and Task 7 (focus groups). They also provided a strong basis for the case studies (Task 6), as well as for the key figures and evidence (country fiches) developed under Task 8.

Where there were data gaps, due to interviewees not having relevant knowledge in relation to certain evaluation criteria, efforts were made to fill in these gaps as part of the case studies task (with additional interviews) and through questions that were added/reformulated in the public consultation questionnaire.

2.4.3. Public consultation

The public consultation provided the opportunity for all interested stakeholders to provide their input on the topics covered by the study. It addressed aspects of the key evaluation criteria (i.e., effectiveness, efficiency and simplification, relevance, coherence, EU added value and visibility) and provided an open channel through which any stakeholder can feed their thoughts into the evaluation.

The Core Research Team prepared the questionnaire for the public consultation in the inception phase, in compliance with the Guidelines on Stakeholder Consultation, which in turn are part of the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines. The questionnaire was further revised following the first round of data collection from the interviews to address any data gaps. Specifically, this included revising the options available for questions on target groups, outcomes of FEAD, and obstacles to providing FEAD support as well as revision of the routing of the questionnaire to ensure all respondents with knowledge of FEAD could contribute.

The questionnaire addressed the key evaluation criteria and included the following types of questions:

- Closed-ended questions: factual, for example ratings on the extent to which FEAD support delivered contributed to achieving the objectives set in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.
- Dedicated areas for comments/suggestions (open questions): in which stakeholders and the general public will be invited to express or explain their positions and reasoning behind their replies.

The following principles guided the approach to the development of the questionnaire.

- The questionnaire includes filter questions to ensure relevance to the different categories of stakeholders who will complete the survey as follows. The categorisation of respondents also enabled us to conduct comparison between the different groups and assess how the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of FEAD funded operations is perceived by the stakeholders with varying degrees of experience of and with FEAD:
 1. Organisations not familiar with FEAD
 2. Organisations familiar with FEAD but not directly involved
 3. Organisations directly involved in providing FEAD support, in particular partner organisations of FEAD
 4. Individuals receiving or having received FEAD support
 5. Individuals aware of FEAD but not receiving support
 6. Individuals not aware of FEAD
- Stakeholders who were not specifically targeted under the targeted consultation activities ((interviews and focus groups) were encouraged to participate e.g., public social services, academic experts, research organisations, etc.
- The range of stakeholders involved in delivering FEAD support on the ground were targeted, in particular, partner organisations of FEAD. A targeted set of questions was developed to gather in-depth insights on the operational delivery of FEAD over the 2014-2020 programming period, as well as on key issues under all evaluation criteria, which were routed only to respondents representing partner organisations of FEAD.
- The survey was accessible and structured in a clear way with clear and accessible language. Questions were thus not dependent on respondents having detailed technical knowledge of the main aspects of FEAD operations and types of activities, or the meaning behind technical terms such as 'EU added value'.

The consultation ran from 14 February 2024 until 8 May 2024. The consultation was available in all official EU languages and was hosted on EU Survey.

To ensure that the results of the consultation were as relevant as possible, representing as full a range of key viewpoints as possible, the Core Research Team disseminated the questionnaire broadly as per the dissemination plan included in the table below:

Table A. 8 – Dissemination plan for public consultation

Stakeholder category as per consultation strategy for the study	Level (European, national, regional, local)	Potential PC respondent	Dissemination approach	Request
National and regional authorities involved in the overall management and coordination of FEAD	National, regional	FEAD Managing Authorities in all 27 EU Member States	Direct email from core team National experts for follow up as needed Supporting email from DG EMPL/geodesks as needed	To answer the survey
	Regional	Other national, regional, and local government bodies in charge of social policies and/or involved in the implementation of FEAD operational programmes (as relevant to each country)	Direct email from national experts	To answer the survey
National, regional and/or local organisations responsible for the delivery of FEAD activities/operations	National, regional, local	FEAD partner organisations	Direct email from core team National experts for follow up	To answer the survey and disseminate it to their partners /other orgs involved
Other civil society organisations and umbrella networks representing end recipients or FEAD partner organisations	European, national, regional, local	EU-level civil society organisations and networks representing and/or working directly with end recipients of FEAD support	Direct email from core team	To answer the survey and disseminate if to their members/ post in their newsletters/ social media channels
	European, national, regional, local	EU-level civil society organisations and networks representing FEAD partner organisations (e.g., FEAD Community members; Eurocities; European Social Network (ESN); (ESAN); etc.)	Direct email from core team	To answer the survey and disseminate if to their members/ post in their newsletters/ social media channels

Stakeholder category as per consultation strategy for the study	Level (European, national, regional, local)	Potential PC respondent	Dissemination approach	Request
	National, regional, local	Civil society organisations and networks representing and/or working directly with end recipients of FEAD support (including national/regional/local offices or members of EU level organisations identified above)	Direct email from national experts DG EMPL to contact FEAD Community members	To answer the survey and disseminate if to their members/post in their newsletters/social media channels
End recipients of FEAD support	National, regional, local	N/A	Direct email to multipliers (EU level and national level CSOs)	To answer the survey and disseminate it to their members
Academic and research bodies focusing on social inclusion	European, national	Academic experts/research organisations	Direct email from study's high-level experts	To answer the survey and disseminate to their networks as relevant
EU citizens and any other interested parties	National	N/A	Direct email to multipliers (EU level and national level CSOs)	To answer the survey and disseminate to their members

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2023

In line with this plan, the Core Research Team directly approached in total **196 contacts**, including Managing Authorities (96), EU-level CSOs (21), and FEAD Partner Organisations (79). In addition, the 27 national experts of the study disseminated the public consultation link via their networks to regional and local stakeholders of FEAD. The Public Consultation was also disseminated through the European Commission's website, as well as by multipliers including DG EMPL geographical units who shared news of the consultation within their networks.

A total of **408 respondents responded to the Public Consultation**. The full details of the respondents and the results of the analysis are included in the annex of the study.

2.5. Task 4: Cost-effectiveness analysis

As set out in the technical specifications, the study required a comprehensive cost-effectiveness analysis of FEAD support, which would consider the unit costs of activities and results to the extent feasible and the factors having an influence on delivery and effectiveness.

We undertook a mixed-method approach to the analysis of cost-effectiveness that combined:

- quantitative analysis of available cost-effectiveness indicators based on expenditure data and output and results data (from Task 1)
- qualitative cost-effectiveness analysis of activities based on the consultations (Task 3) and case studies (Task 6).

A conventional cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) approach involves the quantitative calculation of cost-result ratios (or a unit cost per result), with benchmark comparisons and an analysis of the reasons for differences in unit costs. Cost-effectiveness analysis incorporates an assessment of how far activities have been implemented at a cost which is commensurate with the level of outputs and results achieved. Taking account of the Better Regulation guidance, our approach maximised the use of available quantitative data, where available, to undertake an analysis of unit costs per output or per result indicator. This was complemented by qualitative insights into relative cost-effectiveness that also examined scope for cost savings and gains in efficiency and effectiveness.

Data to inform the CEA calculations was gathered from a range of sources across all tasks as follows:

- Detailed analysis of the FEAD monitoring data which was collected from the SFC support portal as part of Task 1
- Review of all available national evaluations screened under Task 1
- Review of all case studies that were produced as part Task 6
- Analysis of stakeholder interview responses to relevant efficiency questions (Task 3).
- Analysis of data from the public consultation (Task 3)
- Sifting of Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) (Task 1)
- Assessment of the possibility to monetise FEAD benefits through additional academic research that built on the preliminary desk research conducted at inception phase
- Direct engagement with Managing Authorities to clarify inconsistencies in the provided data and request additional data

All research tools were reviewed in the inception phase and again following each research task with the CEA needs in mind. Stakeholders were asked across all research tools for qualitative and quantitative data to feed into the CEA. An overview of all questions relevant to the CEA asked in the stakeholder consultations is provided in the table below.

Table A. 9 – Questions asked on cost-effectiveness through the stakeholder consultation tasks

Research tool	Efficiency/CEA angle
National level interviews	In your opinion, to what degree were FEAD operations cost-effective?
	What type of FEAD activities and for which target group were the most cost-effective?
	Which were the least cost-effective?
	Which main factors influenced the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations the most?
	Which type of administrative requirements of FEAD were most burdensome for your organisation?
	On average, and as an estimate, how much time did your organisation spend each month on fulfilling administrative requirements linked to FEAD?
	To what extent did the use of flat rates simplify the implementation of operations by partner organisations?
	What were the main benefits for whom?
	To what extent did the introduction of vouchers/cards simplify the implementation of operations by partner organisations?
	What were the main benefits for whom?
	To what extent was there unnecessary administrative burden for your organisation in implementing FEAD?
Public consultation questionnaire	Are there any changes you would suggest simplifying administrative requirements and reduce administrative burden?
	In your opinion, to what extent are the following types of FEAD support cost-effective? *[single response for each statement]
	• Food support • Material assistance • Accompanying measures • Social inclusion activities (OP II)

Research tool	Efficiency/CEA angle
	On average, and as an estimate, how much time did your organisation spend each month on fulfilling administrative requirements linked to FEAD (e.g. monitoring and reporting)? • Less than 2 hours • 2-5 hours • 6-10 hours • 11 – 15 hours • Over 15 hours
	To what extent was there unnecessary administrative burden for your organisation in implementing FEAD? • To a large extent • To a moderate extent • To some extent • To a small extent • Not at all • Don't know/ Not applicable
	Which type of administrative requirements were most burdensome for your organisation? [select up to 3] • Design of operational programmes • Designation of authorities • Set-up of monitoring and reporting system • Selection of partner organisations • Scope of flat rate expenditures • Eligibility rules for FEAD support • Direct delivery requirement • Procurement procedures • Obligation to deliver accompanying measures • Ongoing monitoring requirements • Communication/ visibility requirements • Audit requirements • Evaluation requirements • Requirement to carry out structured survey of end recipients for OP I
	Do you know of examples of gold plating or any other case of excessive administrative burden in the management and implementation of FEAD? If so, could you please describe them? [free text response] In your view, what would increase the cost-effectiveness of FEAD? [open text response]
Case studies (interview questions)	In your opinion, to what degree were FEAD operations cost-effective?
	What type of FEAD activities (differentiate between OPI* and OPII**) were the most cost-effective? Why?
	For which target groups were FEAD activities most cost-effective? Why?
	For which target groups were FEAD activities the least cost-effective? Why?
	Which main factors influenced the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations the most?
	Are there any examples of good practices implemented to improve the efficiency of FEAD operations?
	What are the characteristics of these good practices?
Case studies (instructions to national experts)	Were there any bad practices that hampered the efficiency of FEAD operations?
	What are the characteristics of these bad practices?
Case studies (instructions to national experts)	The case studies must look closely at the efficiency of FEAD and factors influencing this. Case studies are particularly important in gathering quantitative evidence (estimates/averages) of the amount of time spent on administrative activities as a result of management and control system requirements. An assessment on whether

Research tool	Efficiency/CEA angle
	simplification measures (e.g. the use of flat rates, use of vouchers and other simplification measures) had an impact on efficiency is also key.

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

Limitations to the CEA

A traditional cost-benefit analysis would focus on the comparisons of costs with pecuniary effects of the intervention. Sufficient data is available for most Member States to determine the FEAD-related expenditure for different activities, however, there is insufficient data to allow the monetisation of benefits. For example, the intervention logic of food support is that inadequate nourishment directly results in innumerable physical, mental, and emotional health consequences which can lead to heavy cost burdens, further health concerns, and even death. Wearing dirty and wet clothes for long stretches of time, makes people vulnerable to the spread of transmissible disease, including COVID-19. In addition, wearing clean and comfortable high-quality clothes can help to open the doors to employment and housing opportunities.

However, even if one can argue that without FEAD operations people have little chance of moving out of poverty or social exclusion, the difficulty is in assessing to which extent FEAD operations improve these results. In addition, Managing Authorities did not collect sufficient end-recipient data related to wellbeing, health outcomes or similar metrics which would make a traditional cost-benefit analysis feasible.¹⁵⁰ None of the reviewed national evaluations were able to adequately assess the impact of FEAD.¹⁵¹ Monetising the outcomes of food provision to the most deprived via OP I was therefore not possible.

Similarly, it is difficult to quantify the results of providing basic material support, such as ‘school starter kits’ in Austria, which are designed to ease financial burdens on deprived families and lead to longer-term downstream effects. Additionally, specific employment or similarly monetizable outcomes from OP II would be difficult to identify, as the focus of social inclusion actions is more on social inclusion via the removal of language barriers or information deficits, which might only result in employment outcomes as a side-effect. In addition, no adequate data was collected by Member States or as part of the national evaluations which were carried out in all OP II countries that would allow to assess the impact OP II interventions had on end-recipients.

Considering these limitations, the CEA focussed on the calculation of cost-output ratios in order to determine the amount of **money by country that was spent per end-recipient and per distributed kilo of food**, and **how these metrics developed over the time of the intervention**. Problems of this analysis were that the form of support (e.g. whether end-recipients were provided with food packages or cooked meals) and the intensity of support (e.g. how much food an end-recipient received from partner organisations) varied widely across all Member States.

The Core Research Team worked closely with DG EMPL to identify and implement several solutions. A technical meeting was held with DG EMPL in April 2024 where a set of actions were agreed upon and implemented by the Core Research Team as follows.

- Special attention was paid to **extreme outliers** in the cost-output ratios and additional analysis such as the review of Annual Implementation Reports was carried out to understand these.
- In order to overcome the lack of quantifiable impact data that would allow the monetisation of FEAD benefits, a **literature review** was conducted to assess whether academic literature could shed light on the cost-effectiveness of FEAD activities. While research regarding the impacts and cost-effectiveness of food provision in developed countries is scarce, there is a sufficient body of literature on the effects of school meal provision which was the sole FEAD activity in Cyprus and also conducted to smaller degrees in Croatia and Czechia. As Cyprus used all funding for food provision on the distribution of breakfasts in schools to disadvantaged pupils, it was possible to calculate the price for each provided meal which was not possible for countries that distributed both meals and food packages. This enabled the comparison of this FEAD activity with that of other school meal programmes.
- All 12 conducted **case studies and all national evaluations** were reviewed in depth for evidence related to efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

¹⁵⁰ The Special Report of the European Court of Auditors concluded in 2019 that due to a lack of data on the results of FEAD, ‘the contribution towards alleviating the worst forms of poverty could not be established’.

¹⁵¹ Further details regarding the lack of data that would allow to quantify the impact of FEAD on recipients can be found under Question 13 in the main report.

- **Interviews with stakeholders** were re-examined in depth and all data on efficiency-related research questions was analysed and incorporated in the assessment of cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Interviewees gave elaborate insights into the perceived cost-effectiveness of different activities, factors that enhanced or reduced efficiency, the effect of vouchers, flat rates and monitoring requirements and how the programme could be simplified in the future.
- The **public consultation** results were examined in depth to provide additional insights in the form of quantifiable perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of different activities and the most burdensome administrative tasks. Results also provided further qualitative suggestions regarding potential scope for simplifications.
- Finally, all **Managing Authorities were contacted again** to provide additional context and data on the following elements:
 - Additional data on expenditures for specific food or basic material items
 - Data on administrative costs
 - Reasons for large gap between approved funding and incurred funding
 - Gap between overall funding and funding for food/basic materials
 - Reasons for identical values for distributed basic material assistance and funding incurred on basic material assistance
 - Reasons for higher value of distributed basic material assistance than funding incurred on basic material assistance
 - Reasons for high costs for food
 - Additional information on the effectiveness and efficiency of vouchers

The table below presents the data requested by Member State and indicates whether or not a response was received.

The results of the cost effectiveness analysis are included in the annex. The report includes the overview of costs and benefits table as required by the Better Regulation Guidelines.

Table A. 10 – Additional data and information request to Managing Authorities

Information requested	Additional data on expenditures for specific food or basic material items	Data on administrative costs	Reasons for large gap between approved funding and incurred (spent) funding	Gap between overall funding and funding for food/basic materials	Reasons for identical values for distributed basic material assistance and funding incurred on basic material assistance	Higher value of distributed basic material assistance than funding incurred on basic material assistance	Reasons for high costs for food	Additional information on effectiveness and efficiency of vouchers
BE								
CY								
CZ								
DE								
DK								
EE								
ES								
FI								
FR								
GR								
HR								
IE								
LT								
LU								
NL								
PL								
RO								
SE								
SI								
SK								

	Not requested
	No answer from MA
	MA is unable to provide answer/data
	Answer received from MA

2.6. Task 5: Support to the JRC

This task aimed to identify and gather data to support the JRC for their own econometric exercise on the impacts of FEAD.

A technical meeting was held with the JRC on 6 June 2023 to clarify their data needs. The JRC emphasised that collecting end recipient data including description/summary of the interventions and any other project specific information, particularly location data to see if the fund was distributed in the right regions, should be a priority in this task, even though significant variations in reporting periods, data quality, depth, and coverage across different Member States were expected.

The primary focus of the data collection exercise was gathering the raw structured survey data from 2017 and 2022 and the lists of FEAD operations from each Member State. Almost all of this data is held by Managing Authorities and not publicly available. For this reason, a detailed data request was sent to all Managing Authorities in August 2023, followed with multiple reminders to complete data gaps.

Several follow-up meetings were held throughout the study with the JRC to decide on the outputs of this task, based on their analysis needs. Agreement was reached to form three main datasets as follows:

- raw structured survey data for 2017 and 2022 from all Member States. For this, the Core Research Team extracted all data from the surveys manually and recoded them, disaggregated with a specific focus on certain questions asked to end recipients. This was finalised and sent to the JRC on 13 November 2023.
- a harmonised dataset of the list of FEAD operations across all countries with geographical and financial data together (where possible). The Core Research Team gathered this data from websites where available and from a data request to Member States (see below). This was finalised and sent to the JRC on 13 November 2023.
- a dataset of the socio-economic indicators (Task 2). This was sent in two parts, at general level, with country overview data and graphs on 6 October 2023 and a more detailed dataset, including data by NUTS level where available, on 17 October 2023.

There were several challenges related to this task. Firstly, it was not possible to retrieve a complete set of data from each Member State, as not all Member States were responsive to the data request (despite reminders and the intervention of the DG EMPL). Secondly, comparability was not always possible between structured survey data due to countries having used different methodologies and data not being recorded in the same way (e.g. some countries have used percentages of participant responses, whereas others have used actual numbers of participant responses). Finally, a very high “data cleaning” effort by the study team was needed in order to work with the data and present it in a format useful to the JRC. Despite these challenges, however, and in discussions with the JRC, alternative solutions were found in terms of disaggregating the data to the most detailed level possible and not requiring comparisons between all structured survey questions asked, given that these were not the same in each country. This made it possible to deliver sufficient data to the JRC.

Table A. 11 – Overview of data received from Member States following data requests

	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU	IE	IT	LT	LU	LV	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SE	SI	SK	Total
National evaluation	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y			Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y		18
Raw data structured survey 2017		Y		Y		n a	n a			Y	Y		Y	Y			Y				n a	Y		Y	n a			9
Raw data structured survey 2022	Y	Y				n a	n a		Y	Y	Y		Y		Y						n a		Y	Y	n a			9
List of FEAD operations	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		17
Additional micro- data	Y						Y		Y	Y			Y				Y					Y		Y		Y		9
National statistics on food insecurity		Y	Y							Y					Y	Y	Y			Y				Y				8

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

2.7. Task 6: Case studies

To gain deeper insight into FEAD related activities, target populations and achievements and feed into analysis across all evaluation criteria we carried out **12 case studies covering operational programmes (countries)**. As per the technical specifications, eight case studies covered OP I type programmes, while four case studies covered the four countries implementing OP II type programmes.

The selection of the countries for the case studies was built on 12 selection criteria. The selection criteria included criteria based on FEAD implementation (for instance, FEAD financial volume implementation rate, number of Partner Organisations (POs) and beneficiaries involved, and participations), response to crisis (REACT-EU funding, amendments), context statistics (for instance, the at-risk-of-poverty-rate (AROPE)), and a balanced geographical scope. The following table provides a detailed list of the criteria used to select the 12 countries.

Table A. 12 – Selection criteria of FEAD case studies

Selection criteria	Detailed sub-criteria
FEAD programming	
Financial allocation of the EU amount by the end of 2022	► EU-amount in EUR
FEAD implementation rate	► Financial implementation rate (%)
OP type	► Type I OP ► Type II OP
Type of support provided from 2014-2022	► Basic Material Assistance ► Provision of food ► Social inclusion activities
Approach ¹⁵²	► Bottom-up approach ¹⁵³ ► Top-down approach ¹⁵⁴
POs/beneficiaries involved	► Number of POs/beneficiaries involved
Use of vouchers/ e-vouchers	► FEAD operations in the OP include the provision of (e-vouchers)
FEAD implementation	
FEAD participations	Number of FEAD participations reported in SFC2014 (2021 data)
Response to COVID-19	
REACT-EU funding	► Yes ► No

¹⁵² As defined in the Study supporting the monitoring of FEAD – data collection systems implemented by Member States

¹⁵³ Eligibility for support is identified at regional and/or local level, or at the discretion of the partner organisation directly involved in the distribution of food and material support.

¹⁵⁴ Eligibility criteria are set by the MA at national level and are usually based on the precondition that the eligibility of a person or a household is based on whether they are included in national social assistance / minimum income support schemes.

Selection criteria	Detailed sub-criteria
Allocation of REACT-EU funding	Share of REACT-EU funding allocated to the OP (%)
Changes based on CRII/CRII+ (OP amendments)	► Yes ► No
Context indicators	
Statistics on poverty, material deprivation and food insecurity)	► Share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) 2013 and 2021 (%) ► Share of severe material deprivation 2013 and 2021 (%) ► Share of people unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day 2013 and 2021(%)
Geography	
Population size of the country	► Small (CY, EE, LT, LU, LV, MT and SI) ► Medium (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DK, FI, GR, HU, IE, NL, PT, RO, SE and SK) ► Large (DE, ES, FR, IT and PL)
Geography	► North-west Europe ► Central Eastern Europe ► Southern Europe
	►
Coverage by CRII/CRII+ study	
Country covered by CRII/CRII+ study as a case study	Exclusion of countries covered by a FEAD related case study in the recent CRII+ study

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2023

These selection criteria led to the provisional selection of 12 Member States as outlined in the table below, which were approved for final selection by DG EMPL following the inception meeting. Collectively, these 12 countries cover 62% of the overall financial volume of FEAD by the end of 2022 (including REACT-EU), and 70% of FEAD participations.

Table A. 13 – Selection of FEAD case studies

Member State	Rationale
Belgium	Highest share of REACT-EU funding compared to FEAD allocation
Bulgaria	High AROPE-rate, severe material deprivation and food insecurity rates of the EU27 in 2021 High share of REACT-EU funding compared to FEAD allocation High (> 80%) implementation rate

Member State	Rationale
	End recipients include persons in need of food support and material assistance Multiple and diverse POs and beneficiaries distribute FEAD support Effect of social inclusion on end recipients: in many cases, people who come to receive their food packages very often become volunteers under other activities organised by the Bulgarian Red Cross Data collection and reporting: a high level of uniformity is ensured by the municipalities that are involved as POs in FEAD implementation, which report the data via a single system (EUMIS).
Germany	OP II
Denmark	OP II
Estonia	Second highest share of REACT-EU funding compared to FEAD allocation High (> 80%) implementation rate End recipients include recipients of social beneficiaries Uniform nature of FEAD programme all across the country, which allows for equal treatment where assistance is given to all persons in need; the help is uniform, and a national information system is used. Geographical balance
France	Bottom-up approach Use of vouchers in FEAD delivery
Greece	High (> 80%) implementation rate End recipients include persons living in deprivation Cases of decentralised delivery as examples of proactive action in a highly bureaucratic system. e.g. the ASDA partnership in Athens Comprehensive e-cohesion system that are partially or fully accessible to organisations involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD i.e. the integrated information system provides for a comprehensive record of all individual characteristics of beneficiaries including age, gender and whether they are refugee camp residents. Geographical balance
Italy	Second largest number of FEAD participations and FEAD financial volume Bottom-up approach
Netherlands	OP II

Member State	Rationale
Portugal	High (> 80%) implementation rate End recipients include Persons in need of food support Large and diverse POs (~600) and beneficiaries distribute FEAD support Use of vouchers The FEAD Information System (IS FEAD) allows the tracking of all FEAD-funded operations. The system is accessible to all bodies and partners in charge of FEAD implementation.
Romania	Second highest AROPE-rate of the EU27 in 2021 Broader target group of end recipients: persons in need of food support, disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, children affected by or at risk of poverty Large and diverse POs (3.185) and beneficiaries distribute FEAD support FEAD provides a much-needed complement to both state and third sector-operated interventions and therefore, adds to national and/or local initiatives Use of vouchers in FEAD delivery
Sweden	OP II

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2023 from a range of Eurostat data, FEAD monitoring data and FEAD mid-term evaluation, 2023

Following approval of the case study selection, desk-based research was undertaken by the study's national experts to collect both qualitative and quantitative information on FEAD implementation in each selected country. The case study desk research built on initial desk research conducted as part of Tasks 0, 1, 2 and the targeted consultations carried out under Task 3. Desk research gathered the following information:

- **Qualitative information** on the programming and implementation of FEAD, FEAD architecture (bodies involved in the implementation of FEAD), and contextual information on the role of FEAD in the country, all of which served as a basis for the development of the country specific theory of change-based intervention logic.
- **Understanding of the implementation of FEAD** (governance mechanisms, national policy framework, roles of the stakeholders involved, etc.) over the programming period 2014-2020, including CRII, CRII+, REACT-EU and CARE as well as REPowerEU if applicable.
- Use of and change of FEAD implementation **in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**
- Identification of **good practice examples**

The following sources were used:

- FEAD Operational Programmes, all adopted versions from 2014 to 2023
- Annual implementation reports 2014-2022, both qualitative and quantitative information
- National evaluations of FEAD as requested by FEAD Regulation, where available
- Studies and reports available in the country covering FEAD

- Studies, evaluations, other publications at European level covering the respective country (for instance, FEAD yearly summary reports, the Study supporting the monitoring of FEAD – data collection systems implemented by Member States)
- Excel file filled with information from mapping Task 1 including tables and figures on the financial and physical implementation of FEAD and provision of socio-economic statistics from Task 2
- Sources identified from the interviews already conducted
- Templates to build the intervention logic

To build on the desk research conducted and the national level consultation undertaken under Task 3, National Experts also conducted additional consultations with national level stakeholders of FEAD in the case study countries, in the form of interviews or where feasible small focus groups. This provided each case study with additional detailed primary data to complement the secondary research outlined above.

Following the collection of the primary and secondary data, National Experts carried out data consolidation, analysis and triangulation and subsequently drew findings based on the evidence gathered. This exercise also involved the triangulation of relevant information gathered in Tasks 1-4.

The following table illustrates the structure of the case study summaries. The case studies are all annexed to the final report.

Table A. 14 – Structure of case study reports

Section	Content
1. Context and background	Context and background summarising the socio-economic context in the country, including the development over time of relevant key indicators (AROPE, severe material deprivation, food insecurity, child poverty, etc.).
2. Reconstructing the intervention logic	Presentation of a theory-based intervention logic
• Objectives and target groups • Implemented operations and accompanying measures	Description of objective and target groups of FEAD Description of measures and accompanying measures implemented in the country in the programming period 2014-2020, including changes over time, e.g., in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
• Description of the national policy framework • including how FEAD operations are integrated within this	Description of the national policy framework and the role of FEAD within this framework
• Governance and FEAD delivery system	Description of the stakeholders involved in the delivery of FEAD operations
3. Key findings (conclusions) on implementation of FEAD	Reporting key findings under each Evaluation criteria
• Effectiveness • Efficiency and simplification • Coherence • Relevance • EU added value	Response to Evaluation questions based on the material collected

Section	Content
• Visibility	
4. Good practices	Description of good practices (e.g., in terms of implementation, outreach to target groups, impact, etc.)
5. Conclusions & lessons learned	Conclusions & lessons learned, including points for improvement
Annex 1: Methodology	The work carried out, representativeness of sampling, methodological choices and limitations of the work done;
Annex 2: References	Sources & Interviews
Annex 3: FEAD indicators	Tables including set of FEAD (common & programme-specific) indicators

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2023

The full list of sources consulted, and interviews conducted for the case studies is included in each case study. The case studies are all annexed to the final report. The case study research and drafting was carried out between October and December 2023.

2.8. Task 7: Focus groups

As per the technical specifications of the study, two thematic focus groups were carried out to discuss the study's provisional findings and fill remaining knowledge gaps: one covering food distribution, basic material assistance and accompanying measures under OP I, and another covering social inclusion under OP II. The aim of the focus groups was to test and validate the draft findings of the study before submission of the final report. The objectives of the focus groups were:

- To consolidate and validate the analysis undertaken in the study
- To fill in any evidence gaps including collecting additional examples, measures, or good practices to supplement existing findings
- To exchange ideas on lessons learned from FEAD implementation and further refine them in view of future FEAD-type support (e.g. under ESF+).

The focus groups were structured by evaluation criterion. A brief overview of the conclusions for each criterion were presented by the study team, each followed by a plenary discussion based on guiding questions that asked participants whether they agree with the conclusions, and probed on specific areas as relevant to each OP. The focus groups closed with a final session asking participants to share their views on the main lessons learned from FEAD support centred around forward-looking considerations.

The focus groups took place on Tuesday 26 June (OP II) and Monday 1 July (OP I) from 14:00-17:00 CET online.

2.9. Task 8: Key figures and evidence

The aim of Task 8 was to prepare individual country fiches for each of the 27 Member States, providing a clear overview of the implementation and the achieved results of FEAD support in the programming period 2014-2020.

As such, the methodology for this task drew on evidence gathered under Tasks 1 to 6, as indicated in the table below:

Table A. 15 – Structure of country fiches

Elements of the country fiches	Content	Source of information
Summary	Boxed summary including overall level of financial investment, end recipients and key findings	Country fiche
Socio-economic context	Short description of the context and presentation of development of: - People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, - Severe material and social deprivation rate	Eurostat data (Task 2)
FEAD support and main outputs	- Information on the OP, FEAD support operations, including accompanying measures - Total financial allocation - Total number of end recipients - Breakdown of end recipients (women, children, persons aged 65 or above, migrants, persons with disabilities, homeless) - Breakdown of distributed goods (depending on type of support / OP)	- Task 1 Mapping of SFC2014 Monitoring data - Task 2 Analysis of the evolution of the socio-economic context - Annual implementation reports (AIRs) - Operational Programmes - FEAD Mid-term evaluation - National evaluation Reports - Study supporting FEAD monitoring: Analysis of FEAD Annual implementation reports
Key achievements to date Main results	- Summary of results - Information on accompanying measures, where available - Target groups addressed - Key findings (e.g., differences in sub-groups across OPs)	- Task 1 Mapping of SFC2014 Monitoring data - Study supporting FEAD monitoring: Analysis of FEAD annual implementation reports - Annual implementation reports submitted 2023 - Task 3 Consultations - Task 4 Cost effectiveness analysis - Task 6 Case studies
Lessons learned Summary of evidence on results and impacts from evaluations/other relevant sources	- Summary of the key findings, results and reported impacts from evaluations, where available - Response to the COVID-19 pandemic through CRII/CRII+ and REACT-EU - good practices and areas of improvement	- Annual implementation reports submitted 2023 - National evaluation reports - CRII+ evaluation report - EU publications (for instance, FEAD case studies: Adapting FEAD-funded measures during the Coronavirus pandemic; Diverse approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived: FEAD case studies 2019) - Sub-task 3.2 targeted interviews - Task 5 Impact analysis where possible - Task 7 Case studies where possible

Elements of the country fiches	Content	Source of information
		• Study supporting FEAD monitoring: Analysis of FEAD Annual implementation reports
Project examples	• 1-2 examples of FEAD support in the Member State	• National evaluation reports • Annual implementation reports submitted 2023 • Task 6 Case studies • EU publications (for instance, FEAD case studies: Adapting FEAD-funded measures during the Coronavirus pandemic; Diverse approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived: FEAD case studies 2019)
Additional information	• URLs of sources of further information	

Source: Ecorys/3s, 2024

The country fiches were drafted in two separate phases and formats: a first phase using Microsoft Word which was delivered to DG EMPL with the interim report, and a second phase producing a full designed version using Adobe InDesign. Revised versions of all countries were submitted with the draft final report, with one fully completed example in PDF format. All revised PDF versions of the fiches will be delivered to DG EMPL with the revised final report.

ANNEX II.B: METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED BY JRC

JRC has been commissioned with the task to analyse the contribution of FEAD expenditures on several poverty outcomes across the European Union (EU) regions.

The analysis assesses the impact of FEAD expenditure on poverty during the 2014-2022 implementation period. The study utilizes data from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), maintained by Eurostat¹⁵⁵, along with information on financial allocation (planned and implemented expenditure) from two different sources for the implementation period 2014-2022:

- FEAD annual implementation reports of the European Commission: information at country-level.
- European Commission's Cohesion Open Data Platform which provides information of the regional distribution of the of Cohesion Policy funds.

The analysis should be understood with the complementary work of De Quinto (2024), which provides a detailed profile of FEAD beneficiaries using novel data from the FEAD End-Recipient Survey. This survey, conducted in 2017 and 2022, offers valuable insights into the socio-economic characteristics, housing conditions, and types of assistance received by end recipients across the EU.

In order to explore the relationship between the FEAD expenditure – measured as the annual amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations of FEAD in accumulated terms¹⁵⁶ - and the changes in the poverty outcomes across the EU Member States, a Fixed Effects (FE) regression model is used. The study presents a descriptive examination of the relationship between FEAD expenditure and six poverty indicators.

1. *Number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)*¹⁵⁷. Assesses the prevalence of poverty and social exclusion, encompassing households facing monetary poverty, severe material deprivation, and/or low work intensity.
2. *Incidence of poverty or At-risk-of-poverty rate (AROP)*. Measures monetary poverty by calculating the percentage of households with an income below the poverty threshold¹⁵⁸.
3. *Intensity of poverty*. Reflects the severity of poverty experienced by households, measuring the distance between households' equivalised disposable income and the poverty threshold.

¹⁵⁵ The EU-SILC survey is designed to offer microdata on income, living conditions, social exclusion, and health across European countries. It encompasses both cross-sectional and longitudinal components, featuring nationally representative samples of individuals aged 16 and older. The implementation of EU-SILC started in 2003 through an agreement among six countries: Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Luxembourg, and Austria. By 2005, EU-SILC data had been released in most EU countries, and by 2011 all 27 Member States along with Croatia, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland- had fully implemented the survey. EU-SILC data undergo annual updates, with cross-sectional data for a specific year being released in November of the subsequent one. Additionally, longitudinal data covering a given year, and the three preceding ones are typically released by March two years later.

¹⁵⁶ The rationale behind using cumulative FEAD expenditure is rooted in the multiannual implementation of FEAD, spanning from 2014 to 2022 with significant differences throughout the years. Moreover, using the accumulated terms captures potential lags or diminishing returns over successive years.

¹⁵⁷ Population in AROPE corresponds to the number of persons who are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially and socially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity. Individuals are included only once even if they are in more than one of these situations. In this case, the unit is 10,000 persons.

¹⁵⁸ The poverty threshold is defined as 60% of national annual median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

For each observational unit ii , which corresponds to a specific country and year, the model defines several key components to capture the varying levels of FEAD exposure and their potential effects on poverty outcomes.

- yy_{1ii} as the potential outcome when unit ii is treated; and yy_{0ii} to the potential outcome when the same unit remains untreated.
- ww_{ii} as the treatment indicator, taking value 1 for those countries or regions receiving more than 1 million euros of FEAD allocation, and 0 otherwise.¹⁶¹
- tt_{ii} as the continuous-treatment (i.e. Dose) indicator, which takes values within [0,100]. The intensity or “dose” of the treatment is calculated based on the percentile rank of accumulated expenditure. Specifically, for each country, the FEAD expenditure is ranked, and then the ranks are converted to a percentile scale from 0 to 100.
- $h(tt_{ii}) = \alpha_1 tt_{ii} + \alpha_2 tt_{ii}^2 + \dots + \alpha_{kk} tt_{ii}^{kk}$ is a polynomial of order kk in tt_{ii} (in this evaluation, $kk \leq 3$).
- xx_{ii} as the vector of confounders, exogenous and observable characteristics, which in this case are food prices and labour compensation per employee (both in constant prices, PPP with EU average = 100).
- $NN = NN_1 + NN_0$ as the total number of units, both treated (NN_1) and untreated (NN_0).

Then, two distinct functions are specified as the unit ii 's responses to the confounding variables xx_{ii} when the unit ii is treated and untreated, respectively: $gg_1(xx_{ii})$ and $gg_0(xx_{ii})$.

Given the previous notation, two potential outcomes are assumed to be generated:

$$\begin{aligned} & \begin{matrix} ww = 1 : yy_1 = \mu\mu_1 + gg_1(xx) + h(tt) + FF_1 \\ ww = 0 : yy_0 = \mu\mu_0 + gg_0(xx) + FF_0 \end{matrix} \quad (2) \\ & \begin{matrix} FF_1 \\ FF_0 \end{matrix} \end{aligned}$$

where $\mu\mu_1$ and $\mu\mu_0$ are two scalars, FF_1 and FF_0 are two random variables with 0 unconditional mean and constant variance, and $h(tt)$ is different from 0 only if treated. Given this, the causal parameters of interest can be finally defined, by specifying the treatment effect as $TTF = (yy_1 - yy_0)$ and the average treatment effect as $FTTF = FF (yy_1 - yy_0 | xx, tt)$.

Under the previous definitions and assumptions, following regression to estimate the parameters of interest are specified $\mu\mu_0, \mu\mu_1, \delta\delta_0, \delta\delta_1, FTTF$:

$$yy_{ii} = \mu\mu_0 + ww_{ii} \times FTTF + xx_{ii} \delta\delta_0 + ww_{ii} \times (xx_{ii} - FF) \delta\delta_1 + ww_{ii} \times \{h(tt_{ii}) - h_0\} + \varepsilon\varepsilon_{ii} \quad (3)$$

where $\varepsilon\varepsilon_{ii} = FF_{0ii} + ww_{ii} \times (FF_{1ii} - FF_{0ii})$.

Annex III provides for more detailed information about the work carried out by JRC and the results obtained.

¹⁶¹ The choice of the 1 million euros threshold corresponds approximately to the 10th percentile of the distribution of accumulated FEAD expenditures, which lies at 0.96 million euros. This choice allows differentiating between countries that received only a minimal amount of funding and those that received a substantial FEAD support.

ANNEX II.C: INTERVENTION LOGIC

This evaluation builds on the intervention logics (IL) of the FEAD as a whole and for each Operational Programme type support (hereafter OP I and OP II). The ILs include a complex set of operational, specific and general objectives. These objectives are mirrored, respectively, by activities/outputs, results, and impacts, which are the main reference for the present assessment.

Needs: Large share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (24% in 2015) and in severe material deprivation (9.8% in 2013), the divergent levels of poverty and exclusion across Member States and the risk that those in poverty and social exclusion are more vulnerable to negative trends brought on by other external factors (e.g. financial, economic etc.).

General Objectives: Promote social cohesion and enhance social inclusion; contribute to reduce poverty in the EU by 2020 and decrease the number of people counted under AROPE by at least 20 million compared to 2008 (or the most updated objective of contributing to reduce the number under AROPE by 15 million by 2030, including at least 5 million children, compared to 2019).

Specific Objectives: Alleviate the worst forms of poverty and social exclusion; improve living conditions and wellbeing of the most deprived persons; develop and foster support structures for alleviating poverty and social exclusion; provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived persons (OP I) and support social integration through social inclusion activities (OP II).

Operational Objectives: Stimulate national strategies and policies for alleviating poverty and social exclusion; enhance stakeholders' capacity and know-how; promote mutual learning and exchange of good practice; establish governance systems for FEAD support; meet immediate needs of the most deprived persons (OP I) and empower persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion through social inclusion activities (OP II).

Inputs: FEAD aimed to achieve the above general, specific, and operational objectives with direct financial inputs from the EU initially of EUR 3.8 billion for 7 years (2014-2020) in addition to EUR 0.7 billion of national co-financing. The funding was then increased through crisis response measures from 2020 onwards, making a total of EU and national funding of EUR 5.2 billion. Inputs are also provided by the European Commission (EC), Member States (MSs), Managing Authorities (MAs) and partner organisations (POs) in the form of staff and financial resources for coordination and implementation activities.

Activities: The above inputs are intended to support the implementation of certain activities i.e. needs assessment, intervention design, governance, capacity building, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation and communication activities. Moreover, OP I activities include the purchase, transport, and distribution of food and basic material assistance either directly through distribution centres, soup kitchens, or other appropriate channels or indirectly through distribution of vouchers (from 2020) as well as the design and implementation of accompanying measures. Activities under OP II include the delivery of social inclusion activities such as street and outreach work, information and sensitisation, workshops, or counselling activities.

Outputs: The above activities are then expected to lead to direct outputs which link back to the operational objectives of the intervention. Outputs across both OP-types include processes being in place to identify target groups and their needs, OPs designed to address these needs and infrastructure created or enhanced to provide support to the most deprived persons. The OPs' specific outputs include the quantity of food and/or number of meals/food packages distributed (OP I) and the number of persons participating in social inclusion activities (OP

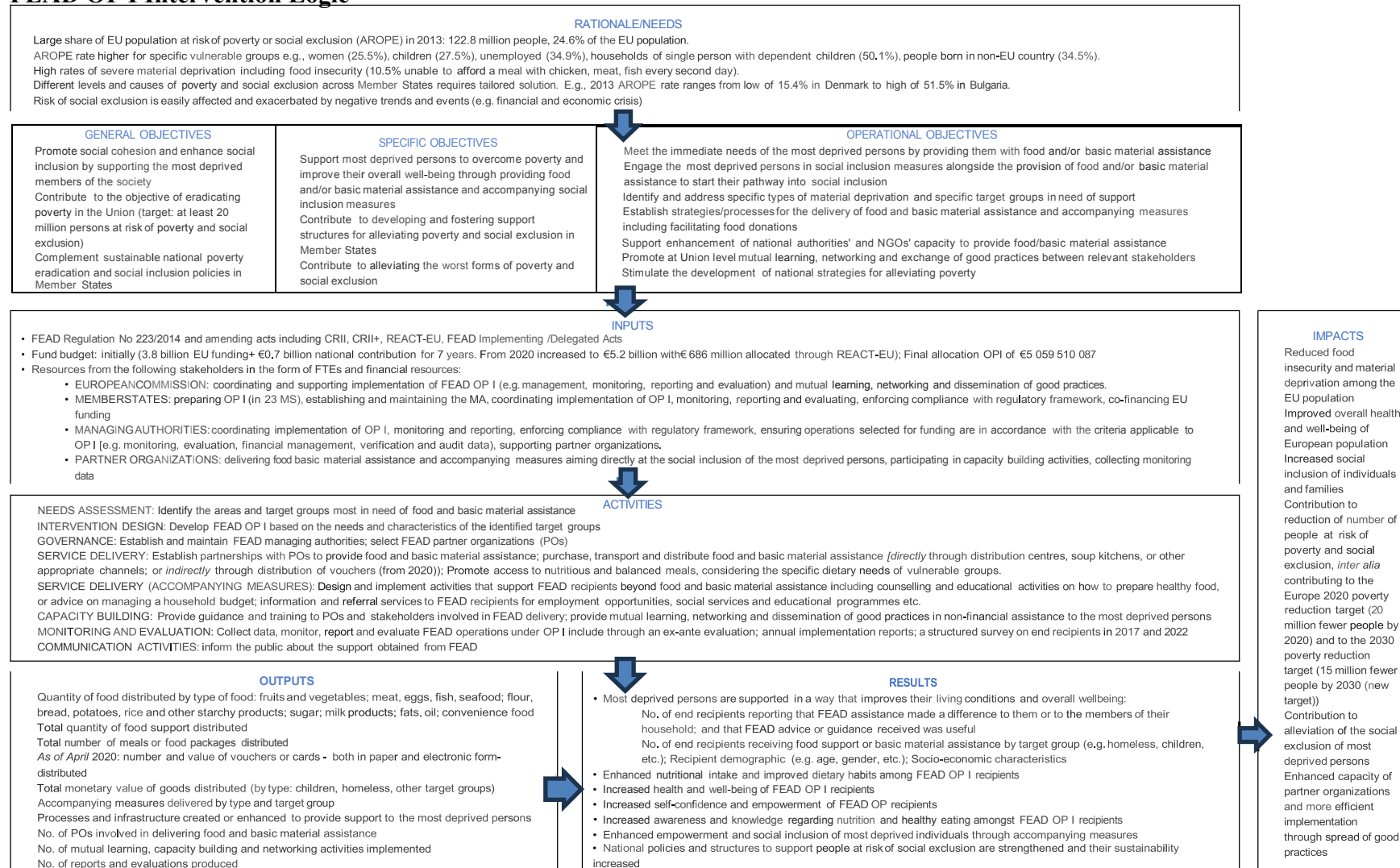
II). These outputs will vary according to the OP in each Member State, as well as the mode of delivery of support (e.g., through vouchers). The separate OP intervention logic provides more detail on the types of outputs that can be expected to emerge from each intervention type.

Intended results: The above outputs can then be expected to lead to a set of intended results that reflect the general and specific objectives of FEAD mentioned above.

Impacts: The above results are intended to lead to positive impacts in the areas of greatest need, linking back to the rationale of the intervention depicted at the FEAD intervention logic below i.e. the longer-term contribution to reducing poverty across the EU, alleviating the social exclusion of the most deprived persons, enhancing the capacity of POs and supporting more efficient implementation through the spread of good practices.

Unintended results: The below IL also recognises the fact that unintended results may also emerge, but it does not specify what these are as by nature they were not expected at the design of the intervention. Several external factors could affect FEAD implementation and its ability to deliver on its expected outputs, results, and impacts e.g. financial and economic crises, pandemics, or a war, climate change.

FEAD OP I Intervention Logic



FEAD OP II Intervention Logic



Table A. 16 – Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
To what extent was FEAD support successful – or not – and why?					
Effectiveness	1. To what extent has FEAD support contributed to achieving the objectives set in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014?	1a. How and to what extent did FEAD support delivered contribute to the achievement of these objectives by type of assistance? ▶ Food distributed, including those related to indirect support through vouchers or cards or food donations (OP I) ▶ Basic material assistance delivered, including those related to indirect support through vouchers or cards or food donations (OP I) ▶ Accompanying measures (OP I) delivered ▶ Social inclusion activities (OP II) delivered ▶ Are there differences in the degree of effectiveness between indirect and direct support?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which FEAD objectives have been met, overall, by OP and by type of assistance Indicators: ▶ Level of achievement of targets set (output and result indicators for each OP), disaggregated by OP and type of assistance ▶ Number/type of targets not achieved by MS, OP and type of assistance ▶ Identification of relationship between FEAD support (disaggregated where possible by type of support) and the achievement of results/outputs ▶ Evidence of changes for end recipients, including soft outcomes	Secondary sources in particular: ▶ Impact Assessment Accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the FEAD (2012) ▶ Regulation (EU) No. 223/2014 on the FEAD (2014) ▶ FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019) ▶ Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ (2023)	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			► Evidence of change in the key indicators related to poverty and social exclusion since the baseline	► FEAD country fiches from the Mid-term evaluation ► Deliveries of the FEAD Network including FEAD case studies ► ESF 2007-2013 Ex post Evaluation ► European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report 05/2019 ► European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/ 2020 ► Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless	(AROE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				(FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe” ► European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies ► European Parliament, 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding T1 Mapping ► SFC monitoring data ► Screening of AIRs	children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ Analysis of end recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations ▶ National ex ante evaluations ▶ Financial data on share of FEAD funding for food support by OP I Member State and target group, the share of payments incurred (spent by beneficiaries) over approved expenditure (committed by Managing Authority) T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Evolution of main indicators	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				on poverty and social exclusion including on poverty, child poverty and homelessness ► Policy expenditure data T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation (MAs, end recipients, partner orgs) T5 Impact analysis ► Evidence from existing evaluations/studies ► Results from JRC study T6 Case studies ► Qual./quant. evidence on achievement of objectives T7 Focus groups	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				► Views on degree of achievement of objectives	

	1b. To what extent has FEAD support reached the most vulnerable groups (homeless, children at risk of poverty, Roma and other marginalised groups, etc.)? ☐ Were some target groups more effectively reached than others? Why? ☐ How well were women reached? ☐ Is there other evidence on achievements by other characteristics such as geographical characteristics (rural vs. urban)? ☐ Which factors influenced the reach of different target groups? ☐ How were challenges in reaching target groups overcome?	Judgment criteria: ☐ Extent to which FEAD support has reached the most vulnerable groups, women and groups defined by other available characteristics (e.g. geographical location) ☐ Degree of differentiation of FEAD operations according to different needs of the target groups ☐ Evaluative judgement on the basis of evidence collected as to potential barriers/success factors underlying outputs and results, distinguished by target group, especially those further away from labour market and at risk of exclusion or discrimination Indicators: ☐ Output and result indicators disaggregated by Member State, OP and target group (younger people (<15 years), older people (>65 years), women, migrants, minorities including marginalised communities such as the Roma, persons with disabilities, homeless, etc.) ☐ Evolution since the baseline of key Eurostat indicators on	Secondary sources in particular: - FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019) and FEAD country fiches - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019 - European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/2020 - Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe” - European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013 relevant to the most vulnerable groups: Severe material deprivation rate of children, 2013: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation of children, 2015 (proxy year): 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian

			poverty and social inclusion (including AROPE rate, by country, gender, age etc.) ► Views of key stakeholders (MAs, partner organisations, monitoring committee members, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD ► Views of FEAD vulnerable target groups/representatives of target groups	- European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding - Outputs of the FEAD Network including FEAD case studies T1 Mapping ► SFC monitoring data ► AIRs ► National FEAD OPs ► End recipient surveys ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data particularly changes in key indicators (e.g. AROPE, disaggregated by target group) from	equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				baseline to 2022 ► Policy expenditure data T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

	1c. To what extent were adjustments made when needs changed or new needs emerged, e.g., deriving from the COVID-pandemic or the energy crisis? ▶ To what extent were these adjustments effective in addressing changed or new needs?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which FEAD operations were adjusted to address the needs brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine (including the energy crisis) and other contextual changes ▶ Evaluative judgment based on evidence collected Indicators: ▶ Number and nature of amendments in OPs (or other programming formal/informal documents) to accommodate new needs ▶ Number (where possible) and nature of FEAD operations specifically addressing new needs / contextual change ▶ Number (where possible) and characteristics of new target groups addressed due to new needs / contextual change ▶ Views of key stakeholders (MAs, partner organisations, monitoring committee members, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD	T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ Analysis of AIRs specifically, number of changes to OPs and reasoning, and amount of financial allocation change T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Socio-economic data particularly changes in key indicators from baseline and from 2020 (COVID onset) onwards ▶ Policy expenditure data T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013, and prior to onset of COVID-19 pandemic in 2019: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material deprivation rate, 2019 • Total population: 5.5% • Children: 5.7% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			► Views of FEAD end recipients/ representatives of target groups ► Evolution of key Eurostat indicators on poverty and social inclusion (including AROPE rate, by country, gender, age etc.) during the COVID-pandemic (2020-21) and energy crisis (2022), in comparison to the baseline and preceding trends.	(MAs, partner organisations) T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different stakeholders	Severe material and social deprivation, 2019 • Total population: 7.5% • Children: 10.3% At risk of poverty or social exclusion

		1d. To what extent have the operations introduced by CRII+, REACT EU and CARE under FEAD mitigated the negative social effects of the COVID and energy crises in terms of poverty and social exclusion? ► To what extent have they allowed to test new ways of working and delivery?	Judgment criteria: ► Extent to which FEAD operations under CRII, CRII+, REACT EU and CARE met the needs which emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic and energy crisis and mitigated the rise in poverty and social exclusion ► Extent to which FEAD operations under CRII+, REACT EU and CARE allowed testing new ways of working and delivering FEAD support to the most deprived Indicators: ► Analysis of the number, nature and value of operations funded by FEAD under CRII+, REACT EU and CARE ► Positive/negative trends in socio-economic indicators relating to poverty and social exclusion ► Qualitative evidence on new ways of working and delivery under FEAD operations related to addressing the crises ► View of key stakeholders (MAS, partner organisations,	Secondary sources including - Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ (2023) - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report 02/2023: adapting cohesion policy rules to respond to COVID-19 T1 Mapping ► SFC monitoring data ► AIRs ► End recipient surveys T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data on at risk of poverty, child poverty, homelessness from 2013 to 2019 and 2020 to 2022 ► Policy expenditure data	(AROE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROE) rate, 2019 • Total population: 21.1% • Children: 22.5% • 65 years or over: 19.4% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 45.5% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian

			monitoring committee members, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD ► Evolution of key Eurostat indicators on poverty and social inclusion (including AROPE rate, by country, gender, age etc.) during the COVID-pandemic (2020-21) and energy crisis (2022), in comparison to the baseline and preceding trends	T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation (MAs, partner organisations) T5 Impact analysis ► Evidence from existing evaluations/studies ► Results from JRC study T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 45% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2019 • Total population: 6.8% • Single person with dependent children: 11% • Households with dependent children: 7.7%

		1e. How well were horizontal principles, such as reducing food waste, addressed? ▶ To what extent were each of the following principles addressed? ▶ Reducing food waste and taking into account environmental/climate impacts ▶ Respecting the dignity of the most deprived persons ▶ Preventing discrimination ▶ Gender equality ▶ Partnership principle	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent of evidence of the implementation of horizontal principles in FEAD operations ▶ Extent to which horizontal principles influenced the design of interventions, the selection of operations and the evaluation process ▶ Extent to which FEAD contributed concretely to the implementation of horizontal principles Indicators: ▶ Evidence of horizontal actions to tackle food waste and take into account environmental/climate impacts across FEAD operations, identification of good/bad practices ▶ Evidence of a targeted actions to promote gender equality across FEAD operations, identification of good/bad practices ▶ Evidence of actions to prevent any form of discrimination in access to FEAD support across FEAD operations and attention to ensuring the dignity of end	Secondary sources including FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019) T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ AIRs ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations ▶ National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Policy expenditure data T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation including sub-survey of partner organisations T5 Impact analysis	Existing assessment of horizontal principles, in the FEAD mid-term evaluation¹⁶² including: - 83% (937 of 1129 respondents) agreed (39%, 440 of 1129 respondents) or strongly agreed (44%, 497 of 1129 respondents) that the partnership principle was being properly implemented - 85% (960 of 1129 respondents) agreed (53%, 598 of 1129 respondents) or

¹⁶² European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

			recipients, identification of good/bad practices ► Gender-disaggregated data on the outreach, participation, and outcomes of end recipients in FEAD operations ► Output and result indicators of target groups: younger people (<15 years), older people (>65 years), women, migrants, minorities including marginalised communities such as the Roma, persons with disabilities, homeless, etc.) ► Views of key stakeholders (MAs, partner organisations, monitoring committee members, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD ► Views of FEAD end recipients (where possible) representatives of target groups	► Evidence from existing evaluations/studies T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different stakeholders	strongly agreed (32%, 361 of 1129 respondents) that the principle was being properly implemented - 87% (982 of 1129 respondents) agreed (32%, 361 of 1129 respondents) or strongly agreed (55%, 621 of 1129 respondents) that the principle was being properly implemented - 71% (802 of 1129 respondents) agreed

					(34%, 384 of 1129 respondents) or strongly agreed (37%, 418 of 1129 respondents) that the food waste reduction principle was properly implemented
					- 66% (745 of 1129 respondents) of respondents agreed (38%, 429 of 1129 respondents) or strongly agreed (28%, 316 of 1129 respondents) that FEAD

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
					was contributing to a balanced diet - 88% (994 of 1129 respondents) agreed (35%, 395 of 1129 respondents) or strongly agreed (53%, 598 of 1129 respondents) that the principle was being properly implemented

	2. Which factors, whether unintended or not, facilitated or hindered the effectiveness of FEAD operations (in terms of implementation and results)?	▶ Rank these factors by order of importance and justify your ranking. ▶ What difficulties were met by partner organisations and how did they overcome them?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Evaluative judgment on the basis of evidence collected as to potential barriers/success factors underlying outputs and results, distinguished by OP and target group Indicators: ▶ Factors most frequently reported by MAs, partner organisations, other stakeholders, studies and evaluations to explain the (in)effectiveness of FEAD operations and supported by clear justification/evidence ▶ Ranking of facilitating/hindering factors with justification/evidence ▶ Difficulties and ways to overcome them reported by partner organisations and/or evidenced in reporting/evaluations/studies and case studies	Secondary sources in particular: - FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019) - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019 - European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/2020 - Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe” - European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18%

				- European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding	• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9%
				T1 Mapping ▶ AIRs ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations ▶ National ex ante evaluations	Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16%
				T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Socio-economic data	Households with dependent children: 16%
				T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation including sub-survey of partner organisations	Existing assessment of factors facilitating and hindering the effectiveness of FEAD operations in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶³
				T5 Impact analysis ▶ Evidence from existing evaluations/studies	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different stakeholders	

¹⁶³ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

	3. Were there unintended results that have occurred, and which hindered progress or facilitated it?	▶ If so, which were those unintended results? ▶ Which stakeholders did unintended results impact (partner organisations, end-recipients) and how?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Existence of results not aligned with FEAD objectives, extent of these results ▶ Extent to which unintended results have hindered/facilitated progress Indicators: ▶ Identification of positive/negative results not aligned with FEAD objectives reported by stakeholders and/or evidenced in reporting/evaluation/studies and case studies ▶ Comparison to the intended results of FEAD at the baseline as outlined in the 2012 Impact Assessment ▶ Assessment of the extent of the unintended results ▶ Evaluative judgment on the degree to which any unintended results hindered or facilitated progress based on evidence gathered	Secondary sources in particular: - FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019) - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019 - European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/2020 - Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) "Overview of housing exclusion in Europe" - European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18%

				- European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding	• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9%
				T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ AIRs ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations	Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16%
				T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Policy expenditure data	
				T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation	
				T5 Impact analysis ▶ Evidence from existing evaluations/studies	
				T6 Case studies	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different stakeholders	

	4. What socio-economic impacts can be identified from FEAD support, both at micro-economic and, if possible, at macro-economic level?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which socio-economic changes/impacts at micro-economic (and, if possible, macro-economic) level can be attributed to FEAD support, disaggregated by OP Indicators: ▶ Evidence from FEAD structured survey of end recipients and partner organisations on micro-economic impacts of FEAD interventions (if available). ▶ Evidence of micro-economic impacts in FEAD monitoring data/indicators on FEAD operations ▶ Findings from contribution analysis on the degree to which macro-economic impacts (e.g., reduction in populations at risk of poverty, reduction in homelessness, etc.) can be attributed to FEAD support ▶ Evaluative judgment on the degree to which socio-economic impacts, at micro-economic (and, if possible, at macro-economic) level can be attributed to FEAD support	Secondary sources including Strategic Studies such as Employment and Social Developments in Europe, Annual Report of the Social Protection Committee etc. T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ AIRs ▶ Financial data on share of FEAD funding for food support by OP I Member State and target group, the share of payments incurred (spent by beneficiaries) over approved expenditure (committed by Managing Authority) ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				► National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data – indicators on at risk of poverty, child poverty, homelessness from 2013 to 2019 and 2020 to 2022 T3 Consultations ► Interviews T5 Impact analysis ► Evidence from existing evaluations/studies ► Evidence from JRC analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different stakeholders	• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% Households with dependent children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
Efficiency and simplification	5. What types of activities and for which target group were the most/least cost-effective? Why?		Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which the invested resources were appropriate (benefits greater than costs) with respect to achievements ▶ Differences between types of activities regarding the cost-effectiveness ratio ▶ Differences between different target groups regarding the cost-effectiveness ratio Indicators: ▶ Unit costs per output and result for each type of activity and target group (where possible) at EU level ▶ Examples of unit costs calculated in case study countries where relevant data is available ▶ Direct and indirect costs of interventions	Secondary sources including - Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) - E-Vouchers for the most deprived: A study complementing the ESF+ impact assessment - Investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ AIRs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				► National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data ► Policy expenditure data and financial data on share of FEAD funding for food support by OP I Member State and target group, the share of payments incurred (spent by beneficiaries) over approved expenditure (committed by Managing Authority) T3 Consultations ► Interviews	• 65 years or over: 18% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% Households with dependent children: 16% Existing assessment of efficiency in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

	6. Are there any examples of good practices implemented to improve the efficiency of FEAD operations?	▶ What are the characteristics of these good practices? ▶ Were there any bad practices that hampered the efficiency of FEAD operations? ▶ What are the characteristics of these bad practices?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Evaluative judgment based on evidence of cost-effectiveness of different types of operations/activities/interventions with different target groups and/or in specific Member States (based particularly on case study countries) Indicators: ▶ Identification of FEAD operations/activities/interventions with different target groups and/or in specific Member States with a high/low degree of cost-effectiveness ▶ Qualitative evidence obtained from consultations (e.g., interviews, case studies, focus groups) on examples of good/bad practices in terms of efficiency of implementing or managing FEAD support	Secondary sources including ▶ Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) ▶ E-Vouchers for the most deprived: A study complementing the ESF+ impact assessment ▶ Investing in jobs and growth - maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds ▶ FEAD Network input papers and meeting reports ▶ FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019)	Existing assessment of efficiency in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶⁵

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				▶ Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ (2023) ▶ Summary of FEAD case studies ▶ Member States' national evaluations of FEAD T1 Mapping ▶ AIRs ▶ Analysis of national evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

¹⁶⁵ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
	7. Which are the factors that influenced the efficiency of FEAD? Rank these factors by order of importance and justify your ranking.	Did these factors particularly affect the efficiency of implementation of FEAD support for certain types of operations (e.g. provision of food/material assistance or social inclusion programmes) or target groups (e.g. partners organisations or specific groups of end-recipients?)	Judgment criteria: - Evaluative judgment on the basis of evidence collected as to potential barriers/success factors underlying efficiency, examining any patterns (where possible) by OP, type of activity and target group Indicators: - Factors most frequently reported by MAs, partner organisations, other stakeholders, studies and evaluations which facilitated or hindered the efficiency of FEAD operations and supported by clear justification/evidence - Ranking of facilitating/hindering factors with justification/evidence	T1 Mapping - AIRs - End recipient survey T3 Consultations - Interviews - Public consultation, particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	Existing assessment of efficiency in the mid-term evaluation ¹⁶⁶ and European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019

¹⁶⁶ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

	8. To what extent were the elements of Management and Control System (MCS) requirements in FEAD set appropriately to minimise the administrative burden? Did they allow effective and efficient implementation? Did those elements protect the dignity of FEAD end recipients while avoiding stigmatisation?	8a. To what extent was there unnecessary administrative burden, in particular gold plating, at MS level in implementing FEAD? ► If so, what were the reasons for this?	Judgment criteria: ► Extent to which procedures adopted by MAs exceeded regulatory requirements at EU level for the management of FEAD support ► Degree to which activities were delivered at reasonable cost (compared to similar interventions and/or in light of benefits) ► Differences in delivery mechanisms and relative variation in the administrative burden between MS/OPs ► Degree to which the dignity of FEAD end recipients was respected in the MCS procedures Indicators: ► Identification of the existence, nature, and degree of prevalence of additional procedures or reporting requirements beyond the regulatory requirements at EU level ► Views of key stakeholders (MAs, partner organisations, monitoring committee members, etc.) involved in the implementation and	Secondary sources including ► FEAD mid-term evaluation for the 2014-2020 programming period ► Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) ► E-Vouchers for the most deprived: A study complementing the ESF+ impact assessment T1 Mapping ► AIRs ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			monitoring of FEAD on proportionality of administrative burden and effectiveness/efficiency of implementation	► Interviews and public consultation particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis including cost collection form from MAs if used. T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		8b. To what extent did the use of flat rates or the introduction of vouchers/cards under OP I simplify the implementation of operations by partner organisations? ▶ What were the main benefits and for whom?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which MAs adopted the use of flat rates or the introduction of vouchers/cards under OP I ▶ Evaluative judgment on the extent to which the adoption of these measures led to simplification of operations, and which stakeholders primarily benefited Indicators: ▶ Identification of the existence and prevalence of the implementation of simplification measures under OP I ▶ Views of partner organisations on the degree to which measures did simplify implementation of operations and key benefits	T1 Mapping ▶ AIRs ▶ Analysis of national evaluations ▶ National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation, particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies (OP I) T7 Focus groups, including views of partner organisations	dependent children: 16% Households with dependent children: 16% Existing assessment of efficiency in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶⁷ and European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019

¹⁶⁷ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		8c. How have partner organisations contributed to effective and efficient implementation? ▶ What factors have supported this?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which partner organisations have facilitated or hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of FEAD operations Indicators: ▶ Identification of examples of good/bad practices among partner organisations in terms of effective and efficient implementation ▶ Views of key stakeholders (MAs, monitoring committee members, (representatives) of end recipients, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD ▶ Views of partner organisations on the measures they implemented to enhance effectiveness and efficiency	T1 Mapping ▶ AIRs ▶ Analysis of national evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation, particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies (OP I) T7 Focus groups, including partner organisations	

	9. To what extent can FEAD processes be simplified at the national level? And at EU level?	▶ Are there (other?) areas where simplification could be pursued further? ▶ If so, which stakeholders would these simplifications principally benefit and how?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which there is scope for further simplification of FEAD processes at national level ▶ Extent to which there is scope for further simplification of FEAD processes at EU level ▶ Existence of further potential areas for simplification ▶ Existence of other simplification measures not applied in FEAD in other EU funds (e.g., ESF+) Indicators: ▶ Evaluative judgment based on evidence collected ▶ Views of key stakeholders (MAs, monitoring committee members, (representatives) of end recipients, partner organisations, etc.) involved in the implementation and monitoring of FEAD ▶ Identification of other simplification measures not applied in FEAD in other EU funds (e.g. ESF+)	Secondary sources including ▶ FEAD mid-term evaluation for the 2014-2020 programming period ▶ Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) ▶ E-Vouchers for the most deprived: A study complementing the ESF+ impact assessment T1 Mapping ▶ Analysis of national evaluations ▶ National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews	Existing assessment of efficiency in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶⁸ and European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				Public consultation, particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T4 Cost-effectiveness analysis T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies (OP I) T7 Focus groups, including partner organisations	
Coherence	10. To what extent were FEAD operations coherent with other interventions? How have complementarity and synergies been ensured?	10a. How complementary was FEAD support with the national actions and policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion? How have synergies between FEAD operations and other EU, national and regional interventions been ensured?	Judgment criteria: - Extent to which FEAD complements national initiatives and policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion - Extent to which synergies and complementarities exist and have been nurtured between FEAD and other regional, national and EU initiatives and policies Indicators: - Evaluative judgment on complementarity/synergies (or lack of) with national	Secondary sources including relevant EU regulations/ recommendations and funding programmes T1 Mapping - AIRs - National FEAD OPs - Analysis of national evaluations - National ex ante evaluations	Existing assessment of coherence in the mid-term evaluation¹⁶⁸ European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019

¹⁶⁸ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

¹⁶⁹ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			policies for poverty alleviation/social inclusion based on documentary desk research and evidence from the mapping and case studies ► Evaluative judgment on complementarity/synergies (or lack of) with other relevant regional, national and EU interventions based on desk research and analysis of ► Views of key stakeholders (MAs, national policymakers, European Commission officials in charge of other relevant EU instruments) on complementarities with relevant regional/national/EU initiatives	► Other relevant studies e.g. FEAD mid-term evaluation (2019), Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ (2023), FEAD country fiches from the Mid-term evaluation, ESF 2007-2013 ex post evaluation, etc. T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

		10b. To what extent were FEAD operations complementary to support provided by other European Union instruments, in particular the ESF and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which FEAD complements other EU instruments, particularly the ESF and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Indicators: ▶ Evaluative judgment on complementarity/synergies (or overlap/duplication/lack of synergy) with other EU instruments (in particular the ESF and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) based on documentary desk research ▶ Views of key stakeholders (MAs, European Commission officials in charge of other relevant EU instruments) on complementarities (or overlap/duplication/lack of synergy) with relevant EU instruments (in particular the ESF and Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund)	▶ Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) 2014-2020 covering the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) or the ERDF, ESF, the Cohesion Fund, the EAFRD and the EMFF ▶ Regulation (EU) No. 1304/2013 ESF Regulation ▶ Regulation (EU) No. 1057/2021 ESF+ Regulation T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		10c. To what extent was FEAD support complementary to the wider EU policies including the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which FEAD complements wider EU policies including the Europe 2020 Strategy and European Pillar of Social Rights Indicators: ▶ Evaluative judgment on complementarity/synergies (or overlap/duplication/lack of synergy) with wider EU policies (including the Europe 2020 Strategy and European Pillar of Social Rights) based on documentary desk research ▶ Views of key stakeholders (MAs, European Commission officials in charge of other relevant EU instruments) on complementarities (or overlap/duplication/lack of synergy) with wider EU policies (including the Europe 2020 Strategy and European Pillar of Social Rights)	Strategic documents including ▶ Europe 2020 Strategy, ▶ European Pillar of Social Rights T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

		10d. Were there cases of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication and if so, which?	Judgment criteria: ► Existence and prevalence of cases of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication between FEAD support and other regional, national or EU policies, actions or funds Indicators: ► Identification of cases of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication between FEAD support and other regional, national or EU policies, actions or funds, supported by evidence ► Evaluative judgment on extent of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication between FEAD support and other regional, national or EU policies, actions or funds ► Views of key stakeholders (MAs, national policymakers, European Commission officials in charge of other relevant EU policies/instruments) on cases of lack of complementarity, overlaps or duplication between FEAD support and other regional, national or EU	Strategic documents including ► Europe 2020 Strategy, ► European Pillar of Social Rights Other secondary sources including Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) T1 Mapping ► AIRs ► National FEAD OPs ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations ► Interviews T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			policies/instruments, actions or funds		
Is FEAD still relevant?					
Relevance	11. How relevant was the support to the needs of the most deprived?	11a. To what degree were the most relevant groups targeted? How were the most relevant groups identified by Member States?	Judgment criteria: - Extent to which FEAD objectives, programming documents (e.g., OPs) and operations have targeted the most deprived groups Indicators: - Effective identification of relevant (most deprived) target groups and their needs in FEAD ex-ante evaluations carried out by Member States - FEAD target groups correspond to most deprived groups as evidenced in analysis of socio-economic data across the EU; including comparison of proportion of funding allocated to different target groups compared to proportion of target group in the wider population	Secondary sources including - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019 - European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/2020 - Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) “Overview of housing exclusion in Europe” - European Social Policy Network, Fighting	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013 relevant to the most vulnerable groups: Severe material deprivation rate of children, 2013: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation of children, 2015 (proxy year): 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) - Children: 27.3% 65 years or over: 18%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			► Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the relevance of the groups targeted	homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies - European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding T1 Mapping ► AIRs ► National FEAD OPs ► End recipient surveys ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation particularly sub-survey of	• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				partner organisations T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		11b. Which target groups were not reached, and why? Were there any gaps in the support provided?	Judgment criteria: ► Existence of target groups which were not sufficiently reached by FEAD support ► Existence of gaps in provision of support (types of assistance, scope of support, geographical locations, target groups, etc.) Indicators: ► Effective identification of relevant (most deprived) target groups and their needs in FEAD ex-ante evaluations carried out by Member States and in Operational Programmes ► FEAD target groups correspond to most deprived groups as evidenced in analysis of socio-economic data across the EU ► Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the relevance of the groups targeted	Secondary sources as above T1 Mapping ► AIRs ► National FEAD OPs ► End recipient surveys ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T2 Socioeconomic analysis ► Socio-economic data T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		11c. What role did accompanying measures play in addressing these needs? ▶ How were accompanying measures designed to take on board the needs of the target groups?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which accompanying measures played a role in addressing the needs of target groups Indicators: ▶ Data (where available) on number, type and value of FEAD support allocated to accompanying measures ▶ Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the degree to which the accompanying measures contributed to addressing the needs identified ▶ Evaluative judgment on the degree to which the accompanying measures contributed to addressing the needs identified	Secondary sources as above T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data ▶ AIRs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	

		11d. Were there any new target groups, needs and/or activities that have emerged in consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine? ► To what extent did FEAD actions address these?	Judgment criteria: ► Extent to which new target groups, needs or activities emerged because of the COVID-19 pandemic or Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine Indicators: ► Number and type of new target groups, needs and/or activities which emerged due to the pandemic or Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine ► Comparison between needs identified at the baseline from the Impact Assessment and FEAD Regulation and needs identified in subsequent Regulations impacting FEAD (CRII, CRII+, REACT-EU). ► Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the new target groups, needs and/or activities which emerged due to the pandemic or invasion of Ukraine ► Evaluative judgment on the new target groups, needs and/or activities emerged	Secondary sources including - Study on the support provided by ESF and FEAD under CRII and CRII+ - European Court of Auditors: ECA Special Report on FEAD 05/2019 - European Court of Auditors, Combating child poverty, Special Report 20/2020 - Annual European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) reports (2014 to 2021) "Overview of housing exclusion in Europe" - European Social Policy Network, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe - A study of national policies	

			due to the pandemic or Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine	- European Parliament 2018. Fighting Child Poverty: the role of EU Funding T1 Mapping ▶ SFC monitoring data specifically number of changes to OPs and reasoning, and amount of financial allocation change ▶ AIRs ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ End recipient surveys T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Socio-economic data T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T6 Case studies	

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
				T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	
		11e. What are the future trends that could affect the future relevance of this EU support to the most deprived? Why and how? To what extent is the design of FEAD still relevant?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which future trends might affect the relevance of FEAD (or other EU-funded) support to the most deprived in terms of e.g., target groups, activities, needs Indicators: ▶ Evaluative judgment based on analysis of likely socio-economic future trends ▶ Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the impact of new/emerging trends on the needs and focus of FEAD (or other EU-funded) support for the most deprived	T2 Socioeconomic analysis ▶ Socio-economic data T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups, including representatives of different target groups	
Did FEAD make a difference and to whom?					

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
EU added value	12. Overall, what and how significant has been the added value of FEAD support in producing beneficial effects that would otherwise not have taken place? This question shall be addressed by assessing volume, scope, role and process effects	What have been the effects of FEAD support in terms of: ► Volume: To what extent have FEAD operations provided additional resources by adding to existing action, either by supporting national action in general ('mirroring') or in specific areas of national policy ('boosting')? ► Scope: To what extent have FEAD operations broadened existing actions by addressing groups, systems or policy areas that would otherwise not have received support? ► Role: To what extent have FEAD operations supported innovative actions or the mainstreaming of local/regional/innovative activities at	Judgment criteria: ► Volume effects: the extent to which FEAD has provided additional resources by adding to existing actions through 'mirroring' or 'boosting' of national action policies, e.g. leading to an increase in the number of participants (people and organisations) benefitting from actions/policies tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion ► Scope effects: compared to existing actions, the degree to which FEAD has reached new groups or harder-to-reach groups, provided more opportunities of support, supported systems with specific actions, or developed/extended policy areas ► Role effects: the extent to which FEAD operations have supported innovative actions or/and contributed to mainstreaming of local/regional innovations at national level	T1 Mapping ► SFC monitoring data ► AIRs ► National FEAD OPs ► End recipient surveys ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T5 Impact analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
		national level? e.g. To what extent has awareness about food and material deprivation been raised through FEAD resulting in similar national initiatives which support target groups not covered by FEAD? ► Process: To what extent have Member State administrations and partner organisations derived benefits (e.g. improvement of systems/structures, improved cooperation between social services and local organisations or partner organisations and individual stakeholders) and been influenced from being involved in FEAD actions?	Indicators: ► Process effects: the extent to which FEAD has brought about sustainable changes in the cooperation between administrations and other entities, integration between policy systems (e.g. social assistance and training or health services, etc.) and empowerment of the actors involved in the operations ► Numbers/volume of end recipients and organisations participating in policies/actions tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion supported by FEAD compared to previous actions ► Evidence of ‘mirroring’ or ‘boosting’ of national action policies seeking to tackle poverty and social deprivation ► Any evaluative evidence (including counterfactual evidence) from existing evaluations or studies or the impact analysis on the impact of FEAD at MS level		• 65 years or over: 18% • Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			▶ Evidence of new target groups reached by FEAD which would not have been reached otherwise ▶ Evidence of extension in access to services or actions due to FEAD support ▶ Evidence of existence of extension of types of activities/services provided with FEAD support ▶ Evidence of existence of new policy areas covered thanks to FEAD support which were not covered otherwise ▶ Evidence of local/regional innovative actions mainstreamed into policies or interventions at national level ▶ Evidence of benefits for – and influence on - MS administrations or partner organisations (e.g. improved systems/structures, improved cooperation between social services and local organisations or partner organisations and individual stakeholders) from being involved in FEAD actions		

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
			▶ Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on volume, scope, role and process effects ▶ Evaluative judgment based on evidence collected on volume, scope, role and process effects		
	13. Were there attempts in MS to quantify and assess the impact of FEAD support?	▶ If not, why not?	Judgment criteria: ▶ Extent to which MS have sought to quantify and assess the impact of FEAD support Indicators: ▶ Availability of studies/evaluations at national level which seek to quantify and assess the impact of FEAD support ▶ Content and focus of any available studies	T1 Mapping ▶ Analysis of national evaluations T5 Impact analysis ▶ Evidence from existing evaluations/studies ▶ Evidence from JRC analysis	

	14. What are the key results of FEAD support that made a difference?	► To which group(s) of stakeholders did FEAD make a tangible difference?	Judgment criteria: ► Evaluative judgment based on evidence collected on the key results of FEAD that made a difference in terms of results/outcomes for end recipients and partner organisations and wider impacts (e.g., on levels of poverty, homelessness, etc.) ► Evaluative judgment based on the evidence collected on the stakeholder groups with the most tangible benefits from FEAD support Indicators: ► Results indicators for different stakeholders and target groups ► Other evidence of impact for different groups (e.g., from impact analysis and existing evaluations/studies at MS level) ► Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on key results of FEAD and the stakeholder groups which have most benefited	T1 Mapping ► AIRs ► End recipient surveys ► Analysis of national evaluations ► National ex ante evaluations T3 Consultations ► Interviews ► Public consultation particularly sub-survey of partner organisations T5 Impact analysis ► Evidence from existing evaluations/studies ► Evidence from JRC analysis T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	Problems and needs that the intervention was intended to solve in 2013: Severe material deprivation rate, 2013 • Total population: 9.8% • Children: 10.9% Severe material and social deprivation, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 6.8% • Children: 8.5% At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rate, 2015 (proxy year) • Total population: 24% • Children: 27.3% • 65 years or over: 18%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
					• Non-EU foreign citizens: 49.9% Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, 2013 • Total population: 10.7% • Single person with dependent children: 16% • Households with dependent children: 16%

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions	Sub-questions	Potential judgment criteria and indicators	Tasks (T) / Primary and secondary data sources	Main point of comparison
Visibility	15. To what extent are the general public and end recipients aware that support comes from FEAD and the EU?	▶ Please specify differences by MS and by target group	Judgment criteria: ▶ Degree of visibility among the general public and end recipients that support is provided by FEAD and the EU Indicators: ▶ Evidence of visibility from documentary sources (e.g., AIRs, end recipient surveys) and case studies ▶ Views of key stakeholders (FEAD MAs, partner organisations, members of FEAD monitoring committees, (representatives of) end recipients,) on the visibility of FEAD and EU funding for support provided via FEAD ▶ Evaluative judgment based on evidence collected	T1 Mapping ▶ AIRs ▶ National FEAD OPs ▶ End recipient surveys ▶ Analysis of national evaluations T3 Consultations ▶ Interviews ▶ Public consultation T6 Case studies T7 Focus groups	Existing assessment of visibility in the mid-term evaluation ¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ European Commission (2017). *FEAD Mid-term evaluation, Report on the open public consultation*

ANNEX III: IMPACT OF FEAD (JRC'S WORKING PAPER)

The study carried out by the JRC performs an ex-post evaluation of the impact of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) during the 2014-2022 implementation period, assessing its impact on poverty across EU regions. This working paper¹⁷¹ examines six key poverty measures, including population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), poverty incidence and intensity, income inequality, concurrence, and persistence of poverty. Concrete methodological aspects have been described in Annex II. We collect here the main findings.

The first stage of the analysis reveals significant progress in reducing the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) across most EU regions between 2014 and 2022, particularly in less developed regions, which demonstrated significant improvements. Conversely, more developed regions exhibited relatively stable rates over this period. Notable progress has been made in East and Southern European countries, where the incidence of poverty has decreased; however, some of these regions have simultaneously experienced an increase in poverty intensity, indicating that those who remain below the poverty line have become even poorer. Despite these challenges, there has been an overall improvement in income inequality over the years, although heterogeneity within country remains high. However, there is still a worrying trend in the persistence of poverty, with many countries showing either a worsening performance or maintaining persistently high rates over the years.

The findings from the FE regression model (See Table A. 17) indicate a generally positive association between increased FEAD funding and reductions in poverty rates. Specifically, one-million-euro increase in FEAD expenditure is associated, on average, with a reduction of 2,650 individuals at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1). Additionally, this increase correlates with a 0.002 percentage point (pp) decrease in poverty incidence (2) and a 0.005 pp reduction in income inequality (4). Nevertheless, the analysis finds no significant correlation between FEAD expenditure and the intensity, concurrence, and persistency of poverty (3, 5 and 6). While these findings offer valuable insights, they must be interpreted with caution, as the Fixed Effects model establishes correlations but does not imply causality.

¹⁷¹ Link to JRC Publication - An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC138808>

Table A. 17 – Fixed effects regression estimates

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	# of persons at risk of social exclusion (AROPE)	Incidence: % of HHs at risk of poverty	Intensity: Avg gap between inds' income and poverty threshold	Inequality: Income gap between HHs in poverty and other HHs	Concurrence: % HHs in monetary poverty and severe material deprivation	Persistence: disp. income below poverty threshold for current year and 2+ out of previous 3
FEAD paid in OPs, in accumulated terms	-0.265*** (0.097)	-0.002** (0.001)	0.007 (0.010)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)
Food prices (PPP)	0.284 (0.713)	-0.001 (0.020)	0.239 (0.285)	0.063 (0.046)	-0.041*** (0.012)	-0.034 (0.033)
Compensation of employees (PPP)	-2.323** (1.079)	-0.020 (0.027)	0.011 (0.243)	-0.089** (0.039)	-0.046** (0.018)	0.062* (0.036)
Constant	726.552** (319.038)	23.162*** (7.436)	35.688 (72.577)	90.170*** (10.955)	21.063*** (5.230)	8.870*** (1.863)
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	162	189	169	169	169	186

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The Dose-Response Model provides additional insights, the results consistently demonstrate a significant positive impact of FEAD expenditure on reducing poverty across all six dimensions studied, suggesting that increasing FEAD funding contributes meaningfully to alleviating poverty and social exclusion across the EU. For the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), the relationship between FEAD expenditure and poverty reduction is non-linear, indicating that the positive effects on poverty become more pronounced at higher expenditure levels. In contrast, the other outcomes—such as poverty incidence, intensity, inequality, concurrence, and persistence—present a linear decreasing trend, suggesting that as FEAD expenditure increases, the reductions in poverty rates occur at a steady, consistent rate. The robustness of these findings is confirmed by estimating Dose Response Functions using polynomials of different orders (see Figure 12 in JRC report¹⁷²).

These results should also be seen together with JRC's policy brief 'Understanding Europe's most vulnerable in six EU Member States: Socio-economic profiles of FEAD end beneficiaries'¹⁷³ based on FEAD End-Recipients data gathered from six countries, which highlight the significant regional disparities in the support provided, illustrating the localized challenges of poverty and social exclusion, and reinforcing the importance of regionally tailored interventions.

¹⁷² Link to JRC Publication - An ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014- 2020: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC138808>

¹⁷³ Link to JRC Publication - De Quinto (2024) 'Understanding Europe's most vulnerable in six EU Member States: Socio-

economic profiles of FEAD end beneficiaries': <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC140588>

ANNEX IV: OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS

Table A. 18 – Fund for European aid to the most deprived (FEAD)

Fund for European aid to the most deprived (FEAD)

Cost/Benefit	Cost/Benefit description	End-recipients	Partner Organisations	Member States (Managing Authorities)	European Commission	
Direct costs						
Implementation costs	Costs incurred for the delivery of food support (OP I)	Not applicable	5% of expenditure flat rate for delivery partners to pay for transport, storage and other administrative measures.	Not applicable	Total expenditure incurred by beneficiaries related to the provision of food support (2014-2022)	EUR 3,755,806,230.55
					Total number of persons benefiting from food support (2014-2022)	119,905,708
					Cost per person (2014-2022)	EUR 31
	Costs incurred for the delivery of basic material	Not applicable	5% of expenditure flat rate for delivery partners to pay for transport, storage and	Not applicable	Total expenditure incurred by beneficiaries related to the provision of basic material	EUR 147,641,598.09

	assistance (OP I)		other administrative measures.		assistance (2014-2022)	
					Total number of persons benefiting from basic material assistance (2014-2022)	7,776,324
					Cost per person	EUR 19
	Costs incurred for the indirect delivery to the most deprived through vouchers cards or other instruments (OP I)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Total expenditure incurred by beneficiaries provided indirectly through vouchers, cards or other instruments (2014-2022)	EUR 102,867,369.02
					Total number of persons receiving support through vouchers, cards or other instruments of indirect delivery (2014-2022)	832,680
					Cost per person	EUR 124

	Costs incurred for the delivery of accompanying measures (OP I)	Not applicable	5% of expenditure flat rate was available to cover delivery of accompanying measures. In some countries (for example Belgium), all funding was used for food/basic material support and accompanying measures were paid for by partner organizations.	Not applicable	No exact figure available. Accompanying measures were in most cases funded by FEAD funding and paid through 5% flat rate of expenditures.	
	Costs incurred for the delivery of social integration measures (OP II)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Total expenditure incurred by beneficiaries related to the provision of social integration measures (2014-2022)	EUR 110,532,277.57
					Total number of persons participating in social integration measures (2014-2022)	209,913
					Cost per person	EUR 527

Administrative costs	Administrative costs	Not applicable	Partner organisations were not required to collect information on administrative costs. However, substantial burden has been reported related to the fulfilment of monitoring requirements and the assessment of eligibility of end recipients. In the public consultation, 17% of respondents (46 of 267) reported that there was unnecessary administrative burden for their organisation to a large extent, 21% (56 of 267) to a moderate extent and 26% (68 of 267) to some extent.	Estimates available from select Member States: EUR 321,410 in Denmark EUR 390,954 in Sweden 400 to 500 hours in Portugal related to monitoring, following up and providing information system support. Administrative costs in OP I countries are likely to be higher as MAs had to deal with the regular procurement of food basic materials.	No exact figure/estimates available. Costs borne by the European Commission for the set-up and implementation of FEAD could be regarded as administrative costs.
Direct benefits					

Benefits of the distribution of food and goods	Food provided to end recipients	Total provided food support during the implementation period of FEAD: 3.3 million tonnes of food in the form of: 962 million food packages and 554 million prepared meals. In 2022, an average of 90% (22,781 of 25,313), of recipients of OP I support that responded to the structured survey in all OP I Member States reported that assistance provided by FEAD made a difference to them or to the members of their household.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Goods provided to children	Value of goods distributed to children, often in the form of school materials and layettes - EUR 110 913 306.59 Example: In Austria, where 100% of FEAD provided goods for children, 88% (919 of 1045) of end recipients responding to the structured survey in 2022 indicated that the assistance provided made a difference to them or to the members of their household.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Goods provided to the homeless	Value of goods distributed to homeless people, often in the form of clothing and sleeping bags: EUR 166 135 92.53	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Goods provided to other groups	Value of goods distributed to other target groups often in	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

		the form of hygiene products: EUR 97 428 775.47			
	Enhanced nutritional intake of end recipients	An average of 68% of end recipients responding to the structured survey in 2022 across all OP I implementing countries indicated that a year ago they were not able to afford to purchase the food goods received from FEAD support.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Improved hygiene of end recipients	An average of 68% of end recipients responding to the structured survey in 2022 across all OP I implementing countries indicated that a year ago they were not able to afford to purchase the food/goods received from FEAD support.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Increased educational attainment	Free school breakfasts, such as those delivered by FEAD in Cyprus, have an excellent track record of leading to positive outcomes such as improved learning and educational attainment. A study into the long-term effects of the provision of nutritious breakfast at school in Norway indicated an increase of education by 0.1 years and earnings by 2–3%	Free school breakfasts, such as those delivered by FEAD in Cyprus, have an excellent track record of leading to positive outcomes such as improved learning and educational attainment. A cost-effectiveness analysis in the UK concluded that for each GBP 1 spent, there can be benefits in excess of GBP 50 , largely due to higher tax revenues as a result of better educational attainment.	Free school breakfasts, such as those delivered by FEAD in Cyprus, have an excellent track record of leading to positive outcomes such as improved learning and educational attainment. A cost-effectiveness analysis in the UK concluded that for each GBP 1 spent, there can be benefits in excess of GBP 50 , largely due to higher tax revenues as a result of better educational attainment.	Free school breakfasts, such as those delivered by FEAD in Cyprus, have an excellent track record of leading to positive outcomes such as improved learning and educational attainment. A cost-effectiveness analysis in the UK concluded that for each GBP 1 spent, there can be benefits in excess of GBP 50 , largely due to higher tax revenues as a result of better educational attainment
Benefits of accompanying measures and social inclusion activities	Improved cooking skills of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Classes related to cooking and how to utilise FEAD food packages were offered in most Member States with	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

		this having a reportedly positive impact on end recipients' ability to make the most of FEAD food packages.			
	Improved hygiene of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. In addition to distributed hygiene products, several Member States conducted courses on personal hygiene.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Healthier nutrition of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Classes related to healthier nutrition on how to select food were offered in most Member States, with this having a reportedly positive impact on end recipients' ability to make the most of FEAD food packages in a healthy way.	Not applicable	Member States and the EU benefit from a healthier population due to reduced healthcare costs. Academic research estimates that the costs of hospitalisation due to malnutrition, are between EUR 1 640 and EUR 5 829 per individual (see Annex 3). These estimates far exceed the annual cost per person of	Member States and the EU benefit from a healthier population due to reduced healthcare costs. Academic research estimates that the costs of hospitalisation due to malnutrition, are between EUR 1 640 and EUR 5 829 per individual (see Annex 3). These estimates far exceed the annual cost per person of providing food support (EUR 31). While the number of hospitalisations prevented by FEAD is unknown, it is estimated (based on a hospitalisation cost mid-point estimate of EUR 3 735) that just one hospitalisation for every 120 supported would need to be prevented for FEAD to be cost-neutral.

				providing food support (EUR 31). While the number of hospitalisations prevented by FEAD is unknown, it is estimated (based on a hospitalisation cost mid-point estimate of EUR 3 735) that just one hospitalisation for every 120 supported would need to be prevented for FEAD to be cost-neutral.	
	Improved employability of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Accompanying measures in many Member States included trainings for professional skills and sometimes support and guidance in job searching, with a reportedly positive impact on basic job-	Not applicable	Member States and the EU benefit from higher employability of deprived people due to higher tax revenues and a reduced need for benefits.	Member States and the EU benefit from higher employability of deprived people due to higher tax revenues and a reduced need for benefits.

		search skills and overall employability. Example: In France, the Restaurants du Cœur project employed thousands of FEAD recipients for the provision of meals, 52% subsequently found employment or training.			
	Improved wellbeing and mental health of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Psychological and social support was offered in most Member States. Example: In the Netherlands, informal coffee hours were conducted for lonely elderly people in public libraries - an initiative which was deemed as very cost-effective.	Not applicable	Member States and the EU benefit from improved wellbeing and mental health through e.g. increased productivity at work, less expenditures in psychological support, higher tax revenues, reduced need for benefits etc.	Member States and the EU benefit from improved wellbeing and mental health through e.g. increased productivity at work, less expenditures in psychological support, higher tax revenues, reduced need for benefits etc.

	Improved financial skills of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Courses on budgeting and debt advice were offered in some Member States.	Not applicable	Member States and the EU benefit from higher financial skills of deprived people through increased productivity at work, higher tax revenues and a reduced need for benefits.	Member States and the EU benefit from higher financial skills of deprived people through increased productivity at work, higher tax revenues and a reduced need for benefits.
	Improved knowledge regarding (social) services of end recipients	Quantitative benefits not available. Recipients in all Member States improved their knowledge of (social) services, where to request assistance and how to access services such as healthcare. Specific guidance for recipients in that regard was provided in all countries that provided accompanying measures.	Partner organisations benefitted from better visibility among recipients which makes it easier to reach their target groups.	Member States benefit through increased take up of social services. Recipients become easier to reach.	Member States benefit through increased take up of social services. Recipients become easier to reach.
Indirect benefits					

	Improved collaboration between stakeholders	Quantitative benefits not available. Indirectly benefited end recipients through strengthening the capacity of organisations that can support them.	FEAD has improved the relationships of Partner Organisations to public authorities.	In addition to better relationships with partner organisations, FEAD also contributed to better relationships among public sector organisations. The German evaluation identifies better working relationships between actors such as social services, the police, housing authorities and the federal state.	European Commission benefits from a strong ecosystem of actors supporting the most deprived
	Capacity building in the delivery of social funds or services	Quantitative benefits not available. Indirectly benefited end recipients through strengthening the capacity of organisations that can support them.	Partner organisations were often provided with capacity building support in order to provide the skills necessary for the delivery of services and the compliance with administrative requirements	Managing Authorities gained experience with the management of large EU social funding programmes.	European Commission benefits from a strong ecosystem of actors supporting the most deprived

	Improved awareness of social problems	Quantitative benefits not available. Recipients benefit from better general awareness of social problems which can improve the response to their needs.	Partner organizations benefit from better awareness regarding malnutrition and social inclusion issues as it increases the volunteer pool and can lead to higher donations and more public funding opportunities	Member States benefit from better awareness regarding malnutrition and social inclusion issues.	European Commission benefits from better awareness regarding malnutrition and social inclusion issues in Member States
	Enhanced sense of recognition	Quantitative benefits not available. Projects contributed to making the participants feel seen, taken seriously and treated as fellow human beings. Example: The value of the project employees' friendly and respectful treatment was repeatedly highlighted in interviews in Sweden as part of the Swedish evaluation.	Stronger relationship between end recipients and partner organizations indirectly contributing to greater impact of their work.	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Stronger sense of community	Quantitative benefits not available. Food packages being distributed by volunteers from the community for the deprived members of the community has increased social unity. Example: In Estonia, involving Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression in the work of food banks has contributed to their integration.	Stronger relationship between end recipients and partner organisations indirectly contributing to greater impact of their work.	Member States benefit from increased social cohesion.	The EU benefits from increased social cohesion in Member States.

Source: Ecorys, 2024

ANNEX V: COST EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS BY EXTERNAL CONTRACTOR

3. Introduction

This cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) was undertaken as part of the Study supporting the evaluation of Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). It provides supplementary detail to the analysis provided within the main evaluation report to research questions (RQs) 5-9 which cover the following topics:

- The types of activities and for which target group they were the most/least cost effective and why.
- Good examples or bad practices in the implementation of FEAD which had an impact on efficiency.
- The factors that influenced the efficiency.
- The appropriateness of the Management and Control System and whether it allowed for effective and efficient implementation. This includes an assessment of whether there was unnecessary administrative burden at MS level, to what extent flat rates and vouchers simplified the implementation of operations and how partner organisations contributed to effective and efficient implementation.
- The extent to which FEAD processes can be simplified at different levels in order to increase efficiency.

The CEA complements the responses to the efficiency-related research questions in the main report and should not be read in isolation. It provides an overview of FEAD expenditures and to what extent Member States utilised all of their approved funds. In light of data limitations indicated in section 2 below, the CEA focused principally on the provision of food support under OP I (which made up 93.6% of total FEAD expenditure). In addition, it shows summary calculations of FEAD outputs pertaining to the total volume of distributed food, cost-output ratios for food support, the total number of supported individuals, annual expenditures per individual and the monetary value of distributed basic materials. Lastly, it also includes an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of school meal programmes based on existing academic research and an overview of the collected interview and focus group data which adds to the insights which are presented in the main report.

4. Methodology

The CEA methodology included the following steps:

- Detailed analysis of the data which was collected from the SFC support portal as part of Task 1
- Review of all available national evaluations
- Review of all case studies that were produced as part of the FEAD evaluation
- Analysis of stakeholder interview responses to relevant efficiency questions.
- Analysis of data from the public consultation
- Sifting of Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs)
- Assessment of the possibility to monetise FEAD benefits through academic research
- Engagement with Managing Authorities to clarify inconsistencies in the provided data and request additional data

A traditional cost-benefit analysis would focus on the comparisons of costs with pecuniary effects of the intervention. Sufficient data is available for most Member States to determine the FEAD-related expenditure for different activities, however, there is insufficient data to allow the monetisation of **benefits**. The potential benefits of FEAD are detailed in Annex 2 (Costs and Benefits table) of the study with information on the benefits by stakeholder group (end recipients, partner organisations, Member States and the European Commission/EU) and include the following:

1. Benefits of the distribution of food and goods:
 - a. Enhanced nutritional intake of end recipients
 - b. Improved hygiene of end recipients
 - c. Increased educational attainment
2. Benefits of accompanying measures and social inclusion activities
 - a. Improved cooking skills of end recipients
 - b. Improved hygiene of end recipients
 - c. Healthier nutrition of end recipients
 - d. Improved employability of end recipients
 - e. Improved wellbeing and mental health of end recipients
 - f. Improved financial skills of end recipients
 - g. Improved knowledge regarding (social) services of end recipients
3. Indirect benefits of FEAD support
 - a. Improved collaboration between stakeholders
 - b. Capacity building in the delivery of social funds or services
 - c. Improved awareness of social problems
 - d. Enhanced sense of recognition
4. Stronger sense of community

There is insufficient data to allow the monetisation of these benefits. For example, the intervention logic of food support is that inadequate nourishment directly results in innumerable physical, mental, and emotional health consequences which can lead to heavy cost burdens, further health concerns, and even death. Wearing dirty and wet clothes for long stretches of time, makes people vulnerable to the spread of transmissible disease, including COVID-19. In addition, wearing clean and comfortable high-quality clothes can help to open the doors to employment and housing opportunities. However, even if one can argue that without FEAD measures people have little chance of moving out of poverty or social exclusion, **the difficulty is in assessing to which extent FEAD measures improve these results.** In addition, Managing Authorities did not collect sufficient end recipient data related to wellbeing, health outcomes or similar metrics which would make a traditional cost-benefit analysis feasible.¹⁷⁴ None of the reviewed national evaluations was able to adequately assess the impact of FEAD.¹⁷⁵ Monetising the outcomes of food provision to the most deprived via OP I is therefore not possible.

Similarly, **it is difficult to quantify the results of providing basic material support, such as ‘school starter kits’** in Austria, which are designed to ease financial burdens on deprived families and lead to longer-term downstream effects. Additionally, specific employment or similarly monetizable outcomes from OP II would be difficult to identify, as the focus of social inclusion actions is more on social inclusion via progress towards removing language barriers or information deficits, which might only result in employment outcomes as a side-effect. In addition, no adequate data was collected by Member States or as part of the national evaluations which were carried out in all OP II countries that would allow to assess the impact OP II interventions had on end recipients.

In light of these clear limitations, the **CEA focussed therefore on the calculation of cost-output ratios principally for the provision of food support under OP I** (which made up 93.6% of total FEAD expenditure). It aimed to determine the amount of money by country that was spent per end recipient and per distributed kilo of food, and how these metrics developed over the time of the intervention. Problems of this analysis were that the form of support (e.g. whether end recipients were provided with food packages or cooked meals) and the intensity of support (e.g. how much food an end recipient received from partner organisations) varied widely across all Member States. Special attention was paid to extreme outliers in the cost-output ratios for which additional analysis was carried out such as the review of Annual Implementation

¹⁷⁴ The Special Report of the European Court of Auditors concluded in 2019 that due to a lack of data on the results of FEAD, ‘the contribution towards alleviating the worst forms of poverty could not be established’.

¹⁷⁵ Further details regarding the lack of data that would allow to quantify the impact of FEAD on recipients can be found under Question 13 in the main report.

Reports. In addition, Managing Authorities were contacted to provide additional context and additional cost data on food items.

In order to overcome the lack of quantifiable impact data that would allow the monetisation of FEAD benefits, **a literature review was conducted with the aim to assess whether academic literature can shed light on the cost-effectiveness of FEAD activities.** While research regarding the impacts and cost-effectiveness of food provision in developed countries is scarce, there is a sufficient body of literature on the effects of school meal provision which was the sole FEAD activity in Cyprus and also conducted to smaller degrees in Croatia and Czechia. As Cyprus used all funding for food provision on the distribution of breakfasts in schools to disadvantaged pupils, it was possible to calculate the price for each provided meal which was not possible for countries which distributed both meals and food packages. This enabled the comparison of this FEAD activity with that of other school meal programmes in Cyprus.

The interviews with stakeholders provided a comprehensive data source that allowed all efficiency-related research questions to be addressed. Interviewees gave elaborate insights into the perceived cost-effectiveness of different activities, factors that enhanced or reduced efficiency, the effect of vouchers, flat rates and monitoring requirements and how the programme could be simplified in the future. The public consultation provided additional insights in the form of quantifiable perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of different activities and the most burdensome administrative tasks. It also provided further qualitative suggestions regarding potential scope for simplifications.

All conducted case studies and all national evaluations as well as data from the focus groups were reviewed for evidence related to efficiency and cost-effectiveness. It should be noted that information from interviews, case studies, evaluations and public consultations that directly relates to the efficiency RQs 5-9 is presented in the main report and, in order to avoid the duplication of information, not additionally presented in this Annex. **This cost-effectiveness analysis should therefore be seen as complimentary to the results in the main report and not be read in isolation.**

5. The costs of undernutrition

As outlined above, due to data limitations, the CEA focuses primarily on the cost-effectiveness of OP I, food support. **The cost-effectiveness of OP I of FEAD is intricately linked to the financial toll of malnutrition and undernutrition across the EU.** These costs manifest in two primary ways: direct expenses borne by the healthcare systems of EU nations and indirect societal costs. Indirect costs encompass a range of factors, including diminished work capacity among affected individuals and reduced educational achievement stemming from impaired cognitive development in undernourished children. While quantifying the indirect costs of malnutrition on EU Member States poses significant challenges, the direct costs can be gauged through the financial strain on healthcare systems, primarily due to disease related malnutrition.

Malnutrition is associated with a range of health conditions, including weakened immune systems, increased susceptibility to infections, delayed wound healing, and higher rates of hospitalisation. Individuals experiencing undernutrition may also suffer from nutritional deficiencies, such as deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals, which can lead to various health problems. Malnourished individuals are more likely to require hospitalisation and may have longer hospital stays compared to well-nourished individuals. The costs associated with hospitalisations for malnutrition-related conditions, including treatments, medications, and specialised care, contribute to overall healthcare expenditures.

Undernutrition can exacerbate existing health conditions and increase the risk of developing complications and comorbidities, such as pressure ulcers, infections, and impaired wound healing. Treating these complications adds to healthcare costs and may require specialized interventions and prolonged care. Severe undernutrition, particularly among older adults, may necessitate long-term care services, such as nursing home placements or home health care. The costs associated with long-term care for malnourished individuals, including personal assistance, nutritional support, and medical supervision, contribute significantly to healthcare expenditures.

Several studies have tried to assess the healthcare related costs within EU national contexts. **A literature review of available research estimated the cost of the hospitalisation of a malnourished person in Europe to lie between EUR 1 640 and EUR 5 829¹⁷⁶.** Country-specific studies estimated total healthcare

¹⁷⁶ Khalatbari-Soltani, Saman et al. (2015): The economic cost of hospital malnutrition in Europe; a narrative review. Clinical Nutrition ESPEN, Volume 10, Issue 3, e89 - e94.

related annual costs for undernutrition to be around EUR 1.4 billion in Ireland¹⁷⁷, EUR 9 billion in Germany¹⁷⁸ and 10 billion in Italy¹⁷⁹. A widely cited study estimated that **malnutrition cost EU governments up to EUR 120 billion annually** around the year 2010. More recent insights on the costs of malnourishment in the EU are scarce. While it is difficult to determine how representative these figures are for the current context, the decrease of individuals unable to afford a healthy meal from 10.7% to 8.3% combined with increased inflation levels, which will also affect healthcare costs, suggests that they are on a comparable level.

In summary, the multifaceted impact of malnutrition on health and society emphasises the vital role of initiatives such as FEAD in tackling this complex challenge. While the direct financial strain on healthcare systems is evident, broader societal implications, including reduced workforce productivity and educational attainment, underscore the urgency of effective interventions. While precisely quantifying FEAD's contribution to reducing healthcare costs poses challenges, the substantial investment in combatting malnutrition through programmes like FEAD is justified by the considerable costs it alleviates for EU Member States.

6. Assessment of FEAD costs and outputs

6.1. Overall costs

Within the EU, **FEAD stands as the largest programme of its kind, offering essential provisions such as food and basic materials to those in need.** An initial allocation of EUR 3.8 billion was provided for implementation during the 2014-2020 period. FEAD funding was later boosted to address the surge in poverty and financial strain across Europe in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, largely through financial transfers from REACT-EU. This increase aimed to ensure the continuous provision of vital assistance during a time of widespread crisis. By 2022, the approved funding for FEAD operations surpassed EUR 5.6 billion. Note that the EUR 5.6 billion is the total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations. This is more than the approved budget of EUR 5.2 billion. This difference is explained by allowing for overbookings in case of financial corrections. Figure A. 2 illustrates the cumulative approved funding for FEAD throughout the 2014 to 2022 implementation period. Following an initial two-year period with relatively lower intensity, marked by delayed initiation of FEAD operations in many Member States, the approved funding remained relatively stable, ranging between EUR 600-800 million per year. However, a notable upswing occurred in 2022, pushing the approved funding to over EUR 900 million. The figure also highlights the funding reported as paid by Managing Authorities during the execution of FEAD operations which amounted to around EUR 4.2 billion in 2022.

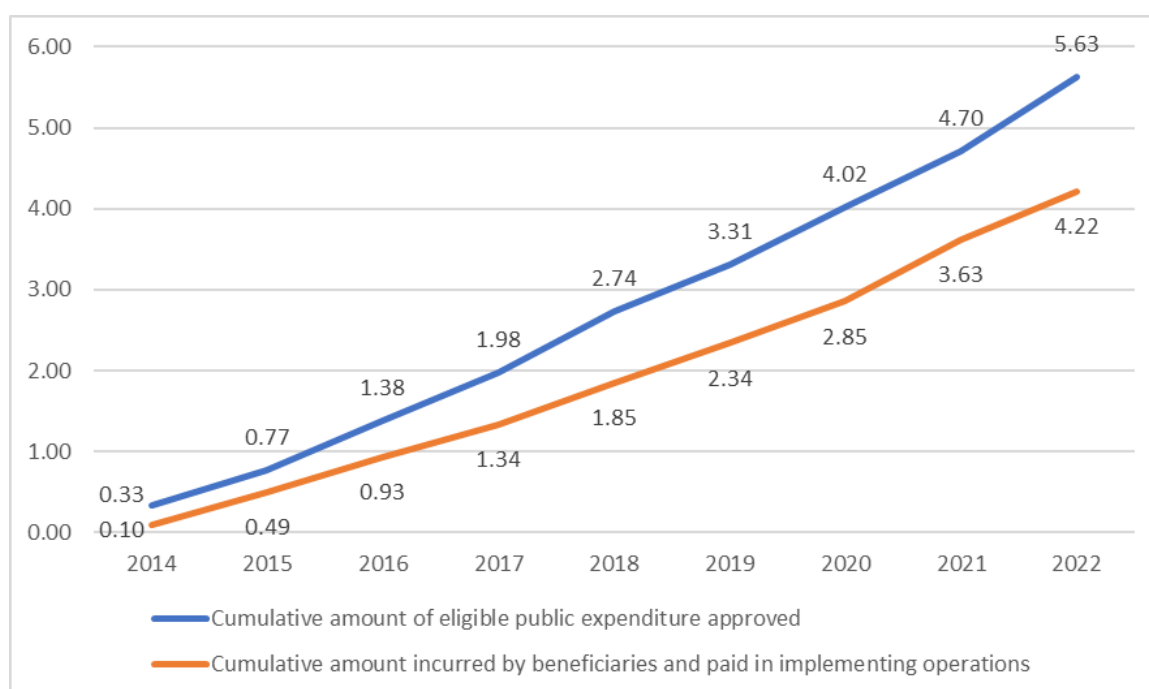
A discernible gap emerges between the approved funding and reported expenditures, indicating challenges in some Member States in fully utilising the allocated funds. This disparity steadily widens throughout the implementation period, reaching a peak of approximately EUR 1.4 billion in 2022. This is potentially explained by additional funding being made available through REACT-EU.

¹⁷⁷ Rice N, Normand C. The cost associated with disease-related malnutrition in Ireland. Public Health Nutr. 2012 Oct;15(10):1966-72.

¹⁷⁸ Cepton-net [internet]. Publications [cited 2011 Nov 15]. Müller MC, Uedelhofen KW, Wiedemann UCH. Mangelernährung kostet 9 Milliarden Euro jährlich 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Pradelli L, Zaniolo O, Sanfilippo A, Lezo A, Riso S, Zanetti M. Prevalence and economic cost of malnutrition in Italy: A systematic review and meta-analysis from the Italian Society of Artificial Nutrition and Metabolism (SINPE). Nutrition. 2023 Apr; 108:111943.

Figure A. 2 – Cumulative funding (EUR billion) for FEAD by year in relation to cumulative expenditures related to the implementation of FEAD operations, 2014-2022



Source: SFC2014 data.

Figure A. 3 illustrates the divergence in the utilisation (funds reported as spent) of approved FEAD funding across Member States. Notably, eleven Member States reported nearly complete utilisation, reaching rates of approximately 95% or higher. In contrast, seven states, namely France, Slovakia, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Romania, and the Czech Republic, exhibited utilisation rates below 70%. The remaining Member States fell within the range of 80% to 95%.

The data implies that the lower utilisation rates in certain Member States may be partially attributed to increases in approved funding resulting from the European crisis response. A recent study on the absorption rates of cohesion policy funds has shown that by the end of August 2023, only 45% of REACT-EU funds had been paid to Member States.¹⁸⁰ While only four out of the 11 Member States with the highest utilisation rates received additional funding through financial transfers from REACT-EU, the same was true for 6 out of the 7 Member States with utilisation rates below 70%. **This suggests that some Member States faced challenges in fully deploying funds made available at relatively short notice, indicating potential difficulties in adapting swiftly to increased allocations.**

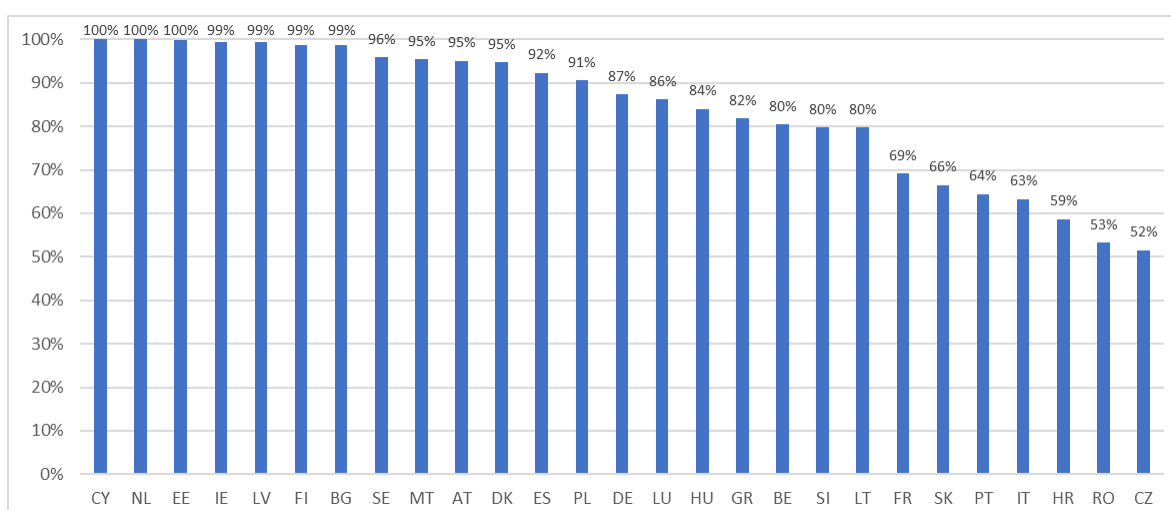
Member States with low utilisation of FEAD funds were contacted for explanations. The Czech Managing Authority responded, attributing delays in one operation to the hindrance in transferring funds to another. They discovered the unspent funds too late after the final audit to reallocate them. They also acknowledged the impact of REACT-EU funding on reduced absorption as the programming period ended, complicating new procurements.

The national evaluation for Italy¹⁸¹, one of the countries with the lowest utilisation rates, conducted an in-depth description of financial implementation by assessing the claimed expenditures of every participating partner organisation. The evaluation found that there was a large degree of variance between organisations with some having claimed nearly 100% of their approved funding while other organisation had not claimed any of the assigned funding by September 2021. Unfortunately, the authors of the evaluation did not provide an interpretation of this finding.

¹⁸⁰ Research for REGI Committee (2023). *Absorption Rates of Cohesion Policy Funds: Preliminary Study Results*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/747284/IPOL_STU\(2023\)747284_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/747284/IPOL_STU(2023)747284_EN.pdf)

¹⁸¹ Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali (2020), *Servizio di valutazione indipendente del PON Inclusionione FSE 2014/2020*.

Figure A. 3 – Utilisation of approved funding by member state, 2014-2022



Source: SFC2014 data.

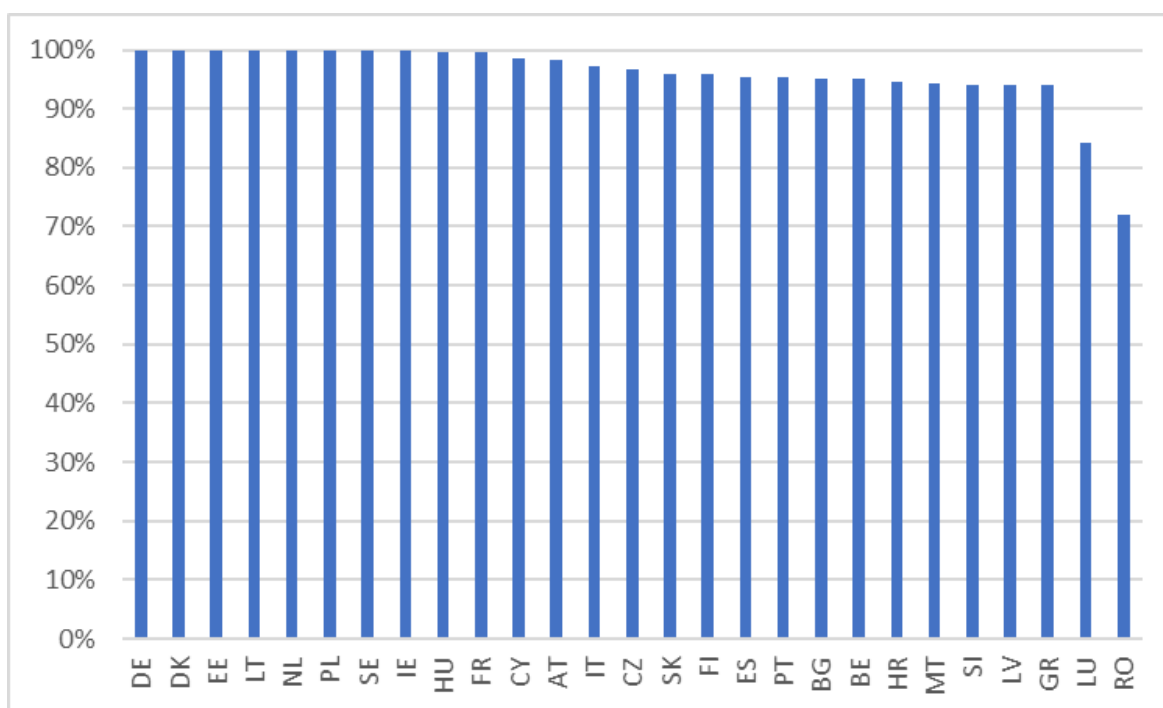
Managing Authorities were also asked to report how funds were used for different activities¹⁸². Reported expenditure for specific activities amounted to EUR 4 billion in total. A comparison with the overall reported expenditure of EUR 4.2 billion, as highlighted above, reveals a gap of approximately EUR 200 million. Figure A. 4. delineates the distribution of expenditure, showcasing the proportion reported as spent by Member States for food support, basic material assistance, or social inclusion measures in relation to the reported total spending.

For eleven Member States, there is a congruence between total spending and spending by activity. Conversely, in several other Member States, almost 95% of the spending is attributed to food and basic material support. Engaging with the Managing Authorities of these Member States revealed that these states do not explicitly list funds allocated to technical assistance, which can constitute up to 5% of their total spending in the form of a flat rate. Notably, Romania stands out, with only 72% of its total spending allocated to food support or basic material assistance. The reason is that Romania was the only country that provided a significant share of its total support via vouchers which were declared in a separate indicator. Adding the EUR 99.8 million to the expenditures incurred by beneficiaries shows that Romania had an implementation rate of more than 99%.

Upon closer examination of allocated funds, **94% were directed towards operations supporting the distribution of food under OP I**. Additionally, approximately 4% funded the distribution of basic material assistance, also under OP I, while around 2% supported social inclusion measures delivered as part of OP II.

¹⁸² The exception are the four countries which implemented OP II as they used all their available funding for social inclusion measures.

Figure A. 4 – Share of funding which was reported as spent by Member States for food support, basic material assistance or social inclusion measures as proportion of the reported total spending



Source: SFC2014 data.

6.2. Administrative costs

The recording of administrative costs was not a monitoring requirement of FEAD. In addition, the nature of the delivery of FEAD which involved paid staff and volunteers on the EU, national and local level in Managing Authorities, headquarters of partner organisations and local outlets of partner organisations makes it very difficult to collect this information. Accordingly, **it is very challenging to provide an estimate of the administrative costs that were incurred during the implementation of FEAD.** Annual Implementation Reports and national evaluations were reviewed for quantifiable information in that regard. In addition, Managing Authorities were asked to provide estimates of administrative costs. These actions have not produced any comparable results. The Managing Authorities of Spain and Poland specifically stated that this information was not collected as there had not been an obligation to do so. The Belgian Managing Authority denied being able to provide this information without giving further details. For some countries, indicative amounts of administrative costs were provided. The Danish Managing Authority calculated EUR 321.41 for administrative expenses for the period January 1st 2016 – December 31st 2021, specifying that these costs are largely consisting of wages and that it is not possible to retrieve similar information from partner organisations as they had not been asked to split their expenses in such a way and as the project had already been completed in 2021. The Swedish Managing Authority provided a similar answer, stating that the costs for staff members working on FEAD amounted to EUR 390,954 and that they were not able to provide data for partner organisations.

While the Dutch Managing Authority did not provide an answer, the Dutch national evaluation cites **estimates of administrative costs that are high, totalling 30% of all resources.** However, this estimate was based on only one interviewed staff member, making it questionable how accurate this figure is for the total FEAD delivery.

The Portuguese case study cites a representative of the Managing Authority which estimated that for the authority itself **administrative tasks relating to FEAD may amount to 400/500 hours each month** which can vary depending on time of the year.

While these examples can provide an insight into the difficulty of estimating, quantifying and comparing administrative costs, it should be emphasised that they are of little use for the estimation of administrative costs related to the implementation of FEAD. **The vast majority of administrative costs in terms of complying with monitoring requirements, budgeting, coordination of volunteers etc. was borne by partner organisations.** As those were not asked to collect details on administrative costs, which would have

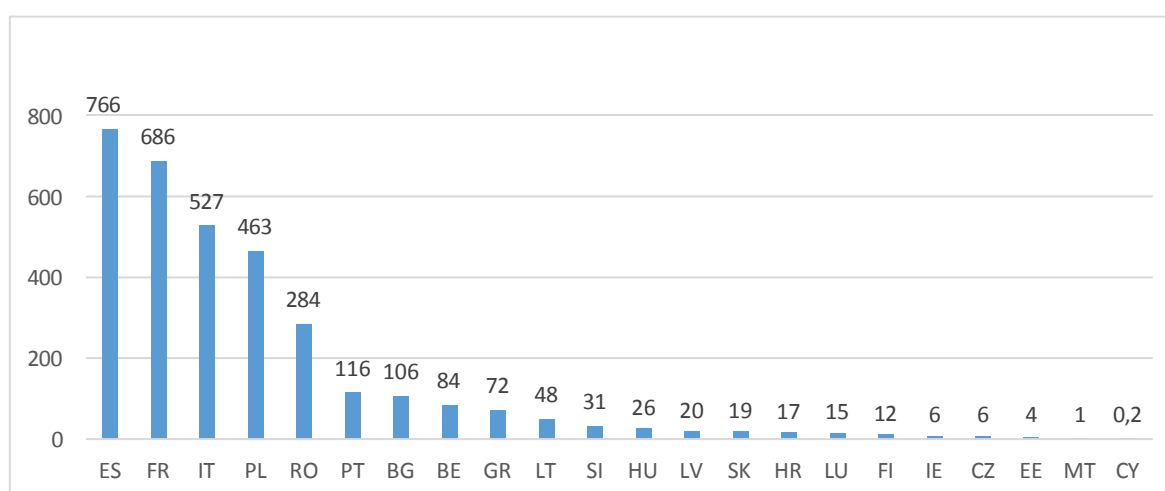
constituted an extreme administrative burden in itself, **it is not possible to provide details on administrative costs and administrative costs per staff as required by the Better Regulation Guidelines.**

6.3. Outputs and cost-benefit ratios of food provision

6.3.1. Quantity and types of distributed food

Since its establishment in 2014 until the latest available data in 2022, **FEAD has facilitated the distribution of a cumulative 3.3 million tons of food across EU Member States.** Figure A. 5 illustrates the distribution of quantities in tons for each member state. These figures vary considerably, from 766 000 tons in Spain to 153 tons in Cyprus, influenced not only by the varying population sizes of the countries, the types of food distributed and the achieved price for food, but also by decisions on whether Member States allocated FEAD funds exclusively for food provision or opted for providing basic material assistance as well. The figure shows that the vast majority of food (82%) was distributed in only five countries: Spain, France, Italy, Poland and Romania.

Figure A. 5 – Total sum of distributed food in ‘000 tons, 2014-2022

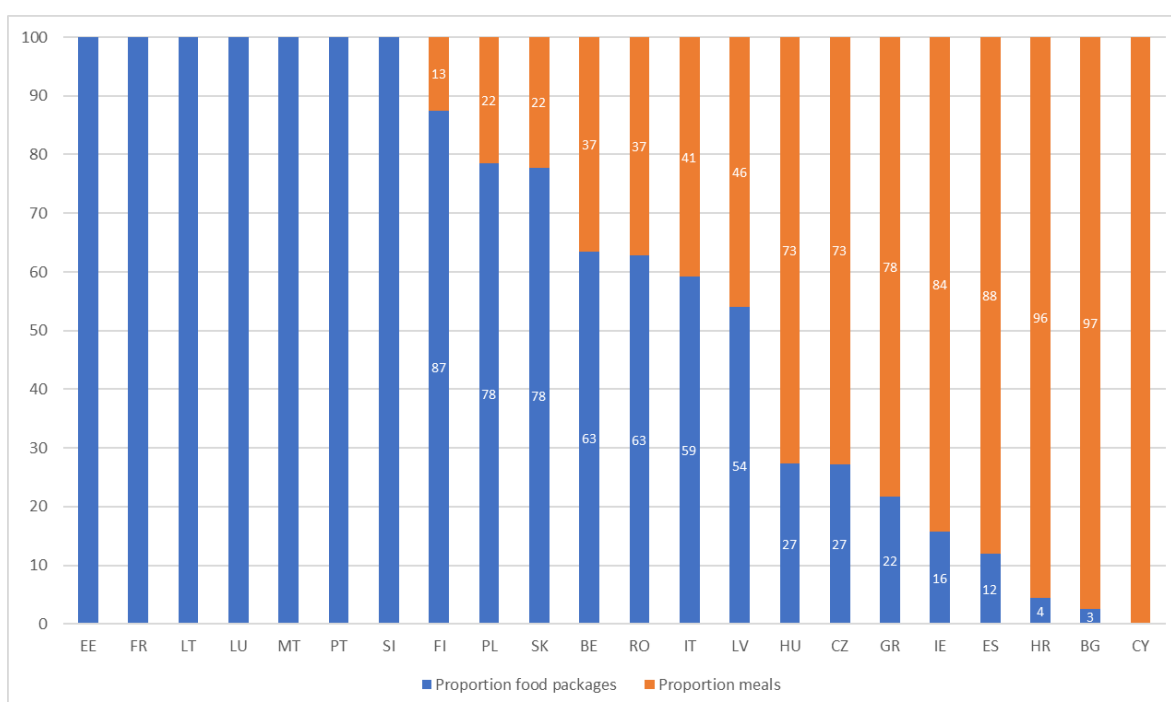


Source: SFC2014 data.

Member States and their partner organisations exercised significant discretion in implementing the FEAD mandate, aiming to offer food assistance to the most deprived populations. Although the predominant method of distribution involved providing food packages for end recipients to prepare their own meals, this approach was deemed insufficient for certain groups facing the most extreme forms of poverty, such as the homeless. Consequently, several Member States opted to supplement food packages with the provision of cooked meals.

Figure A. 6 illustrates the disparity between the reported number of distributed food packages and meals in each member state offering food support. Notably, seven Member States—Estonia, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, and Slovenia—exclusively provided food packages. In contrast, Cyprus emerged as the sole country exclusively offering prepared meals by using FEAD funding for a school meal programme offering free breakfasts in the form of sandwiches to disadvantaged pupils. This unique approach contributes to the observation that Cyprus reported the lowest quantity of distributed food when assessed solely by weight as most Member States focused heavily on the distribution of staple foods such as rice, pasta and sugar which incur a lower price per kilo.

Figure A. 6 – Proportion of distributed food packages and meals in %, 2014-2022

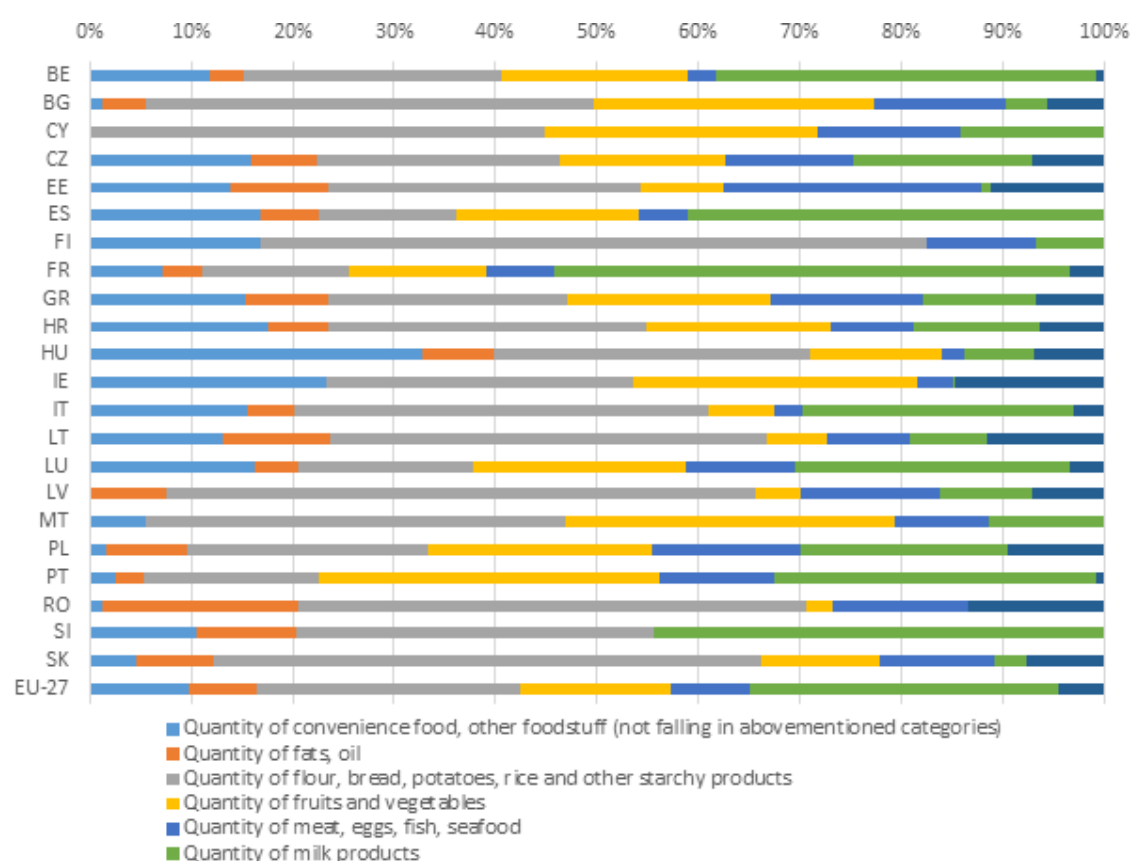


Source: SFC2014 data.

The composition of distributed food, as revealed in the graph below, highlights variations among Member States. Across the EU27, the largest share, constituting 30%, falls under the category of milk products, followed closely by flour, bread, potatoes, rice, and other starchy products at 26%. Fruits and vegetables make up 15% of distributed food, while meat, eggs, fish, and seafood make up 8%, followed by fats and oils at 7% and sugar at 4%. Approximately 10% of the distributed food falls into the category of convenience or other food items.

In the majority of Member States, the most prevalent category of distributed food was comprised of flour, bread, potatoes, rice, and other starchy products. The noteworthy observation that milk products constituted the largest proportion of the overall distributed food stems from the distribution patterns of Spain and France. These two countries, being the foremost distributors of food, distributed significantly greater quantities of milk products compared to starchy products.

Figure A. 7 – Composition of distributed food



Source: SFC2014 data.

6.3.2. Cost per type of food support delivered

Price per kilogram of distributed food

Examining the data on the total food distribution managed by the FEAD programme between 2014 and 2022, alongside the financial disbursements documented under OP I, shows that the **overall cost per kilogram of distributed food was EUR 1.13**. The cost per kg was calculated by dividing the total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to provision of food support by the total quantity of food support distributed. Figure A. 8 graphically illustrates the evolution of the cost associated with distributing one kilogram of food throughout the implementation timeline.

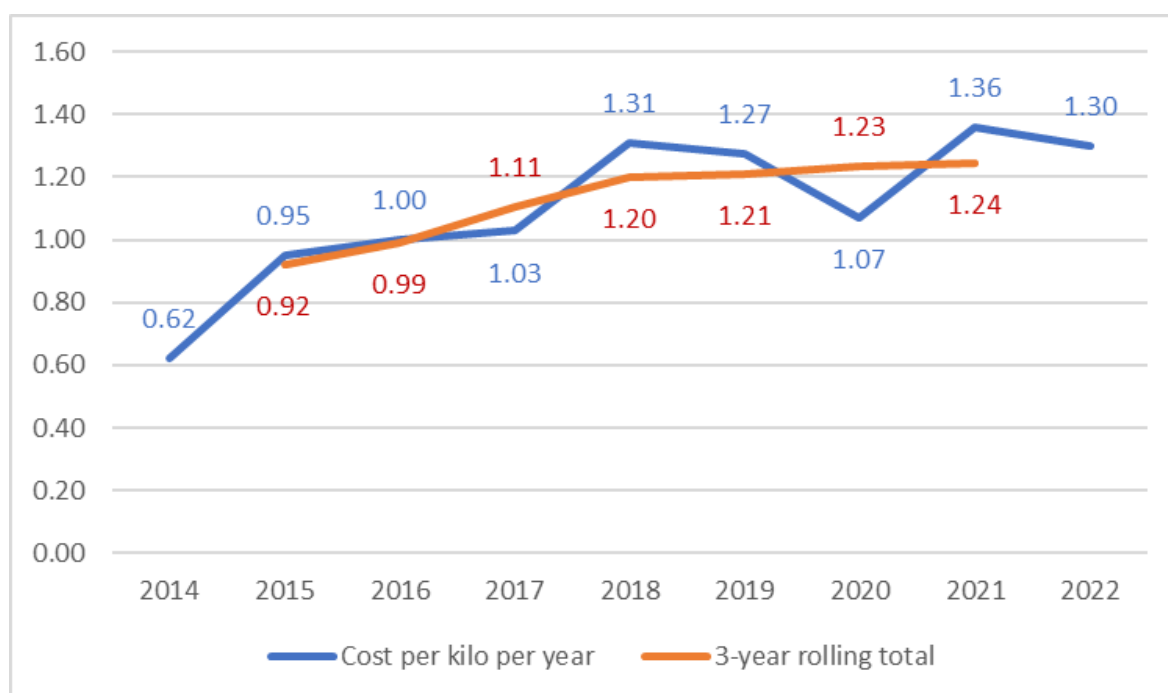
Notably, in 2014, the cost per kilogram stood at EUR 0.62, yet this figure does not accurately reflect the overall performance of the Fund as a significant number of Member States only commenced their food provision operations in 2016. Subsequently, following the initiation of operations in most Member States, the cost stabilised at approximately EUR 1.00 before witnessing an ascent to EUR 1.31 in 2018. The temporal trajectory exhibits a downturn in 2020, possibly attributed to disruptions of FEAD operations caused by the global pandemic, followed by a resurgence to the previous value exceeding EUR 1.30.

Upon scrutinising the data available on the SFC Support Portal, inconsistencies have been identified in certain countries. Year-on-year variations in food provision did not consistently align with the corresponding funding incurred, suggesting time lags in reporting timelines. Some Member States reported substantial expenditures in years during which no food was reported as distributed. Consequently, the figure presented below incorporates a 3-year rolling combined value¹⁸³, offering a more dependable estimate of the cost-output ratio's progression. This analysis reveals a consistent increase from EUR 0.92 in the period spanning 2014 to 2016 to EUR 1.24 in the interval from 2020 to 2022. Some of this increase can be attributed to general price increases. **However, there is also evidence that several Member States adjusted the types of distributed food during the evaluation period.** For example, Portugal and Greece indicated in their Annual Implementation Reports

¹⁸³ For example, the value 1.24 for 2021 reflects the average unit costs achieved in the three years from 2020 to 2022.

that, following feedback from recipients, attempts were made to diversify the distributed food. Instead of focussing on cheap and durable staple foods such as rice, pasta, sugar and flour, more expensive products such as legumes and canned fish were included in the food packages in order to align the content of packages better with the actual consumption habits of recipients. **The responsiveness of Managing Authorities to the actual needs of recipients has therefore also contributed to increasing per kilo prices of distributed food aid over the lifetime of FEAD.**

Figure A. 8 – Development of the incurred costs for distributing one kilo of food among all Member States across the total implementation period



Source: SFC2014 data.

Figure A. 9 shows how the cost to output ratios varied across all Member States that used FEAD funds for food provision. The figure illustrates that the **cost of distributing one kilo of food differed substantially across countries and ranged from EUR 4.94 in Cyprus to EUR 0.20 in Luxembourg**. Most countries fell in the range of EUR 1 to EUR 3.

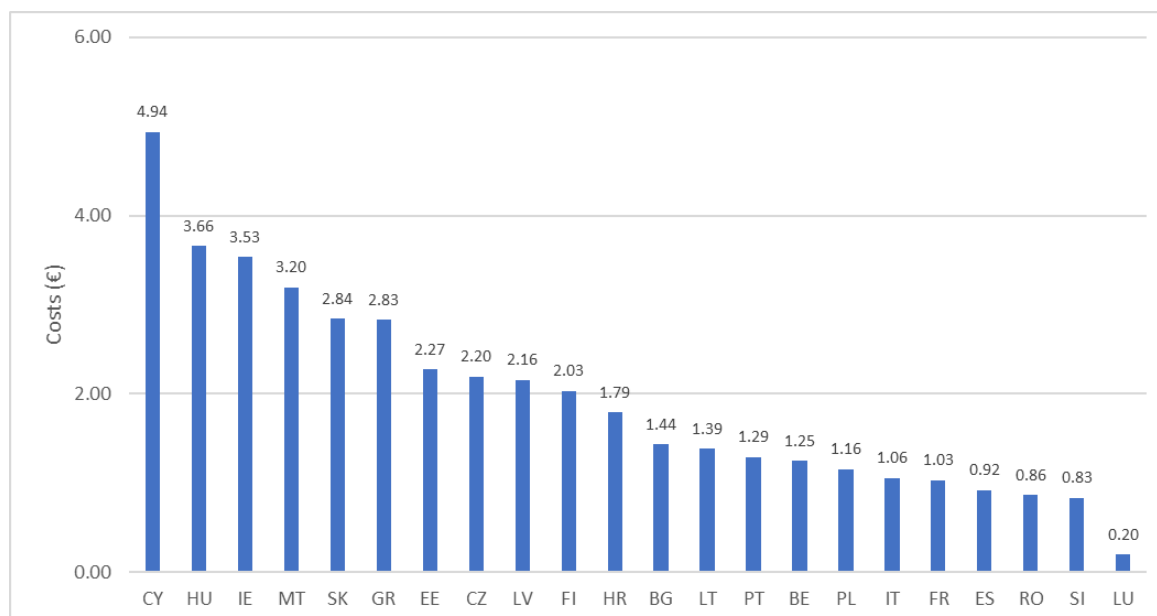
These results should be interpreted with caution as the mode of food delivery varied widely across Member States which reduces the comparability of the calculated cost per output ratios, and which makes **it difficult to assess whether these results are based in different levels of cost-effectiveness**. This is particularly true for the two extreme outliers Cyprus and Luxembourg. Cyprus, as shown above, was the only country that did not distribute any food packages but spent their entire budget for food support on the provision of prepared breakfasts in the form of sandwiches for school children. This stands in contrast to the approach of countries which distributed food packages which often contained cheap and durable food products such as pasta, sugar or cooking oil. Taking into account the 722,368 meals Cyprus reported as distributed shows that each breakfast had an average weight of 212g and incurred a cost of EUR 1.05 which compares cheaply against Europe wide prices for the provision of breakfast to school children.

The very low cost per kg of distributed food in Luxembourg of only EUR 0.20 is identical with the value that was calculated during the mid-term evaluation which only considered data for 2016. The discretion of Member States to organise the delivery of support based on the local context also included the possibility to use FEAD funding solely for the transport, distribution and storage of food which was either fully donated or acquired using other sources of funding. In Luxembourg, the share of distributed food which the managing authority marked as not being paid for by FEAD funding amounted on average to 45% which was the highest value among all Member States. The only other countries which indicated that some of the distributed food was not paid for by FEAD were Estonia and, to a marginal degree, Croatia. In addition, Luxembourg opted to provide nearly exclusively cheap staple foods which also resulted in a lower cost per kilo as opposed to other countries which also provided food items that are more expensive in relation to weight such as meat, nuts or tea¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ Examples taken from Malta's AIRs which had the highest expenses per kilo of food amongst countries which only provided food packages and no cooked meals.

According to the submitted AIRs, in most years Luxembourg distributed solely cooking oils, milk, pasta, rice, sugar and canned tuna.

Figure A. 9 – Cost per distributed kg of food via OP I



Source: SFC2014 data.

Cost per person

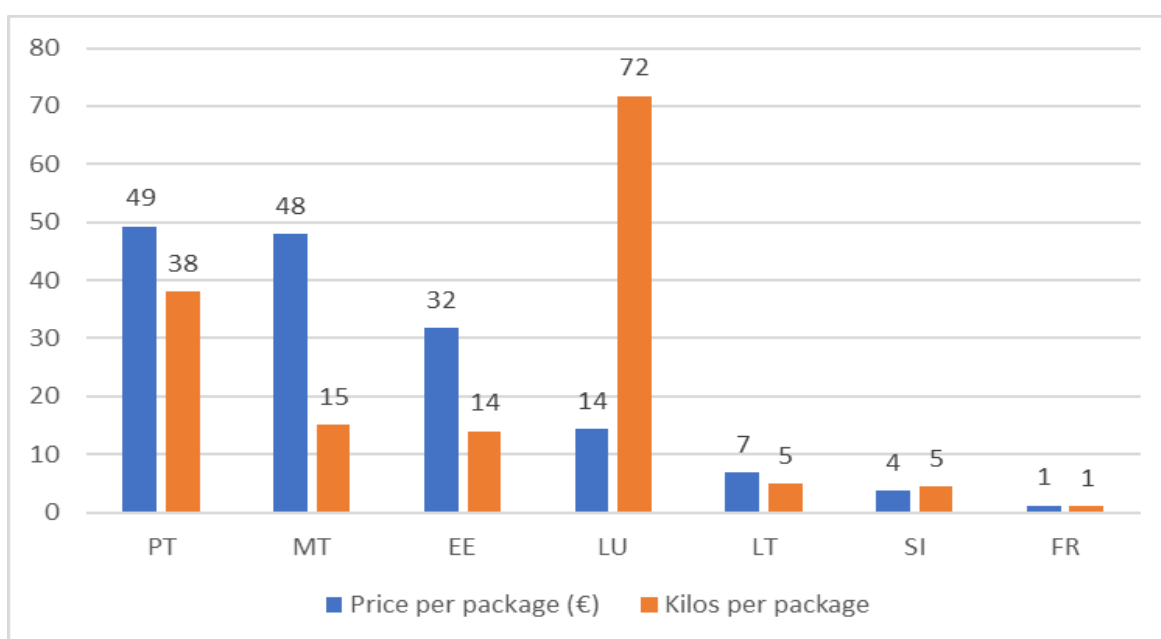
The EU-wide annual average cost of providing one person with food via FEAD was EUR 31¹⁸⁵. This figure varied substantially across Member States, with Finland (EUR 13) and Cyprus (EUR 137) being on the extreme ends. This disparity can partially be explained through the intensity and type of support that was provided. For example, Cyprus was the only country that opted for exclusively providing prepared food in the form of breakfasts for disadvantaged pupils, which explains its higher costs per supported person and per distributed kg of food.

As noted above, the differences in the composition of distributed food reduces the comparability of the price per kilo metric. However, since the volume of food parcels varied widely across all Member States, incurred costs per distributed kilo is still a more comparable metric than incurred costs per food parcel which is only presented here for completeness. As the SFC data presents cost and weight data aggregated for both packages and meals, the weight of food packages and associated costs can only be calculated for the seven countries (EE, FR, LT, LU, MT, PT, SI) which chose not to distribute cooked meals.

Figure A. 10 shows how the price per food package and the weight per food package compare across these seven Member States. Evidently, average weights per food package vary widely from 1kg in France to 38 kg in Portugal and reportedly even 72 kg in Luxembourg. This is not surprising as the size of a package may depend on the frequency of distribution and also the number of people it is determined for, which varies across Member States and may vary even between partner organisations within a Member State. The numbers indicated that in some Member States, food support for a family was delivered in one package while in others, each member of the family received their own package.

¹⁸⁵ The annual average cost per individual is calculated by dividing the yearly amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to provision of food support by the yearly number of end-recipients and calculating the average across all years of implementation.

Figure A. 10 – Cost per distributed package of food by Member State



Source: SFC2014 data.

Cost per specific food item

As the type of food support varied drastically between Member States, it was decided to request additional data on costs per specific item in the hope that comparing the costs for similar items may contribute to the understanding of FEAD's cost-effectiveness. Responses were received from BE, CZ, EL, ES, LT and PO. However, the submitted responses illustrate the difficulties that arise when trying to harmonise data ex-post from various authorities.

Lithuania responded that this data had not been collected as it had not been a requirement of FEAD to aggregate data by item and that this would require the review of invoices since 2014. Greece and Spain referred to their Annual Implementation Reports in which the Managing Authorities publish every year detailed information regarding the quantity and exact brands of distributed food, but not the expenditure that the procurement of each of these items had incurred. Conversely, Belgium also referred to their Annual Implementation Reports which show the expenditures for certain items (for example EUR 700,000 in 2020 for rice) without indicating the quantity that was purchased for this expenditure.

Lastly, Poland and Czechia submitted aggregated data on cost per unit. While Czechia provided data for the whole implementation period of FEAD, Poland only provided data for 2020 and emphasised that the Managing Authority has not aggregated this data for reporting purposes and had to compile information from various documents in order to arrive at a result. The submitted data is presented below in Table A. 19 and Table A. 20.

The price per weight data from Poland illustrates how the choice of distributed food can have a strong impact on the price per kilogram with prices ranging from EUR 0.38 per kilogram for barley groats to more than EUR 3.00 per kilogram for honey and canned mackerel filets. Overall, meat and fish had the highest per kilogram price at EUR 2.26, followed by milk products at EUR 1.15, cooking oils at EUR 0.93, sugar (which included honey) at EUR 0.88, fruit and vegetables at EUR 0.84 and starch products at EUR 0.73.

While many items were distributed both in Poland and in Czechia, a per item comparison is not possible as Poland submitted prices per tonne and Czechia per item. However, for some items such as pasta, rapeseed oil and sugar, it can be assumed that items were distributed in packages weighing one kilogram and that therefore costs per item likely equal costs per kilogram. A comparison of these items shows that products were procured at similar prices:

- One kilogram of pasta incurred expenses of EUR 0.56 in Poland and EUR 0.57 in Czechia.
- One kilogram of rapeseed oil incurred expenses of EUR 0.93 in Poland and EUR 1.09 in Czechia.

- One kilogram of sugar incurred expenses of EUR 0.60 in Poland and EUR 0.63 in Czechia.

Table A. 19 – Prices per distributed tonne per item in Poland, 2020

Expenditure	Amount in tonnes delivered to partner organisations	PLN	EUR	Price per kg (<i>own calculations</i>)
Tomato concentrate	1,649.66	9,407,724.48	2,090,368.53	1.27
Grated beetroot	2,062.20	6,118,538.12	1,359,521.06	0.66
Canned beans	2,208.96	9,170,475.38	2,037,652.48	0.92
Canned carrots and green peas	4,712.40	15,920,254.35	3,537,433.39	0.75
Apple mousse	2,120.94	4,852,999.74	1,078,322.18	0.51
Plum jam	2,209.43	11,204,650.12	2,489,640.09	1.13
Total amount / expenditure on fruit and vegetables	14,963.59	56,674,642.19	12,592,937.73	0.84
Wheat egg pasta	7,362.32	18,537,585.53	4,118,996.63	0.56
Rice	2,946.40	8,792,057.60	1,953,569.17	0.66
Barley groats	2,208.96	3,757,394.57	834,881.95	0.38
Oat flakes	1,472.94	4,390,760.49	975,613.98	0.66
Butter biscuits	589.56	3,621,372.30	804,658.21	1.36
Cereal coffee	883.73	11,524,325.63	2,560,671.04	2.90
Total amount / expenditure on starch products	15,463.91	50,623,496.12	11,248,390.99	0.73
Canned mackerel filets	1,753.25	25,660,222.39	5,701,625.46	3.25
Poultry ham	3,534.45	32,123,920.07	7,137,839.95	2.02
Pork ham	1,767.74	16,482,445.06	3,662,350.50	2.07
Poultry pate	472.74	2,352,838.93	522,793.85	1.11
Total expenditure on meat and fish products	7,528.18	76,619,426.45	17,024,609.76	2.26
UHT milk	10,306.80	23,700,486.60	5,266,177.97	0.51

STUDY SUPPORTING THE EX-POST EVALUATION OF THE 2014-2020 FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO
THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD)

Expenditure	Amount in tonnes delivered to partner organisations	PLN	EUR	Price per kg (<i>own calculations</i>)
Ripening cheese	2,356.50	41,865,579.00	9,302,407.73	3.95
Total expenditure on milk products	12,663.30	65,566,065.60	14,568,585.69	1.15
Sugar	5,890.32	15,872,056.27	3,526,723.92	0.60
Honey	737.20	10,519,475.40	2,337,396.30	3.17
Total expenditure on sugar products	6,627.52	26,391,531.67	5,864,120.22	0.88
Rapeseed cooking oil	5,890.32	24,677,495.64	5,483,266.48	0.93
Total expenditure on oils	5,890.32	24,677,495.64	5,483,266.48	0.93
Total	63,136.82	300,552,657.67	66,781,910.87	1.06

Source: Managing Authority from Poland. Prices were submitted in both PLN and Euros.

Table A. 20 – Prices per distributed tonne per item in Czechia, 2015-2022

Item number	Item	Total pieces	Total CZK incl. VAT	Price per item in Euros, own calculations
1	lentils	59,805	1,154,120.97	0.73
2	peas	51,805	531,415.69	0.39
3	wheat flour	51,805	495,074.48	0.36
4	rice in boiling bags	111,610	1,781,758.94	0.61
5	sugar	51,805	859,678.07	0.63
6	milk powder	59,805	3,694,488.05	2.35
7	egg pasta	103,610	1,550,161.02	0.57
8	vitamin supplements	134,291	1,445,508.32	0.41
9	instant cocoa drink (cocoa in powder)	55,805	1,218,643.44	0.83
10	tomato puree	111,610	1,083,553.69	0.37
11	rapeseed oil	55,805	1,604,556.42	1.09
12	canned pork in own juice	59,805	1,989,441.12	1.26

Item number	Item	Total pieces	Total CZK incl. VAT	Price per item in Euros, own calculations
13	canned beef in own juice	134,291	5,533,393.51	1.57
14	canned tuna	142,291	4,170,061.15	1.11
15	honey	51,805	3,416,669.26	2.51
16	apple pulp snack in glass	207,220	1,601,396.16	0.29
17	fruit jam	138,291	4,749,516.92	1.31
18	baby biscuits	107,610	748,051.43	0.26
19	instant soup	164,972	1,132,615.27	0.26
20	canned beans	82,486	926,771.45	0.43
21	canned goulash	90,486	3,251,160.06	1.37
22	canned sardines	82,486	1,191,427.78	0.55
23	semolina pasta	8,000	185,656.00	0.88

Source: Managing Authority from Czechia. To convert the prices to Euros, the average conversion rate between 2014 and 2022 of 0.038 Euros per CZK was applied.

6.4. Cost-effectiveness of free school meals

As discussed above, monetising achieved benefits of FEAD is extremely difficult as very little quantifiable evidence on FEAD impact was collected by Member States (see RQ 13 in the main report for more details). After reviewing all available data sources in the form of national evaluations, case studies or management information, no examples of the collection of longitudinal outcome data on aspects such as wellbeing, employment or socio-economic status were found that would allow to track the development of FEAD recipients over time.

However, **research conducted outside the FEAD delivery can help to shed some light on the cost-effectiveness of FEAD activities.** While there is a lot of research on the cost-effectiveness and implications of food provision programmes in developing countries, there is very little scientific literature on the cost-effectiveness of similar programmes in developed countries which could be transferred to the European context of FEAD.

However, Cyprus provides a unique opportunity for cost-effectiveness analysis of FEAD using existing academic studies. For most countries, it is not possible to determine the amount of funding that was spent on food packages in opposition to the funding spent on meals as this data was submitted in an aggregated format to the SFC. This is not the case in Cyprus¹⁸⁶, the only country where all FEAD funding was used for the provision of prepared school breakfasts in the form of sandwiches to economically disadvantaged pupils. This specificity allows for precise cost determination of each meal. In addition, while there is little scientific literature on the cost-effectiveness of food provision in developed countries, there is sufficient literature on various aspects of the benefits of free school meals, a topic frequently debated in many nations.

As illustrated in Figure A. 9, the average cost of distributing one kilo of food in Cyprus was EUR 4.94, the highest among all Member States. This higher cost is plausible since providing prepared meals incurs higher expenses for food items and labour compared to distributing cheaper staple foods such as rice, pasta, and

¹⁸⁶ While there were similar programmes in Croatia and Czechia, it was not possible to determine the money spent on these programmes or on each meal as SFC data was submitted aggregated for all operations related to food provision.

sugar, which constituted a significant portion of distributed food in other countries. A closer look at the submitted SFC data from Cyprus shows that a total of 153.15 tonnes of food were distributed in the form of 722 386 meals at a total cost of EUR 756 259. This results in 212 grams of food per meal at a cost of EUR 1.05.

Though acquiring precise data on school breakfasts proves challenging, recent analysis of free school lunch programmes across the EU offers insight. For instance, a study assessing the provision of warm lunches to primary school students in Cyprus estimated an average cost of EUR 2.70 per meal.¹⁸⁷ This makes the expenditure of EUR 1.05 per distributed breakfast—less than 40% of the cost of a hot lunch—appear quite reasonable within the context of Cyprus's school meal programmes.

While most academic research focuses on the effects of free school lunches, there is also evidence of the benefits of free school breakfasts. The **general intake of breakfast has shown to substantially improve the mental performance of children**¹⁸⁸. Free breakfast programmes for disadvantaged pupils have shown to increase the overall school attendance of recipients¹⁸⁹, and to reduce the likelihood of obesity by promoting a healthier diet¹⁹⁰.

In terms of educational outcomes, a randomised controlled trial in the UK found that Year 2 children (aged 6 to 7 years) receiving free breakfasts via the Magic Breakfast programme made the equivalent of two months' additional progress compared to Year 2 children in a randomised control group¹⁹¹. **Improved learning as a result of better nutrition can have long-lasting effects as shown by a study into the long-term effects of the provision of nutritious breakfast at school in Norway which indicated an increase of education by 0.1 years and earnings by 2–3%**¹⁹².

A cost-effectiveness analysis of the Magic Breakfast programme in the UK found the potential for long-term benefits to the economy of around GBP 9 200 per child, nearly half of which would go to public budgets in the form of higher tax revenue. According to the study, this has the potential produce a return of GBP 50 in benefits for every GBP 1 spent indicating high cost-effectiveness¹⁹³.

In conclusion, while no suitable impact data on FEAD food provision was collected which would allow to monetise the effects of FEAD, **existing evidence from related studies underscores the significant benefits of providing free school breakfasts** as happened in Cyprus. It is a cost-effective strategy with substantial educational and economic returns. Considering FEAD food provision in Cyprus appears highly cost-effective, although it had the highest incurred costs per kilogram of food distributed, it may also offer valuable insights into the broader cost-effectiveness of FEAD. It suggests that food distribution in other countries could also yield high cost-effectiveness, reinforcing the value of investing in food provision initiatives under FEAD.

6.5. Individuals benefiting from food support

Estimating the total number of individuals who have benefited from food support through FEAD over 2014 to 2022 poses a challenge. Member States provide annual figures, specifying the number of people receiving food

¹⁸⁷ Guio, Anne-Catherine & Marlier, Eric & Frazer, Hugh. (2021). *Study on the economic implementing framework of a possible EU Child Guarantee Scheme including its financial foundation*. In: [Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

¹⁸⁸ Zipp, A. and Eissing, G. (2019). *Studies on the influence of breakfast on the mental performance of school children and adolescents*. *Journal of Public Health*, 27(1), 103- 110.

¹⁸⁹ Bartfeld JS, Berger L, Men F, Chen Y. (2019). *Access to the School Breakfast Program Is Associated with Higher Attendance and Test Scores among Elementary School Students*. *J Nutr*. 2019 Feb 1;149(2):336- 343.

¹⁹⁰ Millimet, D.L. and Tchernis, R. (2012). *Estimation of Treatment Effects without an Exclusion Restriction: With an Application to the Analysis of the School Breakfast Program: Treatment effects without an exclusion restriction*. *Journal of Applied Econometrics*. 28(6).

¹⁹¹ Crawford, C. et al. (2019). *Magic Breakfast. Evaluation report and executive summary*. In: [https://d2tic4wv01iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/projects/Magic Breakfast report.pdf?v=1715472562](https://d2tic4wv01iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/projects/Magic%20Breakfast%20report.pdf?v=1715472562).

¹⁹² Bütikofer, A., Mølland, E. and Salvanes, K.G. (2018). *Childhood nutrition and labor market outcomes: Evidence from a school breakfast program*. *Journal of Public Economics*, 168, 62-80.

¹⁹³ Franklin, J., Kenward, T., Freeman, K., Remtulla, A., Collier, J., & Greenwold, N. (2021). *The economic cost-effectiveness of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision*. *Pro Bono Economics, Magic Breakfast, Heinz*.

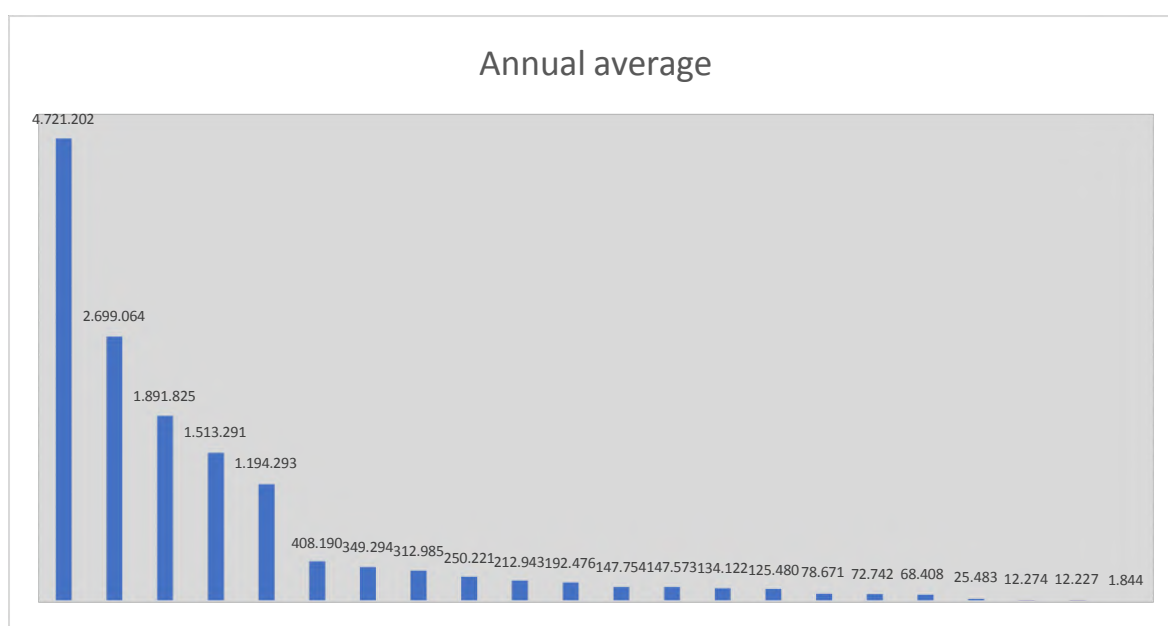
assistance each year. Given the programme's extensive reach and its focus on specific groups (such as homeless individuals and single parents), it is highly likely that a significant portion of recipients has received support over multiple years.

By examining the peak annual figures for each country, indicating the year with the highest number of beneficiaries, we find that a **minimum of 20.5 million individuals** received food assistance in the EU via FEAD which translates to 4.6% of the population of the EU. The inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day was identified as the most relevant material deprivation indicator for FEAD. Comparing the minimum share of 4.6% of the EU population which received FEAD assistance to the average share between 2014 and 2022 of 8.2% of the EU population which can't afford a meal with the specified sources of protein every second day¹⁹⁴ shows that **FEAD has reached as an absolute minimum 56% of people which are affected by this type of material deprivation**.

This calculation assumes minimal overlap between countries which is highly probable as the restricted mobility of the most deprived makes it unlikely for a substantial number of recipients to have sought assistance in more than one country. It also assumes that there is no double-counting within years. It should be stressed that the actual number of individuals which received FEAD assistance will be higher than reported here, however, as it is unclear how large the overlap between different reporting years has been it is not possible to provide a more accurate figure. After supporting around 8.2 million people in its initiation year during which only a small number of Member States started with FEAD operations, FEAD food support reached between 12-16.5 million people in each subsequent year until 2022.

Figure A. 11 shows the annual average of individuals which received FEAD food support by country. As the roll-out of FEAD did not happen in a timely consistent manner across all Member States (countries like Hungary, Croatia or Cyprus did not start with the provision of food until 2017) the chart is only based on the average number of supported individuals in years during which the delivery took place and numbers of supported individuals were recorded. Likewise, to the total sum of distributed food, the large majority of recipients lived in only five countries: France, Italy, Romania, Spain and Poland. In France, 4.7 million deprived people benefitted from FEAD food support in every year on average.

Figure A. 11 – Average annual number of supported individuals in million, 2014-2022



Source: SFC2014 data. Only taking into account years during which food was provided.

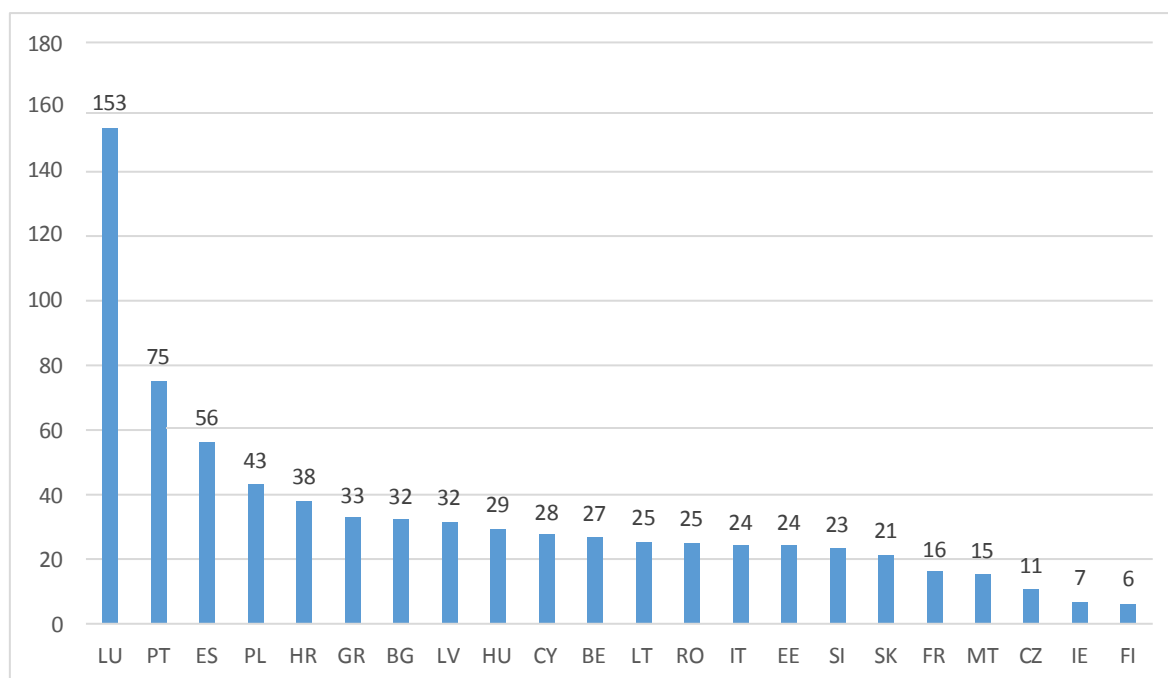
Putting the total amount of distributed food in each country in relation to the total number of supported individuals shows that the intensity of support varied drastically within OP I Member States. In Luxembourg, each recipient received an average of 153 kg of food per year followed by 75 kg in Portugal and 56 kg in Spain. In contrast, individuals in Ireland and Finland received less than 10 kg of food per year which indicated a less intense level of support.

However, follow-up engagements with Managing Authorities and an analysis of Annual Implementation Reports have shown that it was not always clear to what extent partner organisations have correctly registered

¹⁹⁴ See Figure A. 57.

and submitted the number of individuals which will benefit from a food package or whether only the person receiving the food package was recorded as recipient. Different interpretations of data requirements have likely contributed to the large variance in the weight of food that each end recipient received in the form of food packages.

Figure A. 12 – Average kilograms of food support per supported person per year, 2014-2022



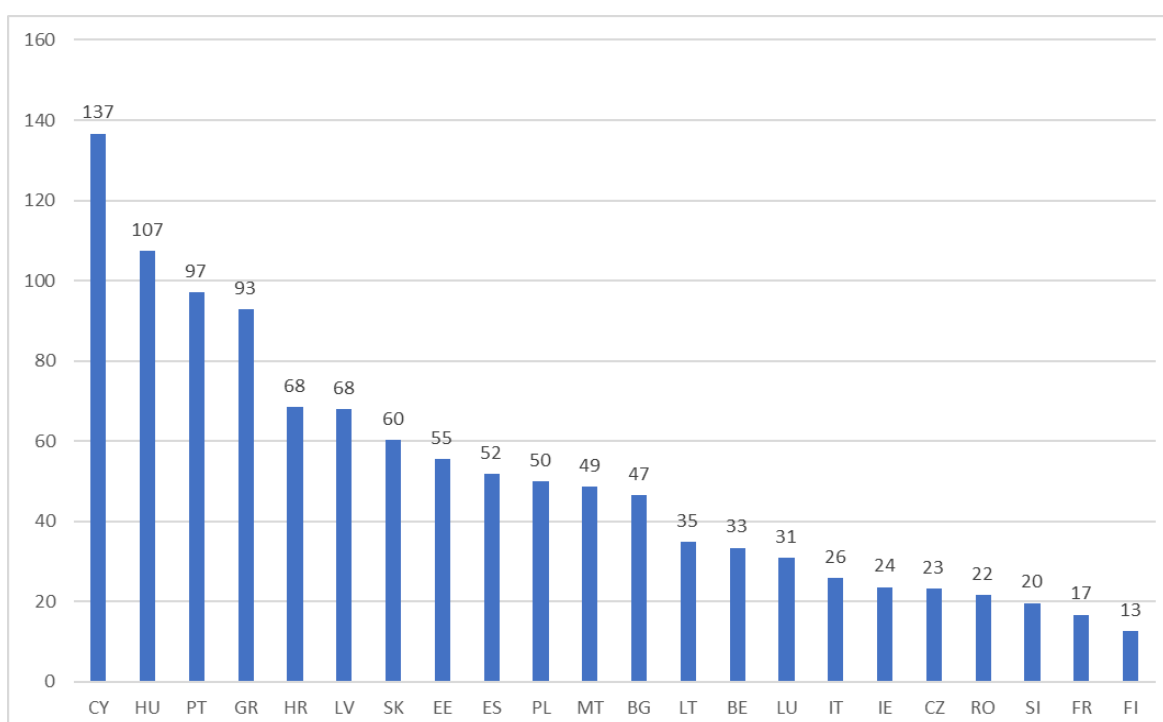
Source: SFC2014 data. Only taking into account years during which food was provided.

Figure A. 13 illustrates the average annual cost for food support per supported person in each country. Notably, Cyprus spent the highest amount, with EUR 137 per supported person, followed by Hungary at EUR 107, Portugal at EUR 97, and Greece at EUR 93. In contrast, Finland exhibited a significantly lower cost per supported person, amounting to EUR 13, indicating a ratio that is ten times smaller than that of Cyprus.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of drawing conclusions solely from the cost-per-supported-person ratios. Disparities among Member States extend beyond financial considerations and encompass factors such as the composition of provided food and the chosen distribution methods – whether through food packages or meals. The intensity of support varied significantly, with some countries opting for weekly distributions while others followed a less frequent, often monthly, pattern. The average volume of annually provided food ranged from 153 kilograms in Luxembourg to 6 kilograms in Finland.

It is important to note that a high cost per supported person does not necessarily imply inefficiency in delivering support. Instead, it may signify a greater degree of support per person, reflecting the diverse approaches taken by Member States. The FEAD, tasked with providing assistance to those in need, usually prioritised targeted support to those that needed it the most, rather than aiming to assist as many people as possible. Consequently, understanding the nuances of support delivery is crucial when interpreting cost-per-supported-person ratios.

Figure A. 13 – Average cost for food support per supported person per year, 2014-2022



Source: SFC2014 data. Only taking into account years during which food was provided.

6.6. Outputs and cost-benefit ratios for other types of FEAD support

6.6.1. Basic material assistance

The monetary value of outputs related to the provision of basic material assistance was considerably lower than the monetary value relating to food provision under OP I. In total, goods worth EUR 221 million were distributed up to 2022. Only around half of Member States (13) opted for providing basic material assistance alongside the provision of food. Austria was the only country which exclusively utilised FEAD funds for basic material assistance provision.

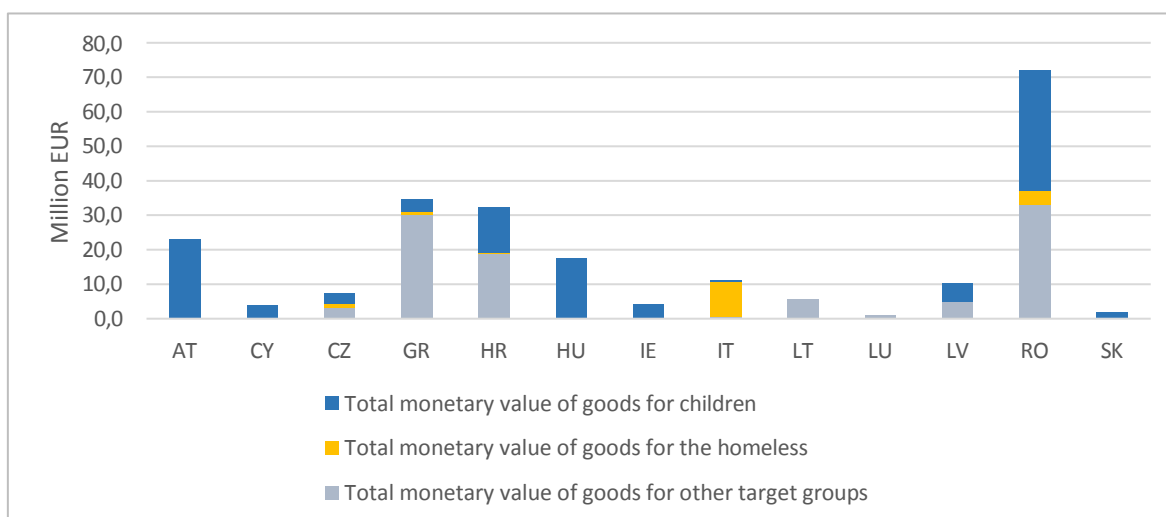
Figure A. 14 shows a split of the value of all distributed goods by country and by target group. With EUR 72 million, Romania reported the highest amount of distributed goods followed by Greece with EUR 35 million and Croatia with EUR 32 million. The total sum of goods for children were valued at EUR 111 million, followed by EUR 97 million for goods for other target groups and EUR 17 million for goods for the homeless.

The existing data does not allow the calculation of cost-output-ratios as it was done for food provision.

Some Member States, namely Cyprus, Lithuania and Luxembourg, recorded identical figures for the value of distributed goods and the money that was spent for the support of operations related to the provision of basic material assistance, suggesting that no funds were used to pay for delivery, storage, administration and similar cost factors. The Lithuanian Managing Authority confirmed that administrative costs for storage or transport had not been paid from this source. The fact that some Managing Authorities use FEAD funding to cover administrative expenses while others either pay these expenses themselves or rely on the support of volunteers and partner organisations reduces the overall comparability of cost-effectiveness in each country.

Other Member States reported total monetary values of distributed goods which largely exceeded the reported expenses for basic material assistance up to factors of four (Romania) and even six (Croatia). In the case of Croatia, goods worth EUR 32.4 million were recorded as distributed which stands against EUR 5.3 million that were recorded as paid for operations relating to basic material assistance. While the Croatian Managing Authority did not react to requests to provide valuable context, the Romanian Managing Authority explained that indicator 2b ‘Total amount of expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to basic material assistance’ only includes payment requests that were sent by beneficiaries and validated by the Managing Authority up to 31 December 2022 and that the final expenditure figures will not be available before the publication of the final implementation report.

Figure A. 14 – Monetary value of distributed goods by Member State and type, 2014-2022



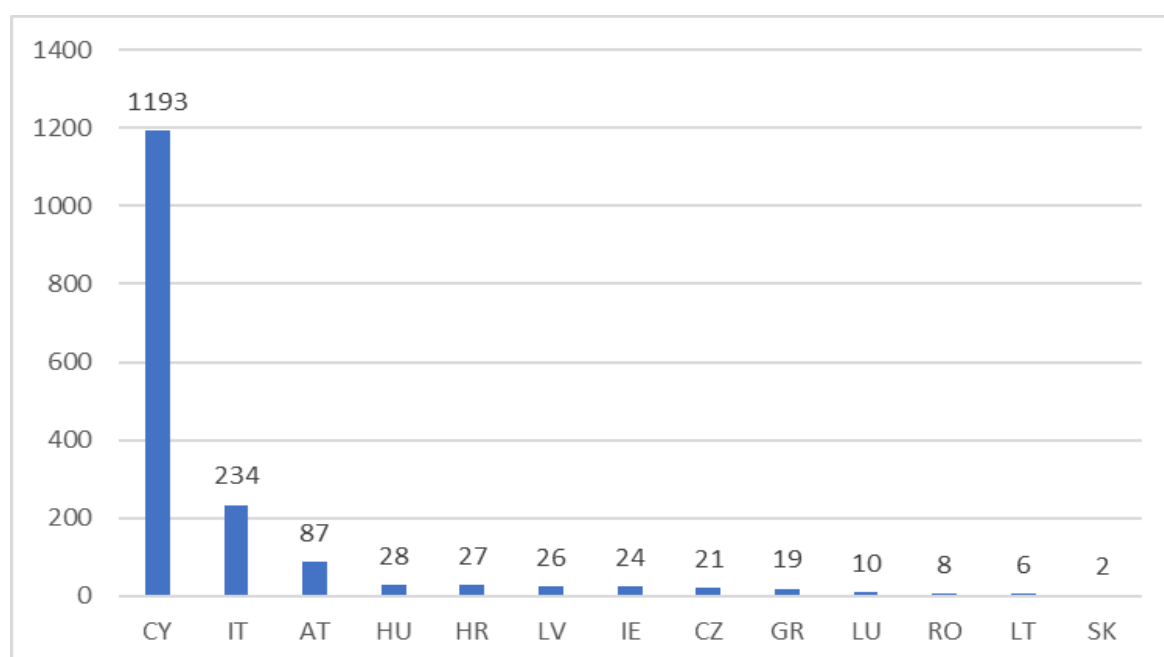
Source: SFC2014 data.

The cost per person of delivery of basic material support was EUR 19¹⁹⁵. Figure A. 15 shows the average cost for basic material support per end recipient per year. **Cost disparities between Member States are even greater than those that were found for food support** as some countries opted for the provision of items to large groups of people while others, particularly Cyprus, decided to provide substantial support to a smaller group of recipients. According to the existing data which Member States registered in the SFC Support Portal, costs to provide basic materials to the most deprived ranged from EUR 2 per end recipient per year in Slovakia to EUR 1 193 in Cyprus, where layettes were exclusively provided and reported to have supported around 3 200 people at a total incurred cost for basic materials of around EUR 3.8 million. The layettes distributed in Cyprus consisted of several essential and partially high-value items for newborns such as baby beds and mattresses, baby bathtubs, highchairs, pushchairs, linen articles and also consumable items such as shampoos, creams and nappies for a total of 24 months.¹⁹⁶ As part of the newborn starter packages, Cyprus also paid a monthly allowance to supported families for the purchase of baby food which makes it plausible why the incurred costs per supported child are so much higher than in other Member States which distributed basic material assistance. In contrast, the countries with the lowest reported costs per supported individual Lithuania and Slovakia distributed exclusively hygiene articles such as shampoo and toothpaste which explains the comparatively lower incurred costs.

¹⁹⁵ The cost per person is calculated by dividing the *total* amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations, by the *total* number of end recipients supported.

¹⁹⁶ See [FEAD 2018 Catalogue of case studies \(europa.eu\)](#).

Figure A. 15 – Average cost (EUR) for basic material support per end recipient per year, 2014-2022



Source: SFC2014 data. Only taking into account years during which basic materials were provided.

6.6.2. Social integration measures under OP II

According to the existing data which Member States registered in SFC, **between 2014 and 2022, the average cost to provide social integration measures under OP II was EUR 527**. This differed by Member State, with Germany registering the lowest cost per person per year at EUR 418. In Denmark this was EUR 944, whilst in Netherlands and Sweden this was at EUR 1316 and EUR 1372 respectively. As the focus of this CEA was on OP I and specifically on food distribution under OP I, due to the data limitations outlined in section 1 and 2 of this annex, additional information on OP II has not been analysed as part of this CEA, but is available in the main report and in the case studies on the OP II implementing countries (see Annex 8).

7. Facilitators and hindlers to cost-effectiveness

Qualitative insights regarding the factors of cost-effectiveness, administrative burdens, scope for simplifications and the Management and Control System are discussed in detail in the main report. In order to avoid the duplication of information, the following only provides a summative overview of factors to cost-effectiveness.

7.1. Procurement and tendering

There was disagreement amongst stakeholders on the efficiency of the public tendering process. Some said the tendering procedures were cost-effective, enabling states to reduce the price of food and goods up to 20% compared to the estimated market value. However, there is an acknowledgement that this is only possible with the cooperation of the public sector. On the other hand, delays in the tendering process can cause increased costs related to food delivery and storage by delaying food delivery and paying for empty storage facilities which can be prevented through effective planning and forecasting. There were further split opinions regarding the cost-effectiveness of sourcing the food. Some felt the purchase and distribution of large quantities of food led to difficulties consuming the food prior to the expiration date or unnecessary products being ordered in excess. Others focused on reducing food waste, using non-perishable products, buying in bulk, removing expensive products from food lists to increase the efficiency of their programmes, or allowing the beneficiaries choice in the products they were given to ensure they only received what they would use.

Other factors mentioned to increase the cost-efficiency of the programme were centralised buying and delivery systems as they helped reduce the cost of procuring through economies of scale and keeping the transportation cost low. Greece had implemented a drive-through delivery system that worked very well, with the recipient showing their national insurance number and receiving their parcel in their car, simplifying the delivery and removing the need for delivery centres. Good and flexible delivery systems also reduced the impact of the

COVID-19 pandemic after March 2020 as they allowed operations to continue during social distancing requirements.

7.2. Organisation

Being able to recruit **partner organisations** with experience and knowledge of implementing these types of activities had a large impact on the cost-effectiveness of the programmes. They can input into the delivery mechanisms and introduce methods to facilitate distribution. Some Member States reported that using charities increased the efficiency of the projects as they already knew the end recipients very well and had contacts in the community. However, other stakeholders reported a **need to train** partners with dialogue skills when reaching the end recipients. They, therefore, suggested further guidelines for organisations to understand the expectations on the organisations, including tools to assess if an organisation was ready to take on the administrative load that projects require. A further hurdle for projects was the **cooperation between all of the actors**, which stakeholders deemed a factor for success. These collaborations worked differently in all Member States, with some reporting the relationship was working well, whilst others reported too many institutions involved, creating a complicated delivery and communication between the different institutions were not working well. Alongside this, stakeholders reported that **accurate planning** had a significant impact on the efficiency of the project. However, this is not easy, particularly in the long term, as conditions and prices change over time, impacting the original planning and the project's ability to deliver or reach as initially planned.

The majority of member state representatives reported the voluntary workforce as being vital to the cost-effectiveness of the projects, especially as they often make up the bulk of the front-line workforce. **Volunteers** have been found to be a great way to supplement the limited resources and make the most out of the funds they have. Stakeholders also noted that an overreliance on volunteer work could be a hindrance. Nevertheless, the view was split here as well, as some reported the need to retrain the volunteers was costly, or it was too time-consuming to find the appropriate staff within the NGOs.

The **flat rates** were mentioned positively by most EU states, as they tended to simplify the procedures, created less paperwork and were easier to check for auditors. However, a large portion of the stakeholders also reported a need for a higher technical assistance budget. Regarding the **vouchers**, there is not much evidence that would allow to assess their impact. The existing evidence provides a mixed picture. Some report they work well, particularly with children and young people, are cost-effective and reduce transport costs. However, there are also stakeholders who report that they are decreasing the cost efficiency as they do not allow bulk purchases or because there are difficulties with their implementation.

A few interviewees perceived a lack of **motivation and political support** which hampered the programme's cost-effectiveness. A Danish stakeholder from a partner organisation felt that a lack of political tailwind and a high turnover rate of staff within the Managing Authority led to delayed distribution of funds which gave the impression that FEAD was generally not considered a high priority. A few stakeholders reported that the complex **national bureaucratic process** caused inefficiencies, although the managing authority's personal effort made the system work more cost-effectively.

7.3. Administration

All Member States recognised the need for respecting requirements, yet they all felt the administrative burden was high to some extent, including the number of people needed to complete administrative tasks. Strategies to ease the burden included using **subcontractors or consultants** to assist with the administration, **simplification** and **digitalisation**. Seven Member States believed that digitisation was important in easing the administrative burden as it removed the redundancy of double filing. A **centralised monitoring and delivery system** also helped to simplify the submission of reports. However, this does come at a cost, as training for the digital platform was costly, and the burden was put on partner organisations and NGOs. In the long run, it was seen as effective and allowed MAs to see the data easily, even if it did not completely eliminate the need for paper during audits in all Member States.

One Member State mentioned that the **quarterly reports** were beneficial, as they allowed for tracking trends over time and showed how much support charities needed from the programme each quarter. However, a few stakeholders also expressed **difficulties retrieving the required data** from partner organisations and NGOs, particularly some organisations that were not interested in collecting data or did not have the required skills to collect the necessary data and needed further training.

Some stakeholders mentioned the need for effective **identification of target groups** the projects are attempting to reach as a factor for efficiency. Managing Authorities, therefore, **used well-established organisations** that were on the ground already and familiar with their target groups. However, complicated eligibility requirements and the need for detailed monitoring sometimes decreased the efficiency. Several partner

organisations found the **national eligibility criteria** cumbersome which required a lot of paperwork and double-checking. Conversely, one Member State explained how they used automatic filing systems to choose the end recipients, reducing the administrative cost. Further digitalisation across all Member States and **access to administrative registers** could positively contribute to reduce this burden.

Around a third of interviewed stakeholders from partner organisations found the most burdensome activity to be monitoring, auditing and reporting, requiring a lot of time and funding from staff members, particularly when **audits were duplicated** at the EU and national levels. One stakeholder mentioned that around 30% of NGOs did not want to contribute to distributing food and goods via FEAD due to fears of being unable to comply with **auditing requirements** which were perceived as challenging.

Lastly, most stakeholders expressed frustration due to the **lack of administrative and technical funding**. At least six Member States required further funding for their regional governments to cover the administrated cost or technical support.

“Administrative burden was very cost draining; You cannot expect this level of admin responsibility from people working at the libraries on top of their duties”. - Stakeholder

“The very high degree of control is exaggerated, and has been unnecessarily time-consuming” – Stakeholder

ANNEX VI: STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

This annex provides a synopsis of the stakeholder consultations conducted for the study supporting the ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (2014-2020).

8. Outline of the consultation strategy

The consultation strategy and respective consultation activities aimed to collect data and/or opinions from key stakeholders, to gather evidence to answer the evaluation questions under all evaluation criteria. The consultations complemented the mapping of FEAD-related activities, target populations and achievements, as well as the analysis of the socio-economic context, and addressed gaps in the documentary evidence base of the study. The consultations also provided additional evidence to develop the point of comparison.

A wide range of stakeholders were consulted, as outlined in Table A. 21. Different consultation activities and methods were used, including a targeted interview programme (EU and national level), a public consultation (PC), including a call for evidence with feedback submitted by organisations responding to the PC^{197,198} and online focus groups to gather views on the draft findings of the study.

9. Overview of consultation activities

The **targeted interview programme** aimed to gather detailed input from stakeholders involved in the management, implementation and delivery of FEAD. The interviews were conducted with EU and national level stakeholders, targeting EU policymakers, civil society organisations working with FEAD target groups, national authorities, FEAD partner and beneficiary organisations, and academics/researchers working on social inclusion. The targeted semi-structured interviews were carried out between July and October 2023.

The **public consultation** aimed provide an open channel for all interested stakeholders to provide their input to the study. The consultation took the form of an e-survey, with closed and open-ended questions addressing the key evaluation criteria and tailored to the different stakeholder groups. It was open for 12 weeks from 14 February to 8 May 2024.

Two online focus groups were held on 26 June 2024 and 1 July 2024 with selected stakeholders to validate the findings of the study. This was also an opportunity to draw out additional lessons learnt from stakeholders involved in the management, implementation and delivery of FEAD, and those representing FEAD target groups more broadly.

10. Summary and reflection on challenges

The consultation methods were implemented as planned, in line with the agreed consultation strategy. The targeted interview programme posed initial challenges in scheduling interviews due to them taking place over the summer period. The support of DG EMPL was used to encourage national authorities to contribute, with the result that all were consulted for the study, as planned.

¹⁹⁷ European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13715-Aid-to-the-most-deprived-evaluation-of-the-2014-2020-FEAD_en

¹⁹⁸ Disclaimer: contributions received in the context of the PC published on the 'Have Your Say' web portal cannot be regarded as the official position of the Commission and its services and thus does not bind the Commission nor that the contributions can be considered as a representative sample of the EU population.

11. Information on consultation activities and stakeholder groups consulted

Table A. 21 – Overview of stakeholders consulted in all consultation activities

Stakeholder category	Targeted Interviews	Public Consultation	Focus groups
EU level policymakers and stakeholders working on social inclusion and managing FEAD and other related EU funding programmes	x		x
National and regional authorities involved in the overall management and coordination of FEAD	x	x	x
National, regional and/or local organisations responsible for the delivery of FEAD activities/operations	x	x	
Other civil society organisations and umbrella networks representing end recipients or FEAD POs	x	x	x
End recipients of FEAD support		x	
Academic and research bodies focusing on social inclusion	x	x	x
EU citizens and any other interested parties		x	x

Source: Ecorys 2024

11.1. Targeted interviews

The interviews targeted the following stakeholder groups: EU level policymakers and stakeholders working on FEAD and social inclusion, national/regional authorities managing FEAD, national/regional/local organisations delivering FEAD, and academic/research bodies focusing on social inclusion. The interviews included questions on effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, EU added value and visibility, as well as overarching questions to investigate the characteristics and objectives of FEAD.

129 interviews were conducted. Of these, 11 were with EU level stakeholders and 118 were with national-level stakeholders in all 27 EU Member States.

Table A. 22 – Targeted interviews completed

Stakeholder	Number of interviews conducted	Member States
DG EMPL (Units G.1, D.3, Geodesk for Spain/Malta, Romania, Denmark)	5	
European Court of Auditors	1	
Red Cross	1	

Stakeholder	Number of interviews conducted	Member States
Federation of European Food Banks (FEBA)	1	
Caritas	1	
European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)	1	
European Disability Forum	1	
Total EU level interviews	11	
National authorities involved in the management of the FEAD operation programmes	42	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PO, PT, RO, SE, SK, SI
FEAD POs	51	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PO, PT, RO, SE, SK, SI
National organisations representing/working with end recipients	10	DE, ES, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, PO, RO, SI
Academic and research bodies	11	AT, CY, CZ, DK, HR, HU, IE, LU, PT, RO
Other relevant national or regional organisations in charge of social policies	4	DE, EE, FR, LV
Total national level interviews	118	

Source: Ecorys, 2024

The list of organisations interviewed by Member States is included below:

Table A. 7 – National interviewees consulted

Country	Organisation
Austria	Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection
	Austrian Red Cross
	Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna (IHS)
Belgium	Inter-federal Financial Inspection Body
	SPP Integration Sociale
	Federation of Belgian Food Banks
	Belgian Red Cross
Bulgaria	Social Assistance Agency (ASP)
	Bulgarian Food Bank
	Plovdiv Municipality
	Bulgarian Red Cross
	Polski Trambesh Municipality
Croatia	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy

STUDY SUPPORTING THE EX-POST EVALUATION OF THE 2014-2020 FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO
THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD)

Country	Organization
	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
	Caritas of Zadar Archdiocese
	Humanitarian NGO 'Putevi milosti', Osijek
	WYG Consulting
Cyprus	Directorate General for European Programs, Coordination and Development, Ministry of Economics
	Ministry of Education
Czechia	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA)
	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA)
	Food Bank Plzen
	Kralovehradecky Region
	Masaryk University, RISLA - Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs
Denmark	The National Centre for Welfare Research and Analysis
	The National Board of Social Services
	Danish Red Cross
	Projekt UDENFOR
Estonia	Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia
	Estonian Food Bank
	Tallinn Welfare and Health Department
	Tartu Food Bank
Finland	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland
	Helsingin Safka
	Finnish Red Cross
France	Les Restos du Coeur
	FranceAgriMer
	Secours Populaire Français (SPF)
	French Food Bank Federation (FFBA)
	Directorate for Social Cohesion
Germany	Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs
	Diakonie Saxony
	Housing Security Assistance
	Caritas Cologne
	Hildegard-Lagrenne-Stiftung (for the equal participation of Roma and Sinti)
Greece	Department for the Management of Co-financed and National Programs
	Department of Planning, Municipality of Kavala
	Municipality of Kozani
	Development organization of West Athens regional authority
	Municipality of Xanthi
Hungary	Ministry of Human Resources
	Hungarian Maltese Charity Service
	Klebersberg Központ
	Hajléktalanokért Közalapítvány (Public Foundation for the Homeless)
	Szociális és Gyermekvédelmi Főigazgatóság (SZGYF) Hungarian Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection

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Country	Organization
	Investigative Journalist
Ireland	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
	Food Cloud
	Focus Ireland
	University College Dublin/Independent Researcher
Italy	Italian Agricultural Payments Agency (AGEA)
	Banco Alimentare
	fio.PSD
	Caritas Ambrosiana
	Italian Red Cross
Latvia	Latvian Association of Local Governments
	Ministry of Welfare
	Society Integration Foundation (SIF), Department for Social Cohesion, Social Inclusion Unit
	The Samaritan Fund
Lithuania	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
	Food Bank
	Antipoverty network
	Lithuanian Red Cross
	Municipality of Kaunas
Luxembourg	Ministry for Family and Integration
	Caritas
	Luxembourg Institute for Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
Malta	Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)
	Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights
	Caritas Malta
	Ministry of the Economy, European Funds and Lands, Planning of Priorities Coordination Division
Netherlands	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
	Library Utrecht
	Public Library Amsterdam (OBA)
Poland	Ministry of the Family and Social Policy
	Federation of Polish Food Banks
	Caritas Poland
	Polish Red Cross
	Man to Man Foundation
Portugal	Pessoas 2030
	Caritas Portugal
	European Antipoverty Network (EAPN) Portugal
	Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social (CESIS)
Romania	Ministry of European Funds
	Ministry of Education
	World Vision International

Country	Organisation
	UNICEF
	Institute for Quality of Life Research
Slovakia	Central Office of Labour Social Affairs and Family
	Slovak Catholic Charity
	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
	Depaul
Slovenia	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities - Office for the Implementation of Cohesion Policy
	Caritas Slovenia
	Slovenian Red Cross
	Association of Volunteers of the Vincentian Goodness Association
Spain	Administration of the European Social Fund (UAFSE)
	Spanish Agrarian Guarantee Fund (FEAGA)
	Spanish Red Cross
	Luna Blanca NGO
	Spanish Food Bank Federation (FESBAL)
Sweden	Swedish ESF-Council
	Ministry of Social Affairs
	Swedish Red Cross
	Swedish Association of City Missions
Total national level interviews	118

Source: Ecorys, 2024.

11.2. Public consultation and call for evidence

There were **14 responses to the call for evidence** document accompanying the PC. The responses came from Italy (3), France (2), Belgium (2), Czechia (2), Finland (2), Greece (1), Slovakia (1), and Spain (1). The majority of the responses came from EU citizens (5) followed by NGOs (4), business associations (2), consumer organisations (1), company/businesses (1), and public authorities (1)¹⁹⁹.

The replies came from various stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), EU citizens, public authorities, consumer organisations, and business associations. The main message from the replies is that the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) has been valuable in providing essential support to the most deprived individuals in the EU, but there are still significant challenges to be addressed. Many respondents emphasised the need for more targeted and effective approaches to reach the most vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities, Roma communities, and those living in poverty.

Several NGOs, including the European Food Banks Federation and the World Roma Federation, highlighted the importance of FEAD in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion. They noted that the Fund has helped to provide food and other essential items to those in need, but that more needs to be done to reach marginalized communities. The World Roma Federation, in particular, emphasised the need for more targeted interventions to address the specific needs of the Roma community, who are disproportionately affected by poverty. Other respondents, such as the Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires, noted that FEAD has been instrumental in supporting food banks and other organisations that provide assistance to those in need.

¹⁹⁹ European Commission, Responses to the Call for evidence for an evaluation:

Despite the positive impact of FEAD, many respondents also identified challenges and areas for improvement. Some noted that the application processes for aid are often complex and inaccessible, particularly for marginalised communities. Others emphasised the need for more funding and resources to support FEAD initiatives, as well as the importance of monitoring and evaluation to track the effectiveness of the Fund. The European Food Banks Federation, for example, noted that FEAD has been flexible in responding to emerging needs, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but that more needs to be done to support the long-term sustainability of food banks and other organisations that provide assistance to those in need.

Overall, the replies to the Call for Evidence highlight the importance of FEAD in addressing poverty and promoting social inclusion, but also emphasise the need for ongoing efforts to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of the Fund.

The public consultation (PC) ran from 14 February 2024 until 8 May 2024. Its distribution targeted FEAD Managing Authorities (MAs), civil society organisations, FEAD partner organisations (POs), end recipients of FEAD support, academic and research bodies focusing on social inclusion, and EU citizens. The PC was disseminated via the European Commission's website and using multipliers.

The consultation was available in all official EU languages, hosted on EU Survey. It gathered input through closed multiple-choice questions, with open-text questions to provide additional information. Questions were grouped by evaluation criterion. Respondents were routed to questions based on their profile, in particular, the nature of their involvement with FEAD.

408 respondents took part in the PC. The vast majority of respondents (99,5%; 406) came from within the EU, with 26 Member States represented. The highest number of responses came from Italy (45%; 173) and Bulgaria (9%; 37). Responses were also received from two non-EU countries, the United States and Venezuela, (0.5% of all responses combined (2)).

The PC received replies from organisations and individuals. 347 responses were submitted by organisations (85%) and 61 by individuals (15%). The highest number of responses (34%; 139) came from organisations that identified as 'Other', including charities and food banks. Public authorities and NGOs respectively accounted for 28% (113) and 18% (73) of respondents. Companies/businesses, business associations and consumer organisations represented 5% of total respondents (21). One response came from academic/research organisations (0.2%). Among the 347 organisational respondents, 28% (97) belonged to small organisations. Micro-sized organisations were the second most represented organisation size (26%; 91), followed by large (24%; 84) and medium-sized organisations (22%; 75).

Organisational respondents were asked about their familiarity with FEAD. The majority (78%; 271) were familiar with FEAD and had detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives and actions. 16% (57) of organisations responding had only a general idea of FEAD objectives/scope and did not know any specific activity funded by FEAD. A small number of organisational respondents indicated they had never heard of FEAD (2%; 7).

Respondents were also asked to specify their involvement with FEAD. The most common respondent was partner organisations (POs) delivering FEAD support to individuals (45%; 155). This was followed by organisations engaged in food distribution/material and/or social assistance to the most deprived but not involved in FEAD (14%; 48), FEAD MAs or intermediate bodies (13%; 45), and organisations representing the most deprived such as civil society organisations (11%; 39). 10% of respondents included other organisations involved in FEAD support (35), such as city councils. One certifying/audit authority contributed to the PC.

11.3. Online focus groups

The online focus groups took place on 26 June 2024 (OP II) and 1 July 2024 (OP I) and targeted FEAD MAs, POs as well as EU level civil society organisations. The draft findings of the study were presented to participants and questions related to effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, EU added value and visibility, and lessons learned were asked.

A total of **24 participants** were present for the focus group on FEAD OP I and **11 participants** were present for the focus group on FEAD OP II as indicated in Table A. 23.

Table A. 23 – List of participants in OP I and OP II focus groups

Country	Stakeholder type	Organisation
OP I focus group		
Belgium	Managing Authority	Federal Public Service for Social Integration, fight against Poverty
Bulgaria	Managing Authority	International Cooperation, Programmes and European Integration Directorate, Social Assistance Agency
Czechia	Managing Authority	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Greece	Managing Authority	National Institute of Labour and Human Resources
Ireland	Partner Organisation	FoodCloud
Latvia	Partner Organisation	Samaritans Association of Latvia
Latvia	Managing Authority	Ministry of Welfare
Lithuania	Managing Authority	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
Malta	Partner Organisation	Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)
Poland	Managing Authority	Ministry for family and social policy
Romania	Managing Authority	General Directorate European Programmes Human Capital, Ministry of Investments and European Projects
Romania	Managing Authority	General Directorate European Programmes Human Capital, Ministry of Investments and European Projects
Romania	Managing Authority	General Directorate European Programmes Human Capital, Ministry of Investments and European Projects
Slovenia	Managing Authority	Ministry for Labour, Family, Social affairs and Equal opportunities
EU	DG EMPL	Unit D5
EU	DG EMPL	Unit C4
EU	DG EMPL	Unit D1
EU	DG EMPL	Unit B5
EU	DG EMPL	Unit B4
EU	DG EMPL	Unit E5
EU	DG EMPL	Unit G5
EU	DG EMPL	Unit G5
EU	EU NGO	FEBA
EU	EU NGO	FEBA
OP II focus group		
Germany	Managing Authority	Federal Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs
Germany	Partner Organisation	Hildegard-Lagrenne-Stiftung für Bildung, Inklusion und Teilhabe von Sinti und Roma in Deutschland
Netherlands	Managing Authority	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
Netherlands	Managing Authority	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
Sweden	Partner Organisation	City of Göteborg
Sweden	Partner Organisation	City of Göteborg
Sweden	Partner Organisation	Forte
EU	DG EMPL	Unit E4
EU	DG EMPL	Unit D3
EU	DG EMPL	Unit G5
EU	DG EMPL	Unit B4

Source: Ecorys 2024

12. Methodology for data processing

For the **targeted interviews with EU and national level stakeholders**, the write-ups from the interviews were collected and exported into analytical grids, broken down by question and respective evaluation criterion. The research team used the analytical grids to carry out an in-depth analysis to inform the relevant sections and annexes of the interim and final reports.

For the **public consultation**, the analysis of results was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data analysis included analysis of frequency distribution for each variable related to the closed-ended questions, and cross-tabulations between specific variables and characteristics of respondents and between specific variables, though the low number of responses limited the possibilities for this. For the qualitative data analysis, data was classified by related variable and analysed to identify additional information.

For the two focus groups, the outcomes of the discussions were collected in summary report drafted by the research team and used to finalise the findings in all sections of the final report.

ANNEX VII: PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

13. Introduction

This is the report on the Public Consultation (PC) conducted as part of the study supporting the evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). It presents the results of the PC that was live between 14 February 2024 and 08 May 2024.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 1.1 presents the overview and objectives of the consultation
- Section 1.2 presents the types of respondents to the consultation
- Section 2 presents an in-depth analysis of the main findings of the consultation across the five evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU-added value.

13.1. Overview of the consultation

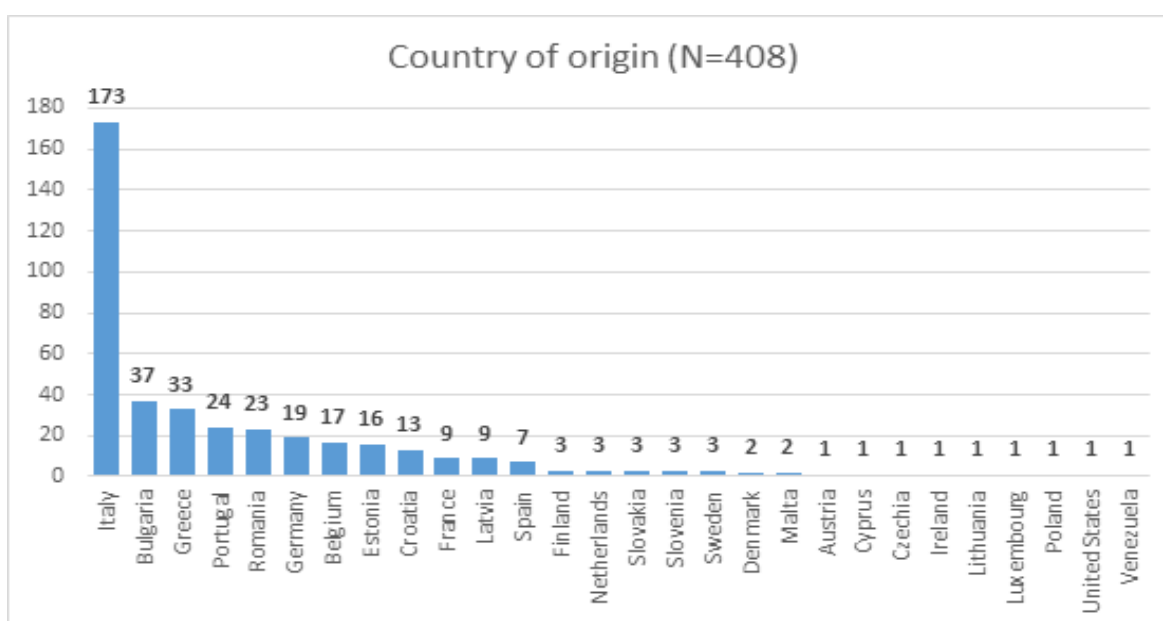
The PC gathered input from intended stakeholders, including national, regional and local authorities, EU citizens, businesses, research and academic institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), on their involvement and experiences with FEAD. The PC ran from 14 February 2024 until 8 May 2024. Its distribution targeted a wide range of stakeholders such as Managing Authorities, civil society organisations, FEAD partner organisations, end recipients of FEAD support, academic and research bodies focusing on social inclusion, and EU citizens, in line with the consultation strategy of the study. The PC was also disseminated through the European Commission's website, as well as by multipliers who shared news of the consultation within their networks.

The consultation was available in all official EU languages and was hosted on EU Survey. The survey gathered input primarily through closed multiple-choice questions with opportunities for additional explanation or input through open-text questions. Questions were grouped based on the study evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. Respondents were branched to different questions based on their responses, including the nature of their involvement with FEAD actions.

13.2. Profile of respondents

A total of **408 respondents** took part in this PC. The vast majority of respondents (99.5%; 406 out of 408) came from within the EU, with **26 Member States** being represented. The highest number of responses came from **Italy** (45%; 173 out of 408), **Bulgaria** (9%; 37 out of 408) and **Greece** (8%; 33 out of 408). Responses were also received from two non-EU countries, the United States of America and Venezuela, accounting for 0.5% of all responses combined (2).

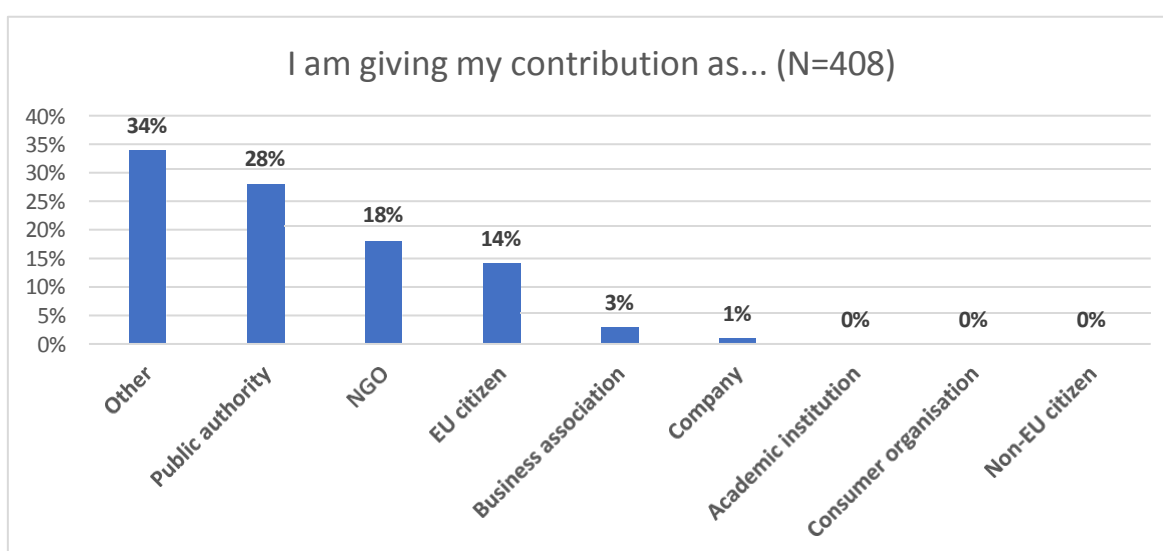
Figure A. 16 – Distribution of responses by country of origin



The PC received replies both from **organisations and individuals**. Overall, 85% (347 out of 408) of responses were submitted by organisational respondents while 15% (61 out of 408) of responses came from individuals. Almost all individuals (98%; 59 out of 61) were EU citizens.

The largest share of responses (34%; 139 out of 408) came from organisations that marked themselves as **‘Other’**, including, for example, charities and food banks. Public authorities and NGOs respectively accounted for 28% (113 out of 408) and 18% (73 out of 408) of respondents. Companies/businesses, business associations and consumer organisations together represented 5% of total respondents (21 out of 408). One response came from representatives of academic/research organisations (0.2%).

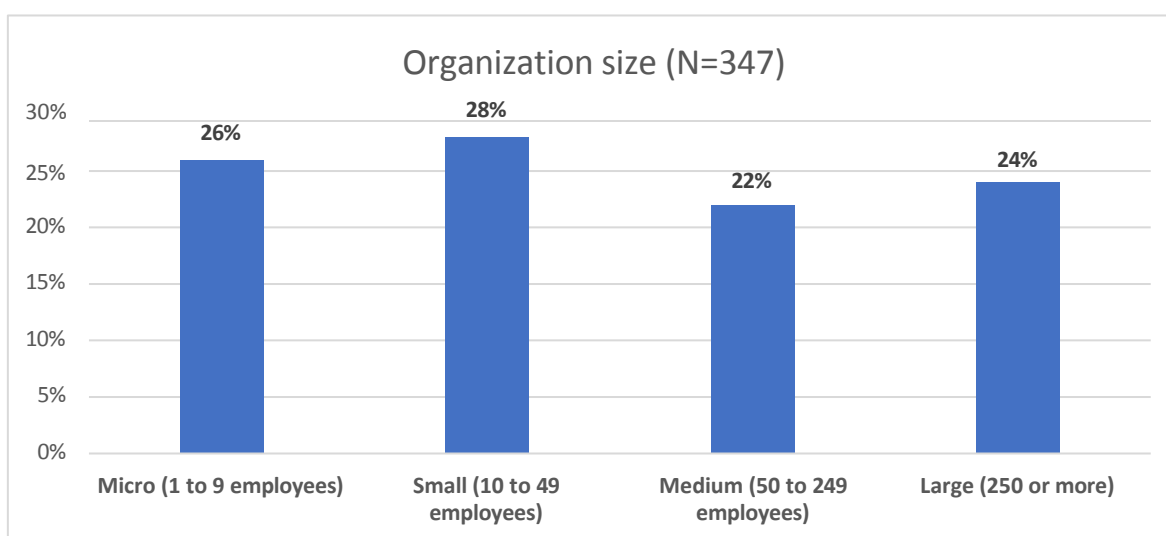
Figure A. 17 – Distribution of responses by type of respondent



13.2.1. Organisational respondents

Among the 347 organisational respondents who participated in this PC, 28% (97 out of 347) belonged to small organisations (between 10 to 49 employees), 26% (91 out of 347) to micro-organisations (1 to 9 employees), 24% (84 out of 347) to large organisations (more than 250 employees) and 22% (75 out of 347) to medium-sized organisations (50 to 249 employees).

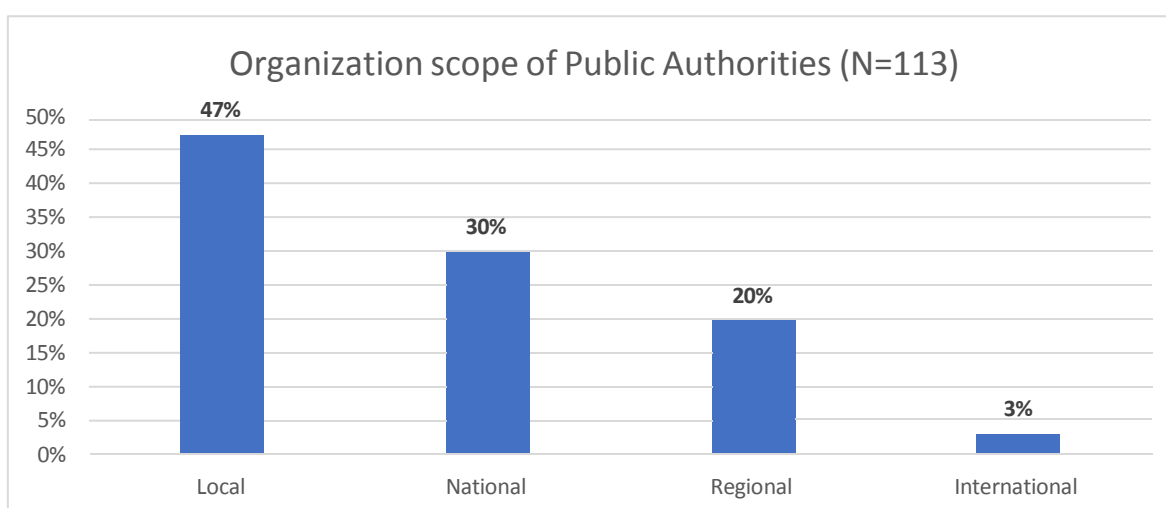
Figure A. 18 – Distribution of responses by organisation size



Respondents who stated that they were giving their contribution as an organisation (N=347) were asked about their **familiarity with FEAD**. The majority of respondents (78%; 271 out of 347) were familiar with FEAD and had detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives and actions. 16% (57 out of 347) of organisations responding to the PC marked that they had only a general idea of FEAD objectives/scope and did not know any specific activity funded by FEAD. A small number of organisational respondents indicated they had never heard of FEAD before the PC (2%; 7 out of 347), while 3% (12 out of 347) remaining respondents indicated that they did not wish to answer this question.

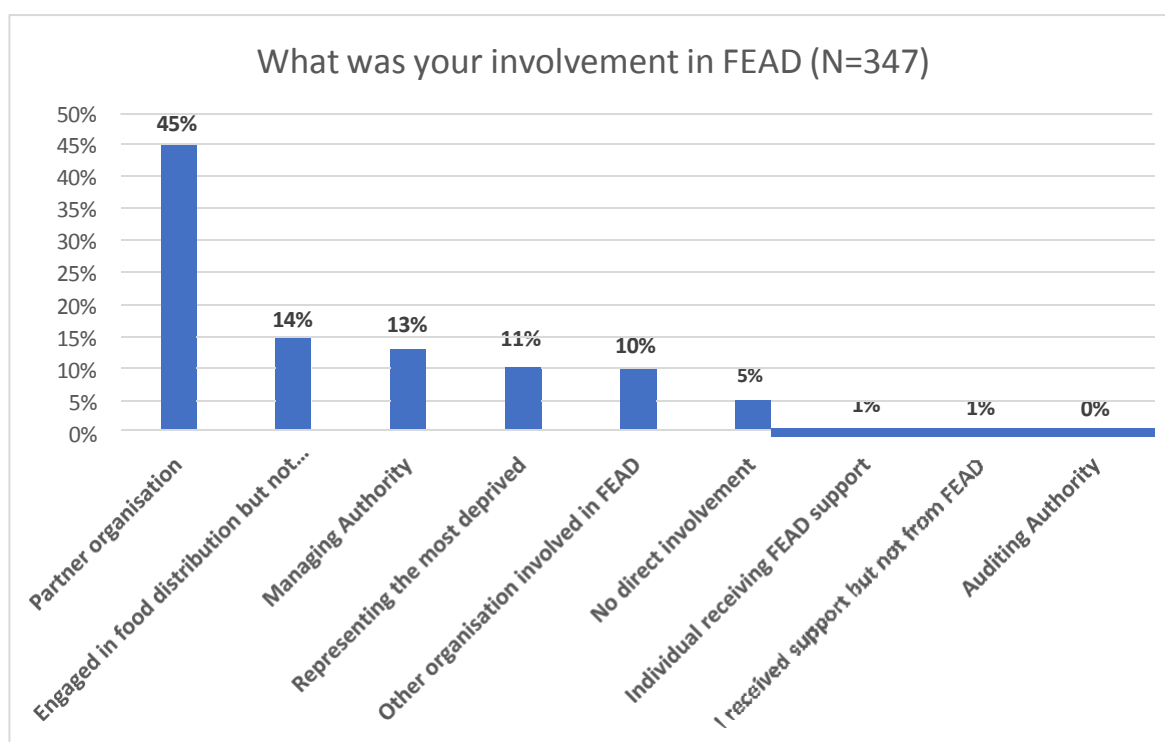
Out of the 113 **public authorities** who responded to the PC, 47% (53 out of 113) operated at local level, 30% (34 out of 113) at national level and 20% (23 out of 113) at regional level. 3% (3 out of 113) operated at international level. 75% (85 out of 113) of respondents represented authorities, 19% (22 out of 113) represented agencies, 3% (3 out of 113) represented a national or regional parliament and 3% (3 out of 113) represented international organisations. Local authorities made up 40% (45 out of 113) of all public authorities while local agencies made up 7% (8 out of 113).

Figure A. 19 – Distribution of responses by organisation scope for Public Authorities



Respondents were asked to specify their **involvement with FEAD** (N=347). The most common involvement type was partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals (45%; 155 out of 347). This was followed by organisations engaged in food distribution/material and/or social assistance to the most deprived but not involved in FEAD (14%; 48 out of 347), FEAD managing authorities or intermediate bodies (13%; 45 out of 347), and organisations representing the most deprived such as civil society organisation or advocacy groups (11%; 39 out of 347). 10% of respondents included other organisations involved in FEAD support (35 out of 347), such as associations or city councils. One certifying/audit authority contributed to this PC.

Figure A. 20 – Distribution of responses by involvement in FEAD

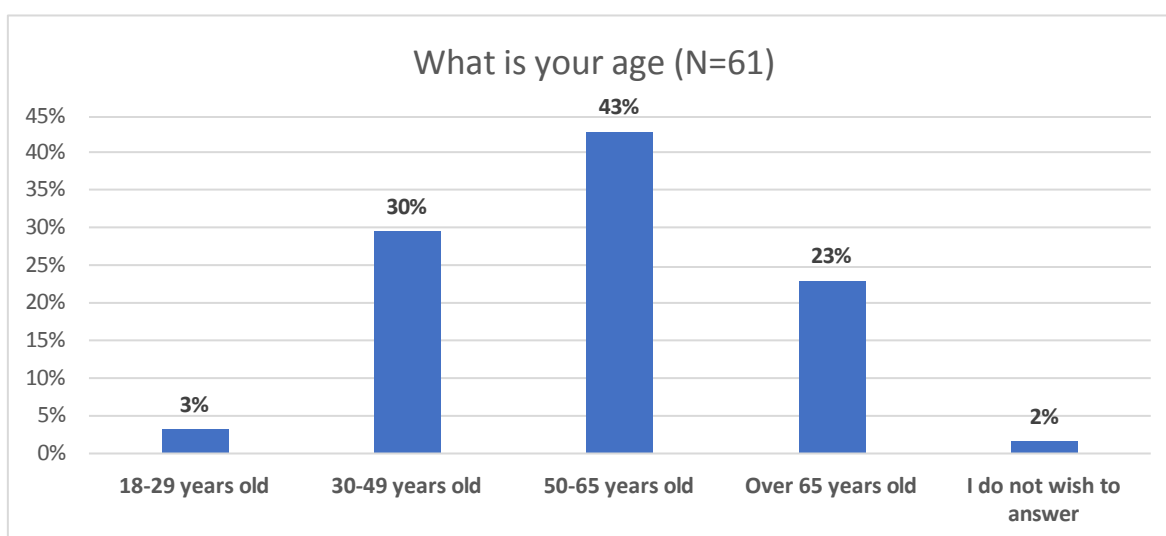


Organisational respondents who were directly involved in FEAD activities were asked **what type of FEAD operation they were involved in** between 2014 and 2022 (N=155). The majority of respondents (83%; 129 out of 155) were distributing food directly to individuals, e.g. food packages or meals. 5% (7 out of 155) of organisations were delivering social inclusion activities for individuals (OP II). One organisation was involved in the distribution of basic goods directly to individuals, one in the distribution of vouchers to individuals and one in the delivery of accompanying measures to individuals receiving food/basic goods, counting altogether for 2% (3 out of 155). The remaining 16 out of 155 organisations (10%) indicated that they were involved in other FEAD operations. This was primarily partner organisations supporting in coordination of distribution of food aid.

13.2.2. Individual respondents

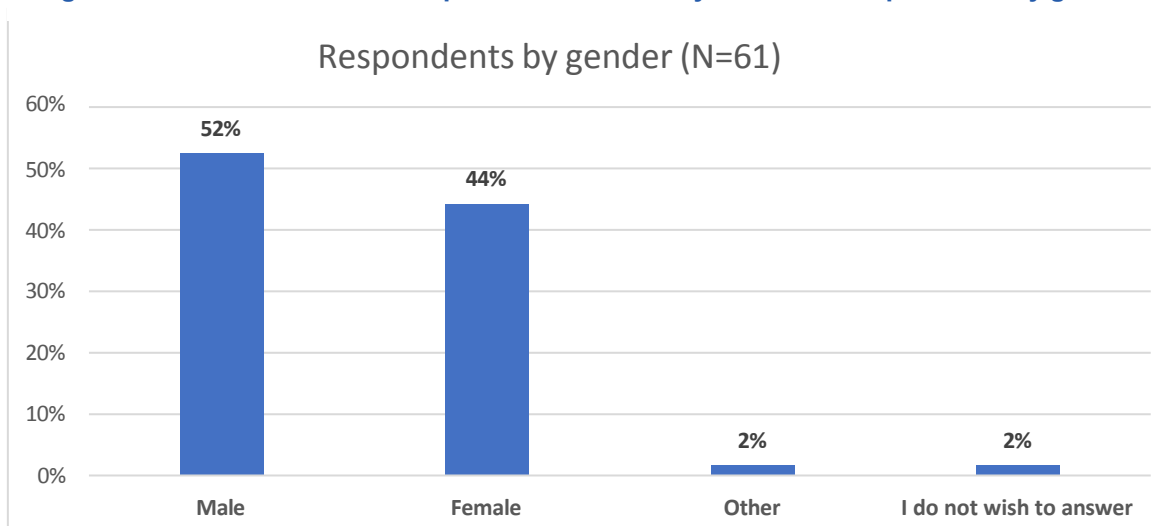
Among the 61 individual respondents (EU and non-EU citizens) who participated in the PC, the largest share were **aged 50-65 years old** (43%; 26 out of 61), followed by respondents aged between 30 and 49 years old (30%; 18 out of 61). 23% (14 out of 61) of respondents were aged over 65 years old and only 2 (3%) respondents were aged 18-29 years old. One (2%) respondent indicated that they did not wish to answer the question.

Figure A. 21 – Distribution of responses submitted by individual respondents by age



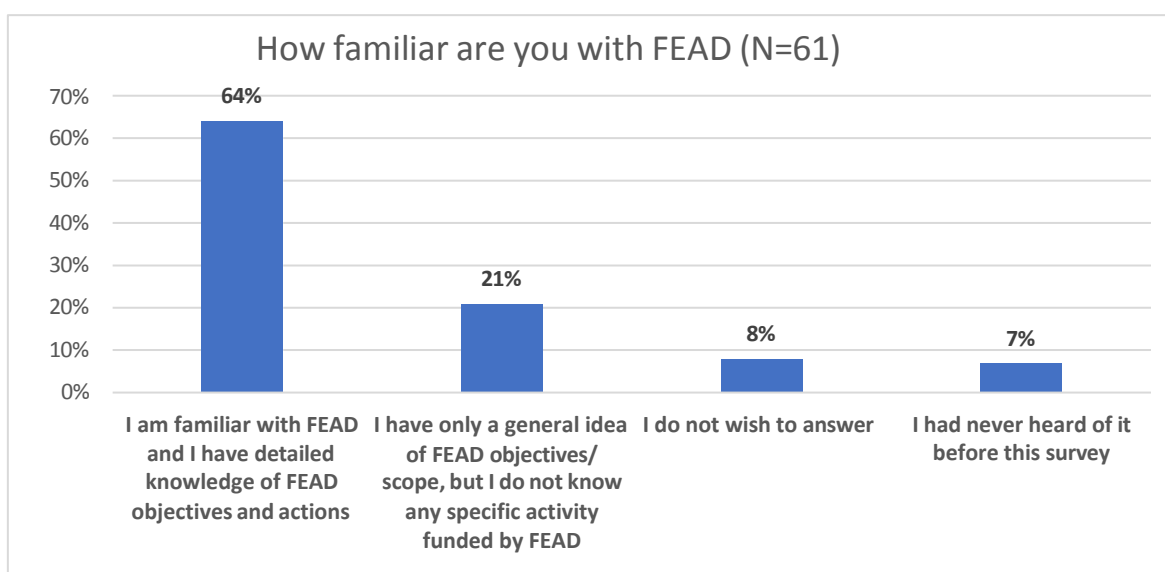
Regarding **gender**, more than half of respondents identified as male (52%; 32 out of 61), while 44% (27 out of 61) identified as female, and one respondent identified as other (2%). One respondent marked that they did not wish to answer (2%).

Figure A. 22 – Distribution of responses submitted by individual respondents by gender



Individual respondents were then asked **how familiar they were with FEAD (N=61)**. Most respondents were familiar with FEAD and had detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives and actions (64%; 39 out of 61). 21% (13 out of 61) of individual respondents to the PC answered that they had a general idea of FEAD objectives and did not know any specific activity funded by FEAD. A small number of individual respondents had never heard of FEAD before the PC (7%; 4 out of 61), while 8% (5 out of 61) remaining respondents indicated that they did not wish to answer this question.

Figure A. 23 – Distribution of responses on familiarity with FEAD from individual respondents



The individual respondents who were **directly involved in FEAD operations** in the period between 2014 and 2022 (N=29) were asked about the type of activities of their engagement. The majority of individual respondents who were involved with FEAD were distributing food directly to individuals, e.g. food packages or meals (93%; 27 out of 29). One respondent was involved in delivering social inclusion activities (3%) and one remaining respondent indicated other types of activities that included volunteering in food distribution (3%).

14. In-depth analysis of public consultation results

14.1. Effectiveness

14.1.1. Overall achievement of FEAD-specific objectives

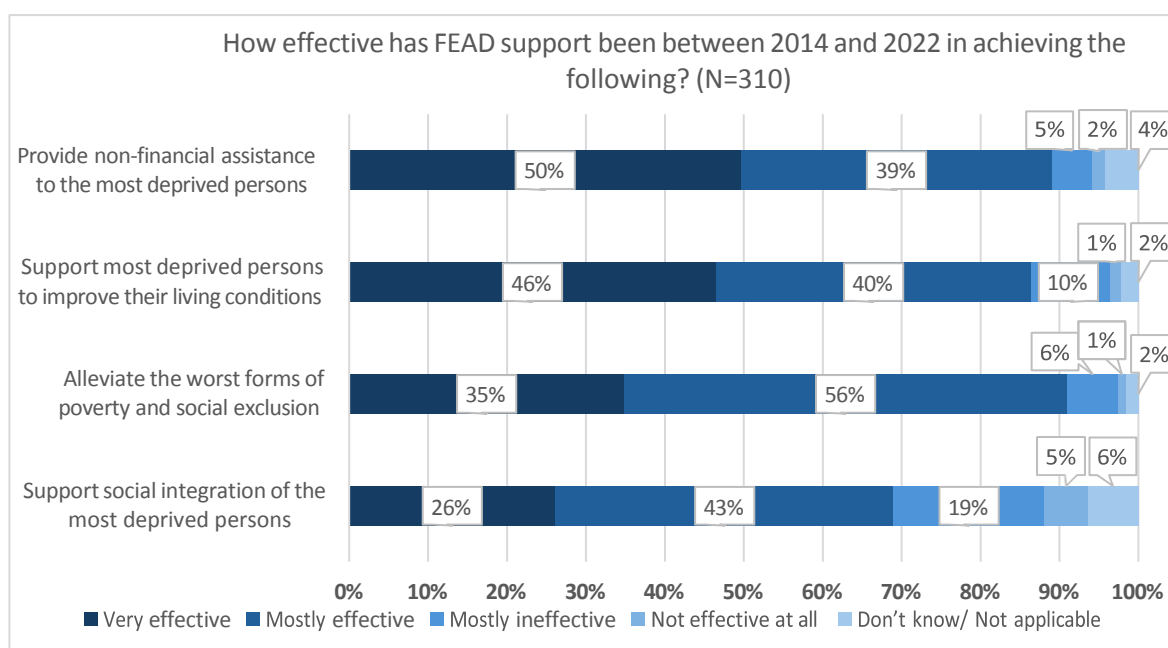
Respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of FEAD support in contributing to its various objectives between 2014 and 2022 (N=310²⁰⁰). The objectives were evaluated as follows (see Figure A. 24):

- providing non-financial assistance to the most deprived persons: 89% of respondents (275 out of 310) believed that FEAD support very effectively or mostly effectively contributed to the achievement of this objective. 5% (16 out of 310) found it most ineffective, while 2% (5 out of 310) found it not effective at all.
- supporting the most deprived persons to improve their living conditions: 86% of respondents (268 out of 310) believed that FEAD support very effectively or mostly effectively contributed to the achievement of this objective. 10% (31 out of 310) found it most ineffective, while 1% (4 out of 310) found it not effective at all.
- alleviating the worst forms of poverty and social exclusion: 91% of respondents (282 out of 310) believed that FEAD support very effectively or mostly effectively contributed to the achievement of this objective. 6% (20 out of 310) found it most ineffective, while 1% (3 out of 310) found it not effective at all.
- social integration of the most deprived persons: 69% of respondents (214 out of 310) believed that FEAD support very effectively or mostly effectively contributed to the achievement of this objective. 19% (59 out of 310) found it most ineffective, while 5% (17 out of 310) found it not effective at all.

In terms of prevalent opinions of different stakeholder types, 63% (22 of 35) of other organisations involved in FEAD (this type represents stakeholders such as NGOs, public authorities and those defined as ‘other’) and 60% (95 of 155) of partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals found that FEAD was **mostly effective to alleviate the worst forms of poverty and social exclusion**.

²⁰⁰ This question was asked to the respondents who selected: “I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions.”. This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

Figure A. 24 – Extent to which FEAD support has been effective between 2014 and 2022 in achieving the following objectives



Respondents were also asked whether FEAD support made a difference to the most deprived groups (N=310²⁰¹). The majority of respondents (63%; 195 out of 310) stated that FEAD support made a difference to the most deprived groups, while 35% (110 out of 310) thought that it only partially made a difference. Looking at the responses per stakeholder type, 69% (24 of 35) of other organisation involved in FEAD selected that support made a difference to the most deprived groups that is the stakeholder type who selected this response most frequently.

Respondents could explain their responses to this question in an open-text box. **Fulfilling the basic needs of the most deprived and alleviating their daily struggles** are commonly emerging themes that respondents had seen as the most important differences brought on by FEAD to the most deprived groups by respondents who provided explanations. Two individuals receiving FEAD support added that FEAD does make a difference as there are not many funds directly providing necessary products to those in need. Analysing the open-text contributions, it seems that most respondents acknowledge FEAD's importance, but some respondents call for additional support measures, going beyond the provision of basic goods to more substantially change the circumstances of those in need.

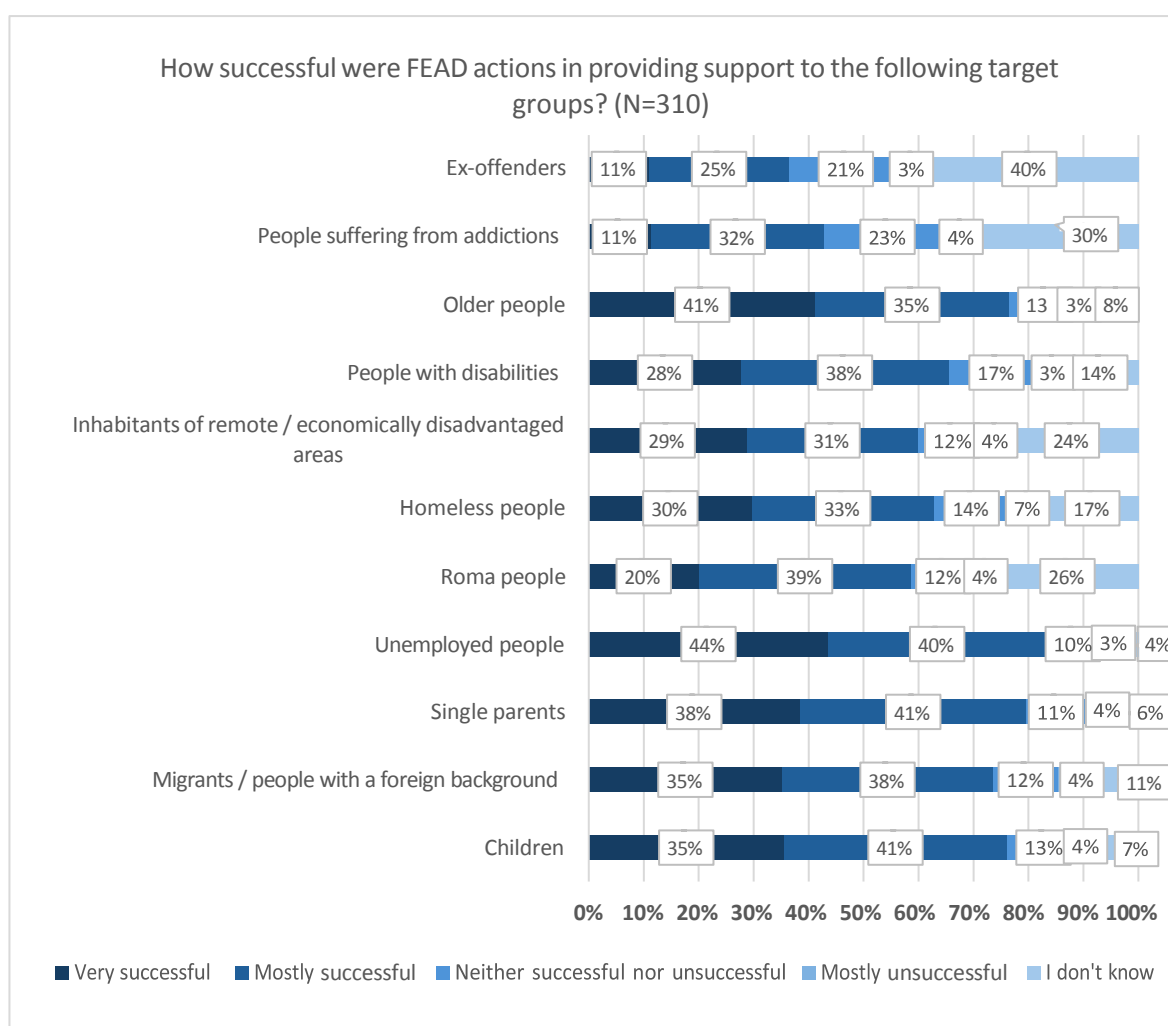
14.1.2. Impact on FEAD's target groups

Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent of FEAD's success in providing support to its target groups (N=310²⁰²). In general, a large majority of respondents found that FEAD actions were very and mostly successful in providing support to all target groups. This is particularly true for the following target groups (see Figure A. 25): **unemployed people** (84%; 258 out of 310), **single parents** (80%; 247 out of 310), **elderly people** (76%; 237 out of 310) and **children** (76%; 236 out of 310).

²⁰¹ This question was asked to the respondents who selected: "I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions.". This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

²⁰² This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

Figure A. 25 – Extent to which FEAD actions were successful in providing support to the following target groups



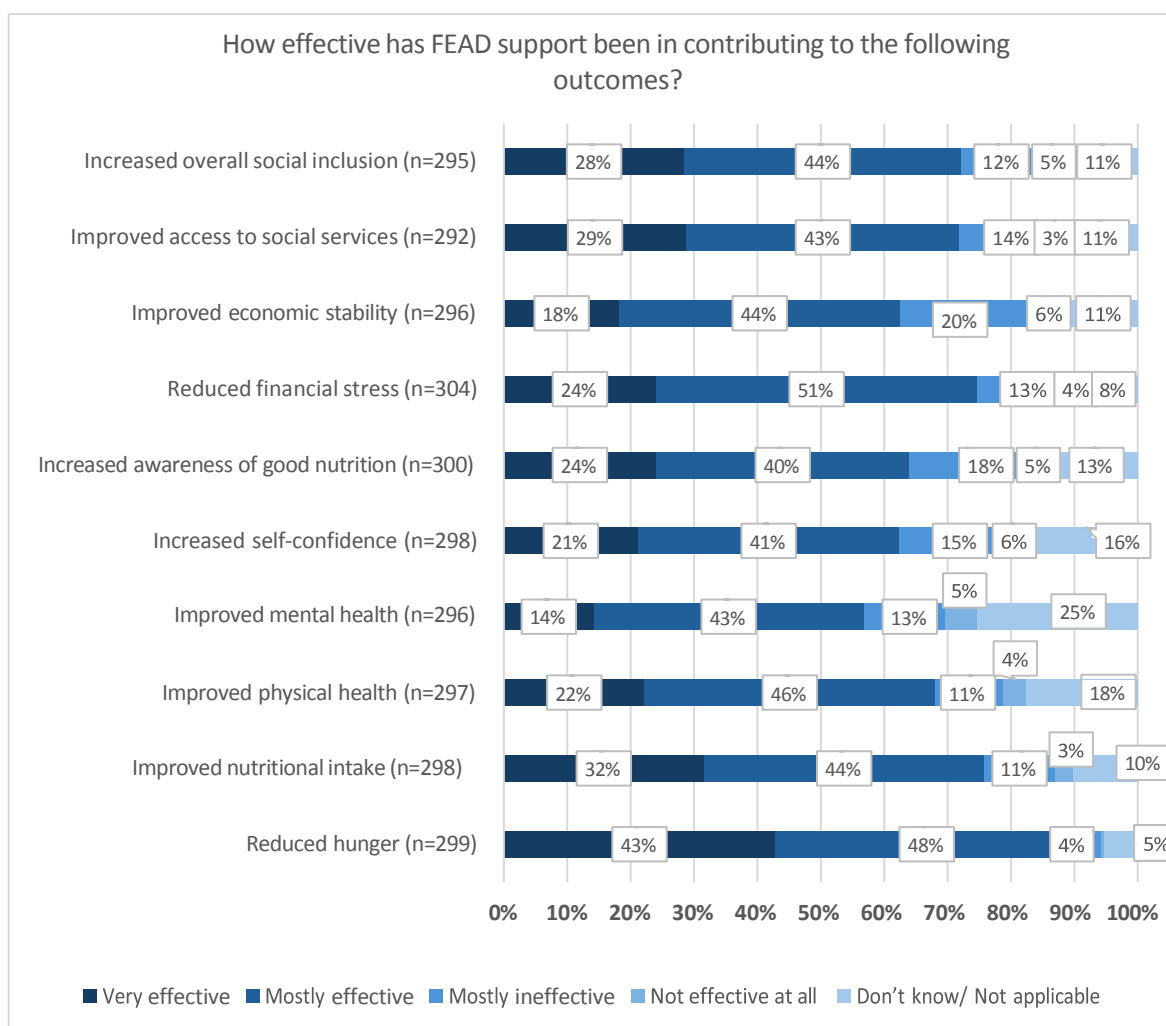
The next set of questions looked into the effectiveness of FEAD support in contributing to the different outcomes for the individuals receiving support. A majority of respondents found that FEAD support was very effective and mostly effective in contributing to all intended outcomes. This is especially true for **reducing hunger** (91%; 271 out of 299²⁰³), **improving nutritional intake (through better quality of food)** (76%; 226²⁰⁴ out of 298) and **reducing financial stress** (75%; 227²⁰⁵ out of 304). All answers per outcome are summarised in Figure A. 26.

²⁰³ This question was not answered by 109 respondents.

²⁰⁴ This question was not answered by 110 respondents.

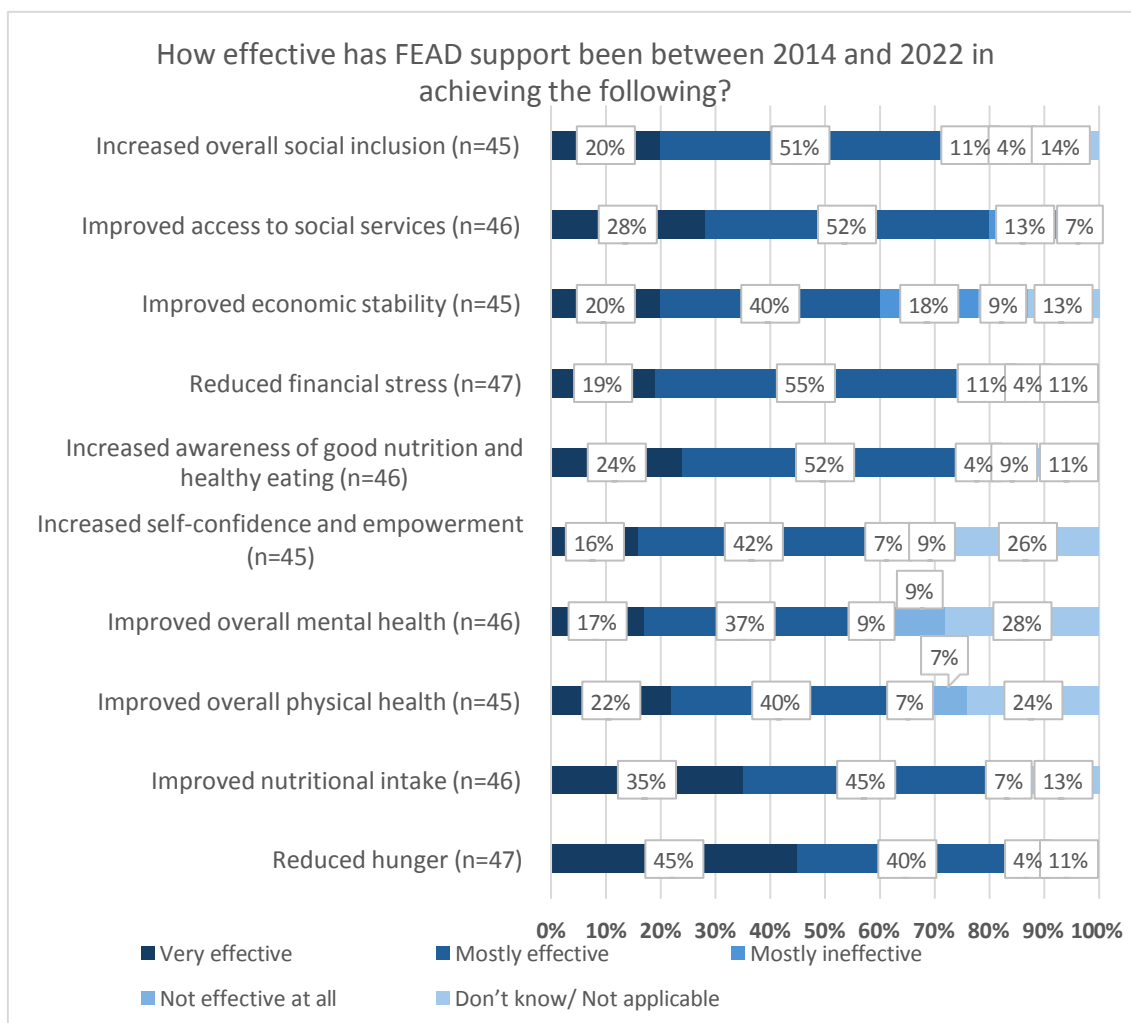
²⁰⁵ This question was not answered by 104 respondents.

Figure A. 26 – Extent to which FEAD actions were successful in contributing to the following outcomes for the individuals receiving support



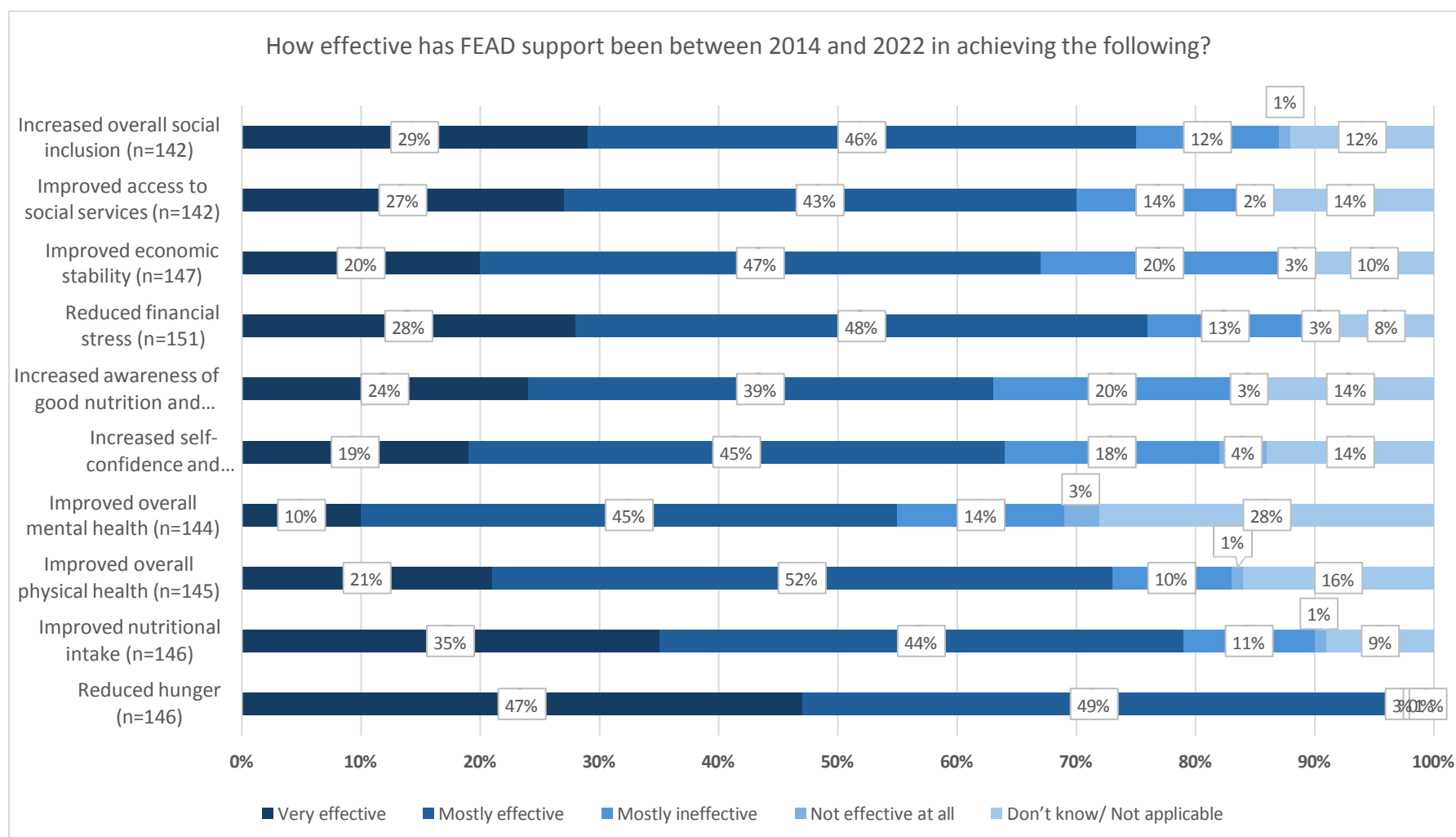
When looking at the responses specifically provided by Managing Authorities and Partners organisations, the following can be observed. Managing Authorities stated that FEAD actions were very and mostly effective in contributing to the following outcomes: reduced hunger (85%; 40 out of 47); improved access to social services (80%; 37 out of 46) and improved nutritional intake (80%; 37 out of 46).

Figure A. 27 – Extent to which FEAD actions were successful in contributing to the following outcomes for the individuals receiving support, according to Managing Authorities



For partner organisations responding to this question, FEAD actions were very and mostly effective in contributing to the following outcomes: reduced hunger (96%; 140 out of 146); improved nutritional intake (79%; 115 out of 146) and reduced financial stress (76%; 116 out of 151).

Figure A. 28 – Extent to which FEAD actions were successful in contributing to the following outcomes for the individuals receiving support, according to Partner Organisations



A majority of partner organisations (56%; 102 out of 183²⁰⁶) think that to a large extent, individuals receiving FEAD support were the same every time food or assistance was delivered. 31% of partner organisations (57 out of 183) think that to a moderate extent, individuals receiving FEAD support were the same every time food or assistance was delivered, while 8% (14 out of 183) and 3% (5 out of 183) think those individuals were the same to some and a small extent respectively. 2% (4 out of 183) did not know and 1% (1 out of 183) stated ‘not at all’. A majority of partner organisations think individuals receiving FEAD support were to a large extent reliant on the support provided to fulfil their basic needs (51%; 94 out of 184²⁰⁷). 32% of them (58 out of 184) think those individuals were to a moderate extent reliant on the support provided to fulfil their basic needs. 13% (23 out of 184) and 4% (7 out of 184) think they were to some and a small extent reliant on the support provided to fulfil their basic needs respectively. 1% (2 out of 184) did not know.

14.1.3. Challenges in implementation

The following set of questions asked respondents to evaluate the extent to which certain **areas posed an obstacle to providing food/basic material assistance to end recipients**. Buying foods/basic goods (e.g. Procurement processes) was seen as an obstacle to a large or moderate extent by 49% of respondents (145 out of 297²⁰⁸). This was followed by the quantity of food/basic goods (35% of respondents, 105 out of 299²⁰⁹) and determining whether individuals were eligible for support (28% of respondents, 83 out of 296²¹⁰).

Cooperation between organisations involved in providing support is the area that was not **seen as posing any obstacles** by the highest percentage of respondents (63%; 187 out of 296²¹¹). The other areas that respondents did not find challenging were **working with volunteers** (55%; 161 out of 295²¹²), **delivering food/basic goods to individuals** (47%; 141 out of 299²¹³) and **the quality of food/basic** (46%; 137 out of 298²¹⁴).

²⁰⁶ This question was asked to the respondents who selected “Partner organisation delivering FEAD support to individuals”. This was not answered by 225 respondents.

²⁰⁷ This question was asked to the respondents who selected “Partner organisation delivering FEAD support to individuals”. This question was not answered by 224 respondents.

²⁰⁸ This question was not answered by 111 respondents.

²⁰⁹ This question was not answered by 109 respondents.

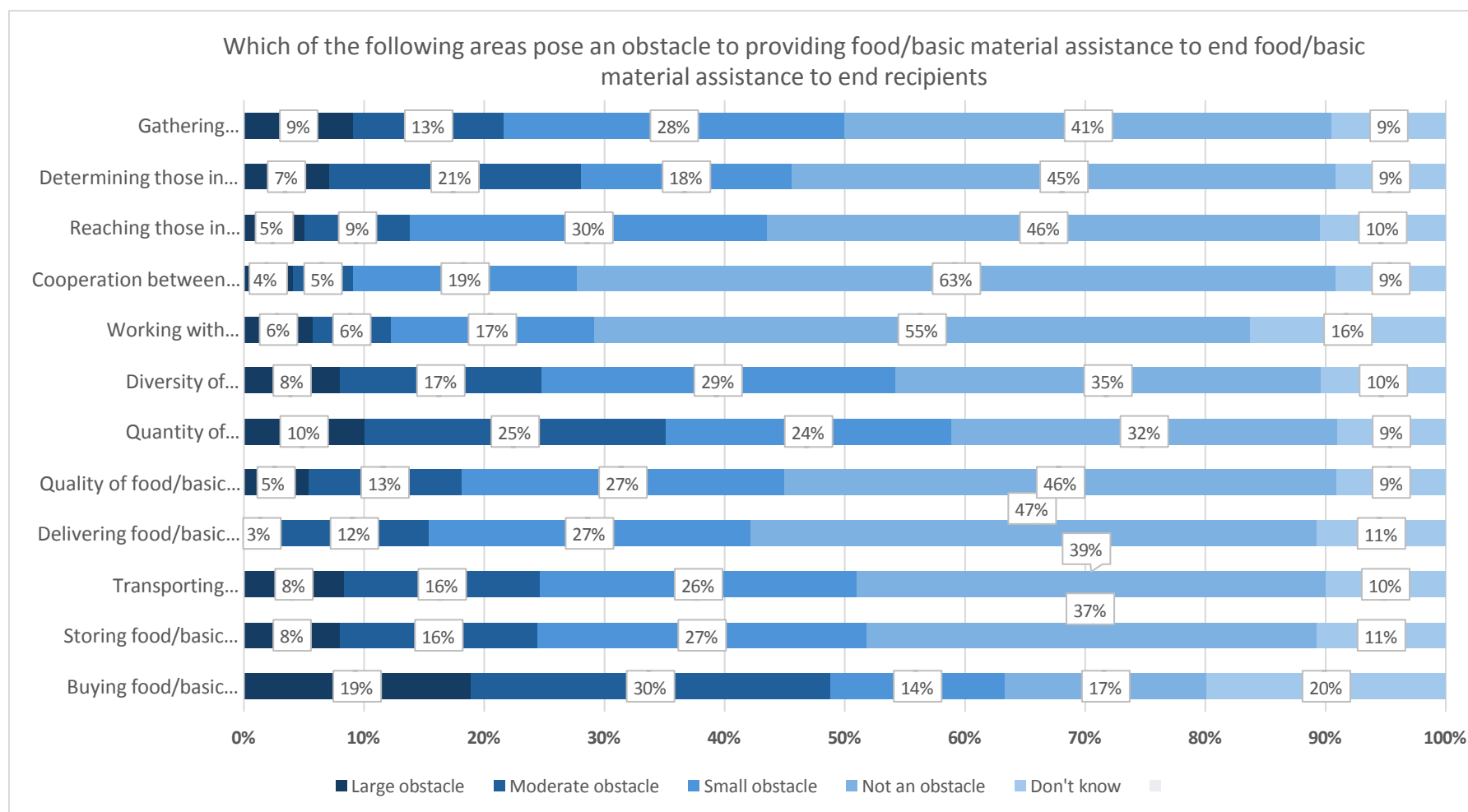
²¹⁰ This question was not answered by 112 respondents.

²¹¹ This question was not answered by 112 respondents.

²¹² This question was not answered by 113 respondents.

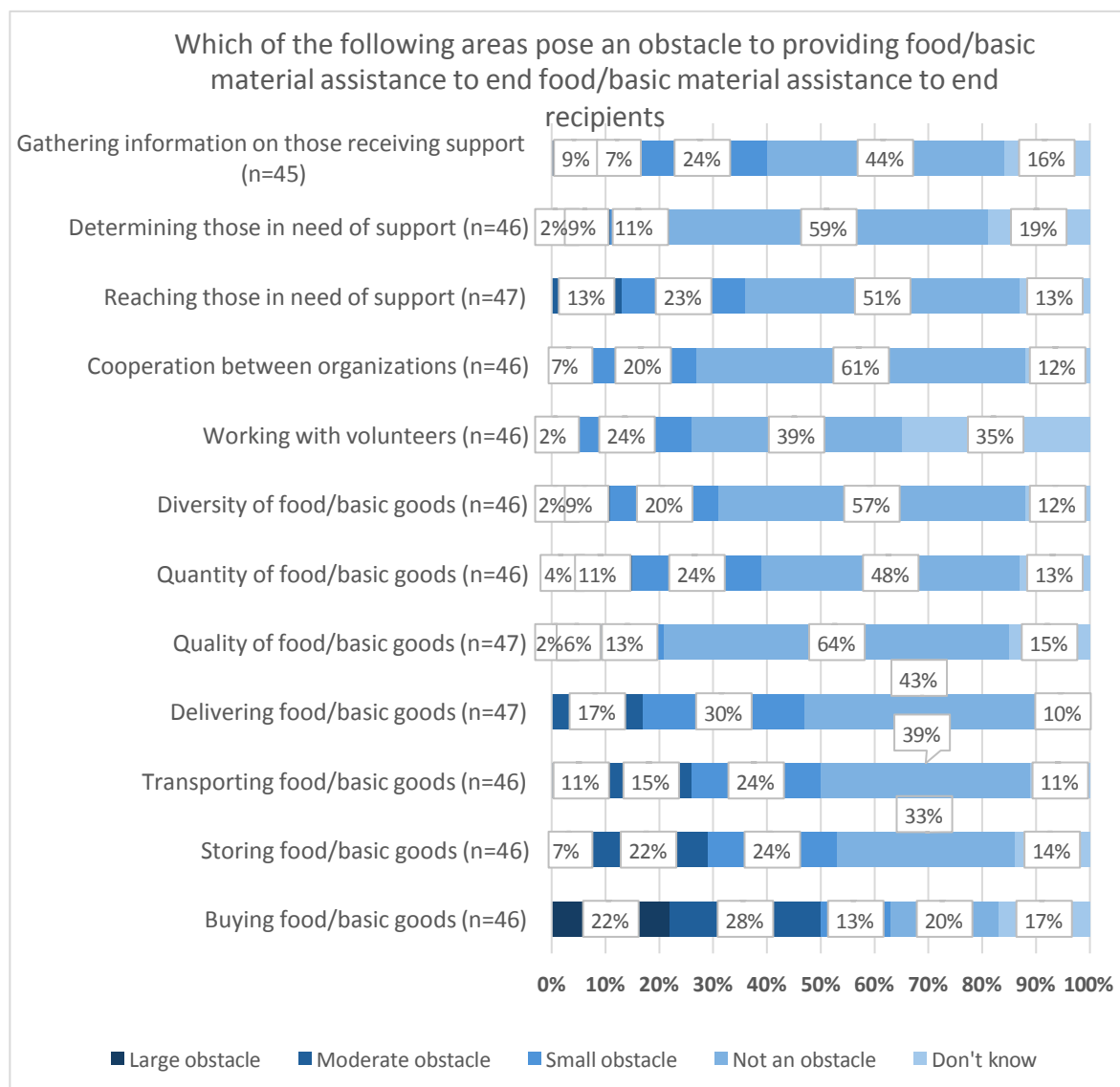
²¹³ This question was not answered by 109 respondents.

²¹⁴ This question was not answered by 110 respondents.

Figure A. 29 – Extent to which the following areas pose an obstacle to providing food/basic material assistance to end recipients

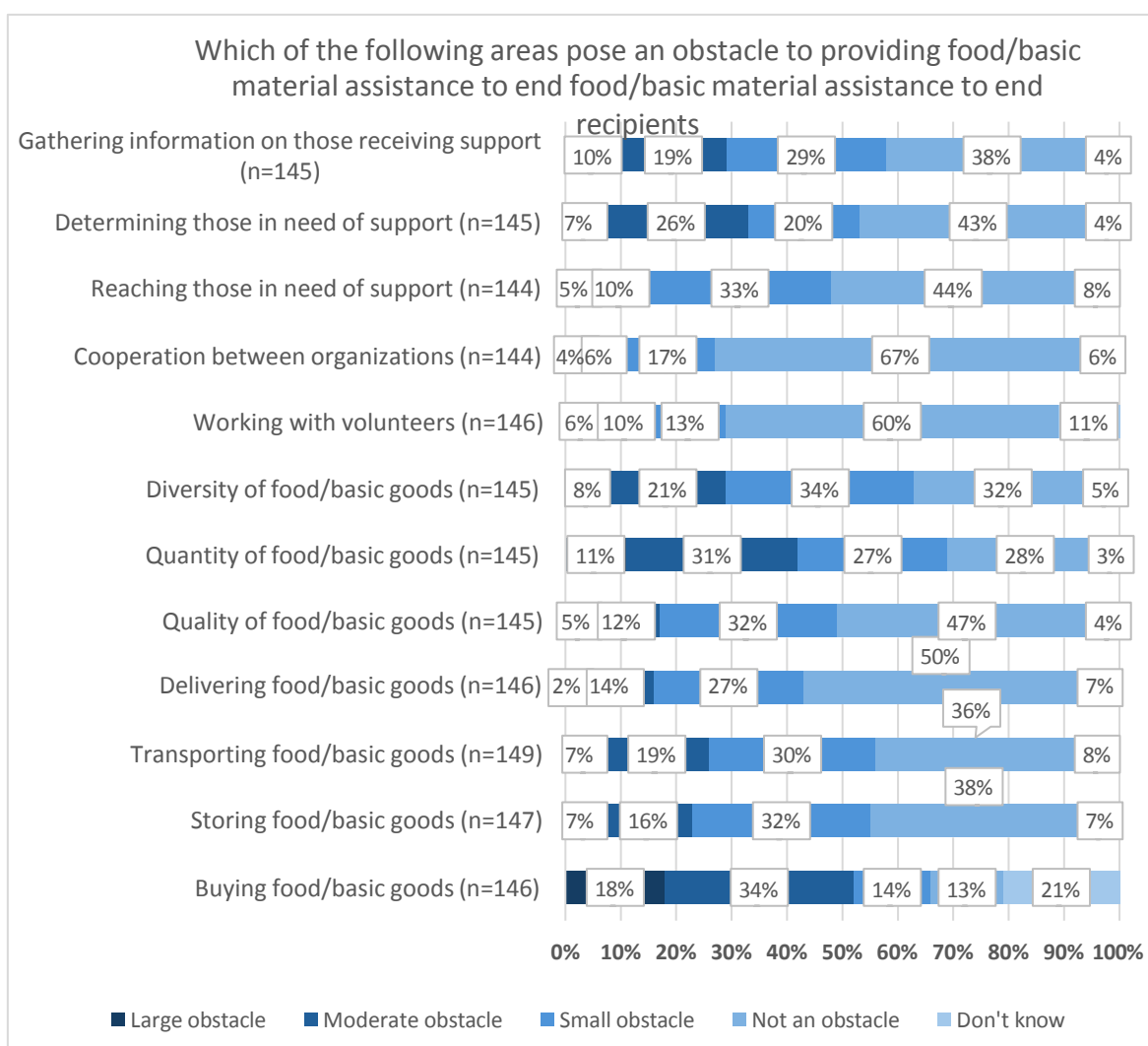
In terms of responses to this question by Managing Authorities alone, the most selected areas posing an obstacle to a large or moderate extent by Managing Authorities that responded to this question were: Buying foods/basic goods (e.g. Procurement processes) (50%; 23 out of 46) and transporting food and basic goods (26%; 12 out of 46).

Figure A. 30 – Extent to which the following areas pose an obstacle to providing food/basic material assistance to end recipients, according to Managing Authorities



According to the majority of Partner Organisations, cooperation between organisations (67%; 96 out of 144), working with volunteers (60%; 88 out of 146) and delivering food / basic goods (50%; 73 out of 146) were not posing any obstacles.

Figure A. 31 – Extent to which the following areas pose an obstacle to providing food/basic material assistance to end recipients, according to Managing Authorities



14.1.4. Adjustments to FEAD to address new challenges

According to the majority of respondents (70%; 211 out of 302²¹⁵), adjustments were made in the way that FEAD was delivered to a large and moderate extent to address new challenges from the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Adjustments were largely and moderately made also in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine according to a relative majority of respondents (43%; 128 of 294²¹⁶). There was a lower share of respondents that consider that FEAD was adjusted to respond to the energy crisis (32%; 93 of 294²¹⁷) and the migration crisis of 2016 to a large and moderate extent (32%; 95 of 296²¹⁸).

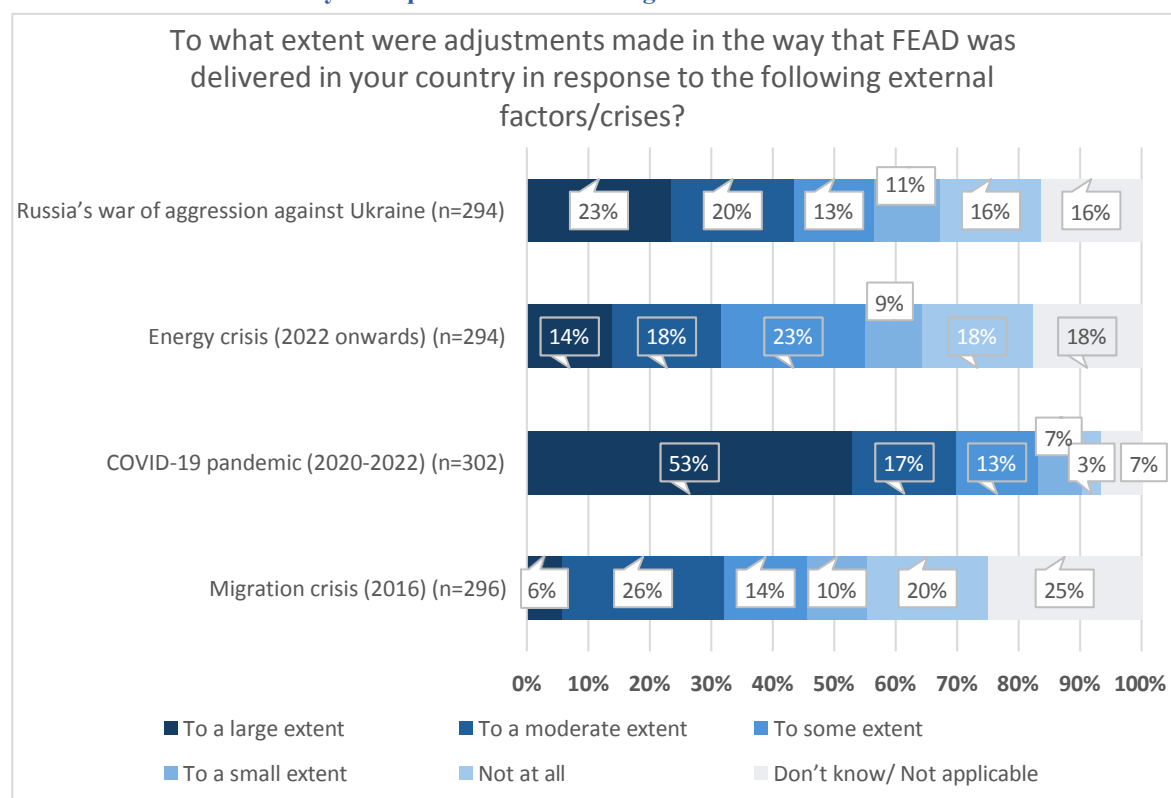
²¹⁵ This question was not answered by 106 respondents.

²¹⁶ This question was not answered by 114 respondents.

²¹⁷ This question was not answered by 114 respondents.

²¹⁸ This question was not answered by 112 respondents.

Figure A. 32 – Extent to which adjustments were made in the way that FEAD was delivered in your country in response to the following external factors/crises



Horizontal principles

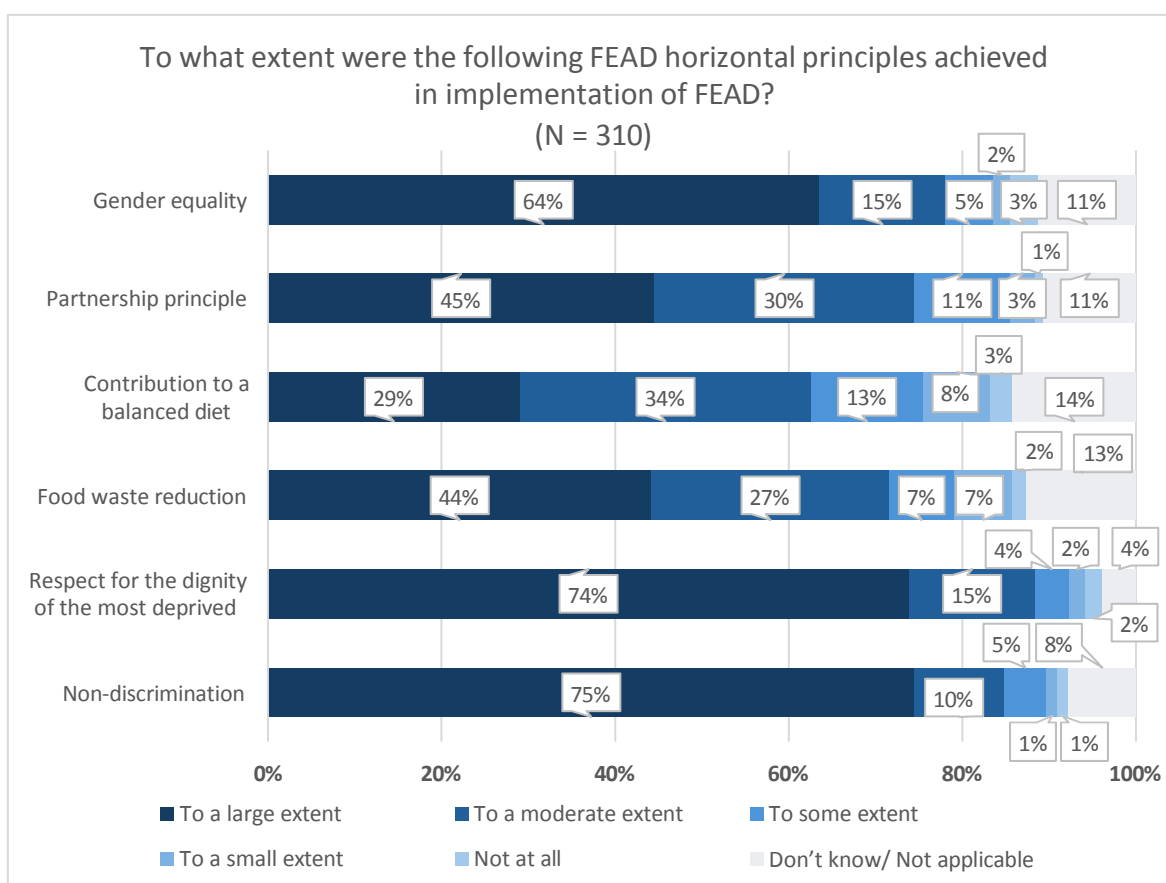
In terms of **FEAD horizontal principles**, the majority of respondents²¹⁹ believed that the following principles were achieved to a large extent:

- Non-discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (75%; 231 out of 310).
- Gender equality (64%; 197 out of 310).

Respondents were more divided regarding the degree of achievement of the other principles as shown in Figure A. 33.

²¹⁹ This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

Figure A. 33 – Extent to which the following FEAD horizontal principles were achieved in the implementation of FEAD



14.1.5. Challenges in the implementation of accompanying measures

Respondents had the possibility to provide their opinion on whether there were any obstacles to providing accompanying measures under FEAD in their countries via an open-text box. Many respondents who answered stated that there were no obstacles. Some pointed-out obstacles included recipients' mistrust towards this type of activity (e.g. what is the purpose and why they should participate) or lack of continuous participation. One partner organisation delivering FEAD support to individuals added that according to their long experience, users mostly participated in workshops when they were conducted just before the distribution of packages.

Individuals who had received FEAD support answered how the received support helped them.²²⁰ However, due to a limited number of responses (19) the findings are not conclusive.

14.1.6. Effectiveness of FEAD support according to respondents' open-ended answers

Finally, respondents could provide their opinions on the overall effectiveness of FEAD support via a textbox. Many respondents highlighted the **effectiveness of FEAD as an emergency measure that successfully provided the basic products to those in need**. A public authority from Portugal referred to a survey they had conducted, which found that 88% of respondents reported that the FEAD assistance made a difference. Two Italian organisations mentioned that FEAD had been effective as it had gone beyond the provision of supplies- it contributed to the **creation of local and regional partner organisations, enabling them to tackle the immediate needs of the most deprived**.

Some respondents explained that FEAD could be further improved. As it addresses the needs of the most deprived, it is important that **time gaps between FEAD-funded operations are minimal, and that support is constant if**

²²⁰ The question "How did the support you received help you?" was only by responded by 19 respondents.

possible, according to a Croatian NGO. Similar to the previous open-ended question, some respondents highlighted that the most deprived could only effectively be helped when the provision of basic needs is coupled with **other ESF+ measures**, including social and employment assistance.

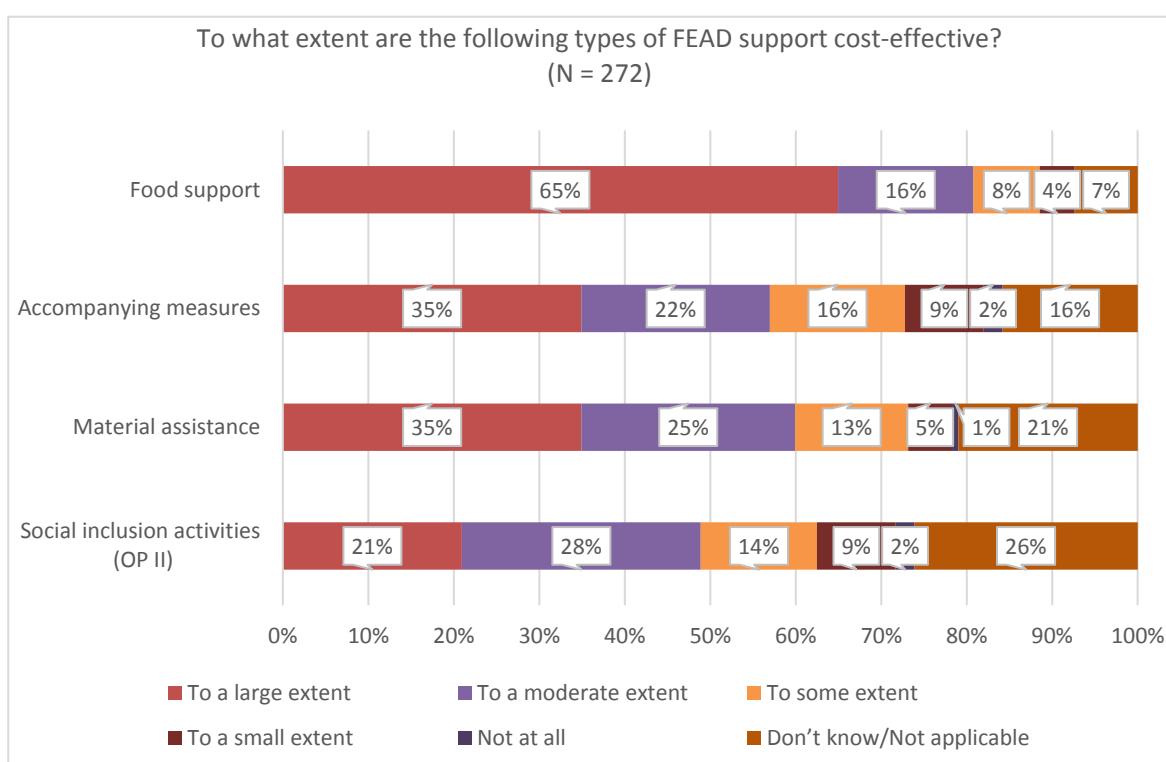
14.2. Efficiency

This section examines respondents' views²²¹ on the efficiency of FEAD by focusing on the overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD and the administrative burden created by FEAD implementation.

14.2.1. Overall cost-effectiveness

Looking at the overall cost-effectiveness of the different types of FEAD support, **food support was evaluated to be cost-effective to a large extent by a majority (65%; 176 out of 272²²²) of respondents²²³**. Respondents were more divided regarding other measures as shown in the figure below, where accompanying measures and material assistance were evaluated as cost-effective to a large extent by over a third of respondents (35%; 95 out of 272 in both cases) of respondents.

Figure A. 34 – Extent to which the following types of FEAD support are cost-effective



The organisations involved in FEAD had similar views on the cost-effectiveness of food support. 66% (122 out of 184) of partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals, 65% (31 out of 48) of FEAD Managing Authorities / Intermediate Bodies, and 59% (23 out of 39) of other organisations involved in FEAD stated that it was cost-effective to a large extent. The majority (50%; 24 out of 48) of FEAD Managing Authorities / Intermediate Bodies believed that material assistance was cost-effective to a large extent.

²²¹ The efficiency questions were asked to the following profiles of respondents: *Partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals; Managing Authority, Intermediate Body & Certifying or Audit Authority, coordinating body for EU funds & Other organisations involved in FEAD.*

²²² This question was not answered by 136 respondents.

²²³ The efficiency questions were asked to the following profiles of respondents: *Partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals; Managing Authority, Intermediate Body & Certifying or Audit Authority, coordinating body for EU funds & Other organisations involved in FEAD.*

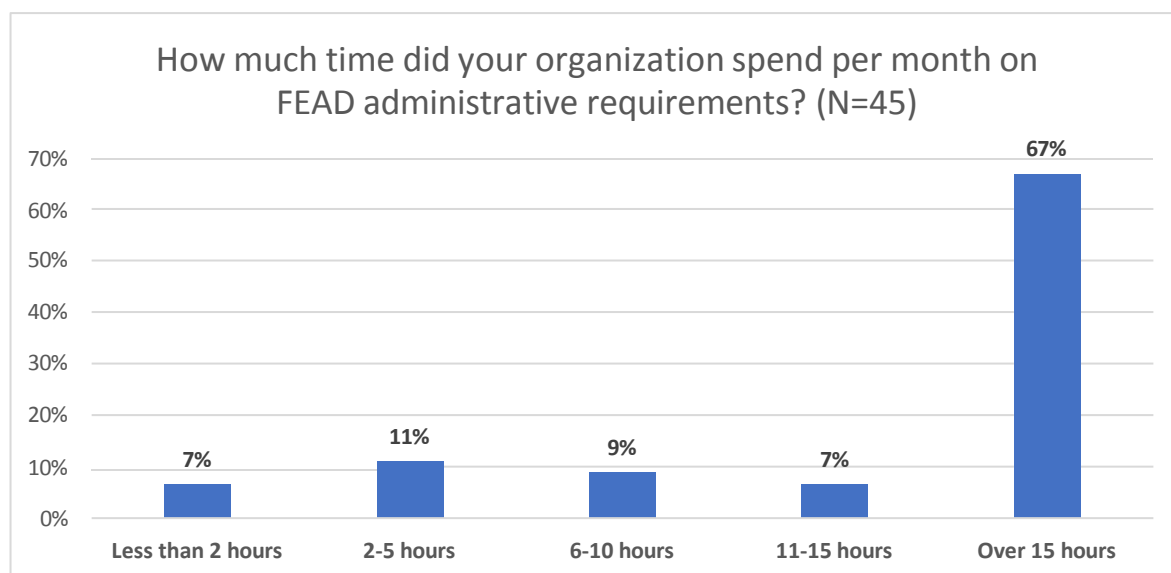
Respondents provided varied opinions on the cost-effectiveness of social inclusion (OP II). A relative majority (28%; 76 out of 272) said that this type of support was cost-effective to a moderate extent. No particular difference in analysed answers was found for the three stakeholder types

14.2.2. Administrative burden

Respondents were asked to estimate how much time on average their organisation spent each month on fulfilling administrative requirements linked to FEAD (e.g. monitoring and reporting). A majority of respondents (56%; 147 out of 262²²⁴) selected **the highest value of 15 hours per month**. Looking at the responses by stakeholder type, 68% (25 out of 37) of other organisations involved in FEAD, 67% (30 out of 45) of FEAD Managing Authorities / Intermediate Bodies and 50% (92 out of 179) of partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals said that they had spent 15 hours on average on fulfilling FEAD's administrative requirements.

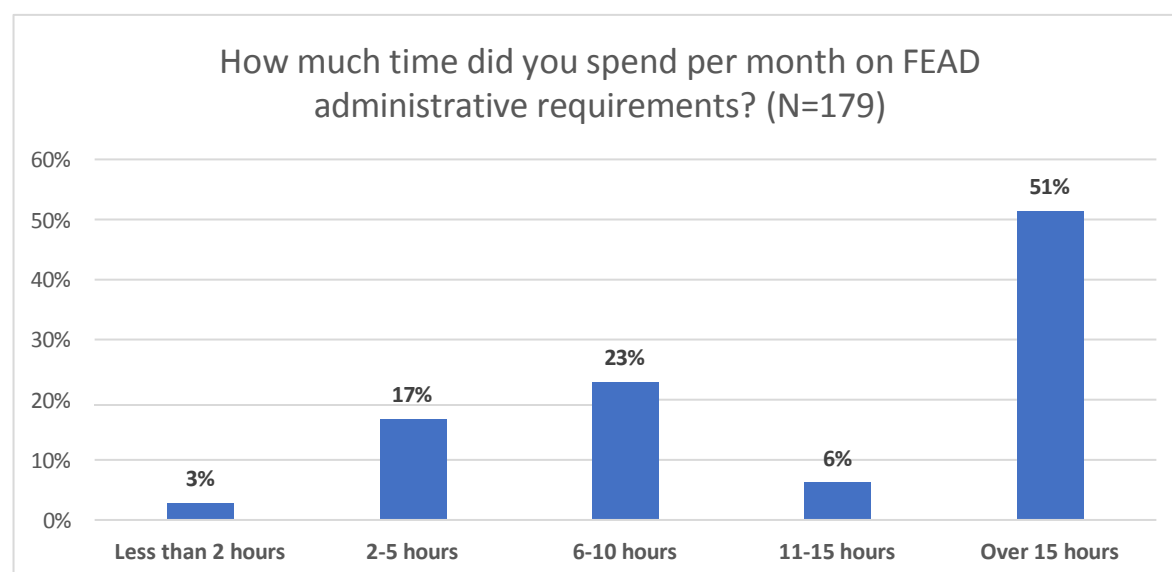
A majority of Managing Authorities (67%; 30 out of 45) spent over 15 hours on average on FEAD administrative requirements. This was also the time selected by the majority of Partner Organisations (51%, 92 out of 179).

Figure A. 35 – The amount of time spent per month on FEAD administrative requirements, according to Managing Authorities



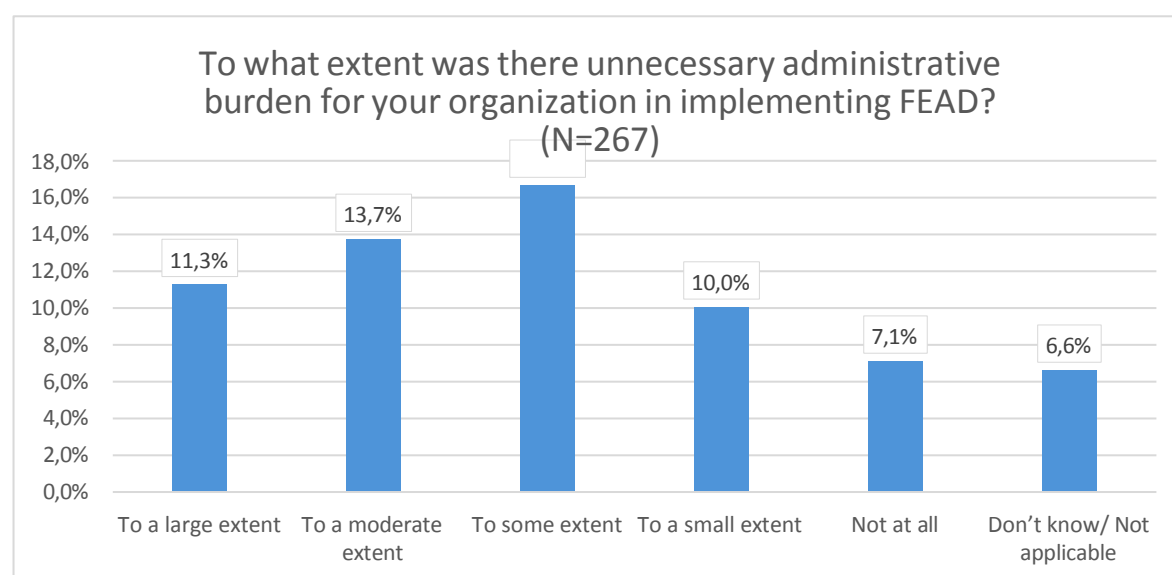
²²⁴ This question was not answered by 146 respondents.

Figure A. 36 – The amount of time spent on FEAD administrative requirements per month according to Partner Organisations



On the unnecessary administrative burden experienced by organisations when implementing FEAD, opinions of respondents are divided. 46% (124 out of 267²²⁵) of respondents said that there was a burden to a moderate and some extent.

Figure A. 37 – Extent to which there was unnecessary administrative burden in implementing FEAD



Moreover, respondents were able to select up to three administrative requirements which were most burdensome for their organisations (N=537). The three requirements most commonly selected were **eligibility rules for FEAD support** (33% of responses; 80), **setting up of a monitoring and reporting system** (28% of responses; 68) and **ongoing monitoring requirements** (25% of responses; 62).

Respondents could provide examples of **gold plating** or any other case of excessive administrative burden in the management and implementation of FEAD. They explained that in most cases, providing detailed end recipients' data (e.g. self-certifications and privacy notices requested periodically) creates an administrative burden. Respondents stated that they did not always understand why that particular data was collected. The administrative

²²⁵ This question was not answered by 141 respondents.

impact related to the identification of beneficiaries (one Italian organisation said that volunteers usually did this identification) is also seen as burdensome.

Some respondents provided ideas on how to make **FEAD more cost-effective**. The commonly mentioned themes are grouped below.

- Putting in place a more **effective collaboration** between the various national structures on the identification of end recipients (working closely with social services) and products to be supplied and distributed. More effective collaboration between Managing Authorities and partner bodies could streamline some processes.
- Creating **synergies with other programmes** to accompany disadvantaged people with labour market inclusion if needed.
- Switching to **different delivery modes** either in the form of a card or voucher. An organisation from Estonia mentioned that their card system enabled beneficiaries to choose relevant assistance (products they need), which reduced transport and storage costs.

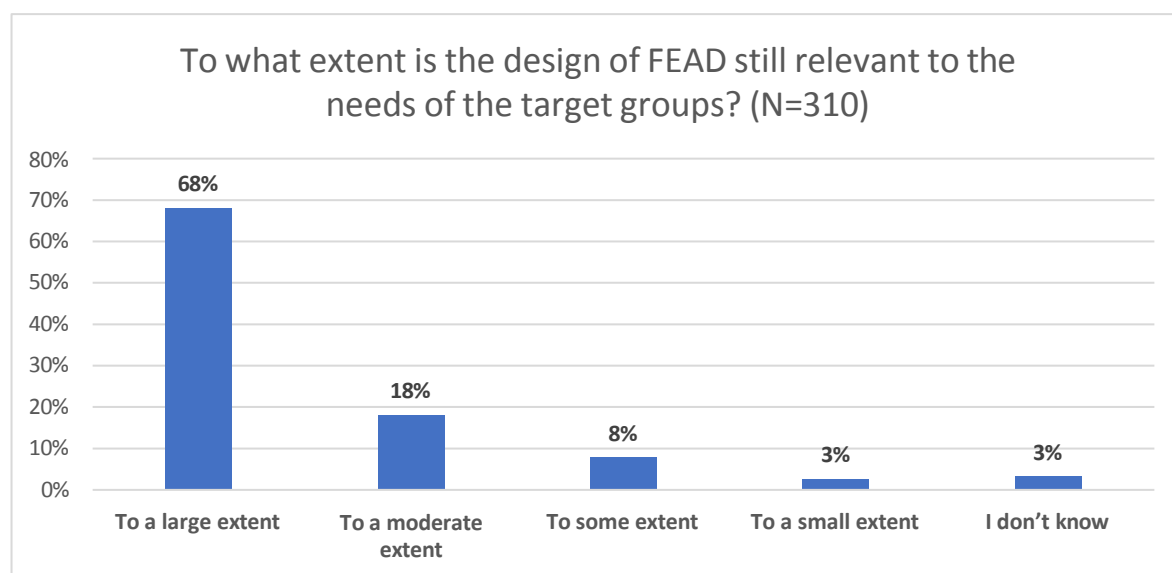
14.3. Relevance

Respondents²²⁶ were asked to assess the relevance of FEAD through two questions: the relevance of FEAD to target groups and the relevance of FEAD to emerging needs.

14.3.1. Relevance to target groups

A large majority of respondents (68%; 211 out of 310²²⁷) think that the design of FEAD was **still relevant to the needs of the target groups to a large extent**. In terms of specific stakeholder types, 77% (27 out of 35) of other organisations involved in FEAD (e.g. NGOs, public authorities) and 73% (107 out of 147) of partner organisations delivering FEAD support to individuals found that the design of FEAD was still to a large extent relevant to the needs of the target groups.

Figure A. 38 – The extent to which the design of FEAD still relevant to the needs of the target groups



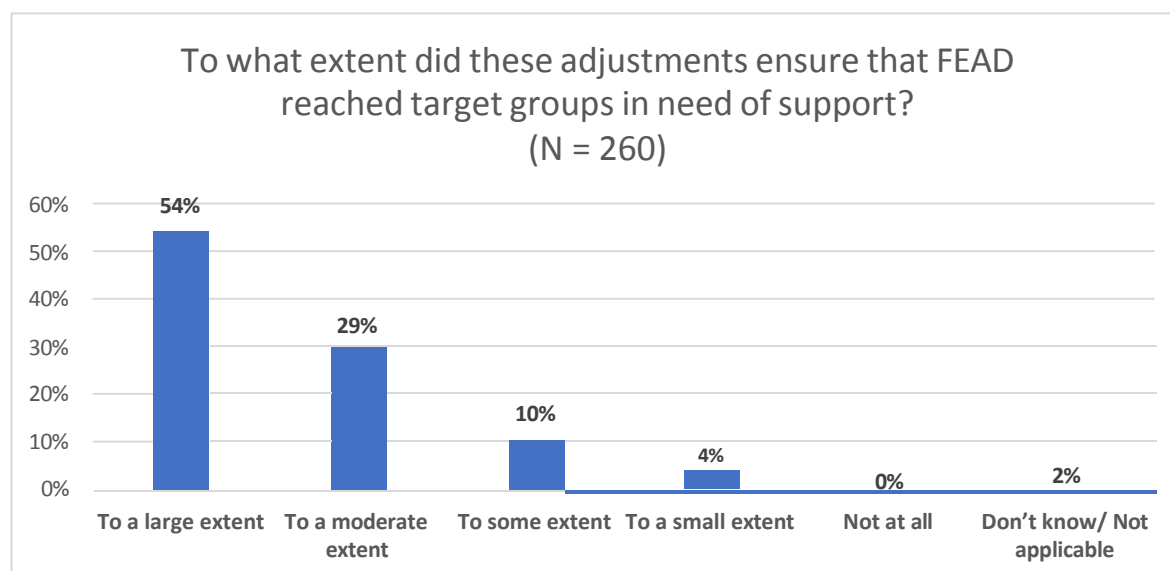
²²⁶ These questions were asked to the respondents who selected: *‘I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions’*.

²²⁷ This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

14.3.2. Relevance to emerging needs

A majority of respondents (54%; 141 out of 260²²⁸) also think that, due to FEAD adjustments (i.e. COVID-19, energy crisis, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine), target groups in need of support were reached out to a large extent.²²⁹ This is particularly true for other organisations involved in FEAD, as 70% (21 out of 30) stated that FEAD adjustments ensured that target groups in need of support were reached to a large extent.

Figure A. 39 – Extent to which these adjustments ensure that FEAD reached target groups in need of support



14.4. Coherence

This section presents respondents' views²³⁰ on the coherence of FEAD with other EU, national, regional, local or private interventions²³¹. A majority of respondents found that FEAD operations complemented or reinforced: existing national programmes (72%; 224 out of 310); existing regional/local programmes (64%; 198 of 310); activities of non-profit organisations and NGOs supporting the most deprived (62%; 191 out of 310) and the European Social Fund (ESF) (57%; 177 out of 310). On the other hand, only a minority of respondents found that FEAD operations complemented or reinforced the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (30%; 94 out of 310), Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (23%; 72 out of 310) and other European Structural and Investment Funds (e.g., EAFRD, EMFF) (21%; 65 out of 310).

Respondents had the possibility to explain why they believed FEAD operations were coherent with other interventions. According to some answers, coherence was evidenced in the fact that:

- FEAD had strengthened the already existing networks of local/regional/national programmes
- FEAD had improved the capacities of delivery organisations to recover surplus food from other channels.

As an example of how FEAD-delivered food was aligned with national plans, a Portuguese respondent mentioned that the FEAD food basket given to recipients was defined according to the National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating.

²²⁸ This question was not answered by 267 respondents.

²²⁹ This question was not answered by 148 respondents.

²³⁰ These questions were asked to the respondents who selected: "I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions".

²³¹ This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

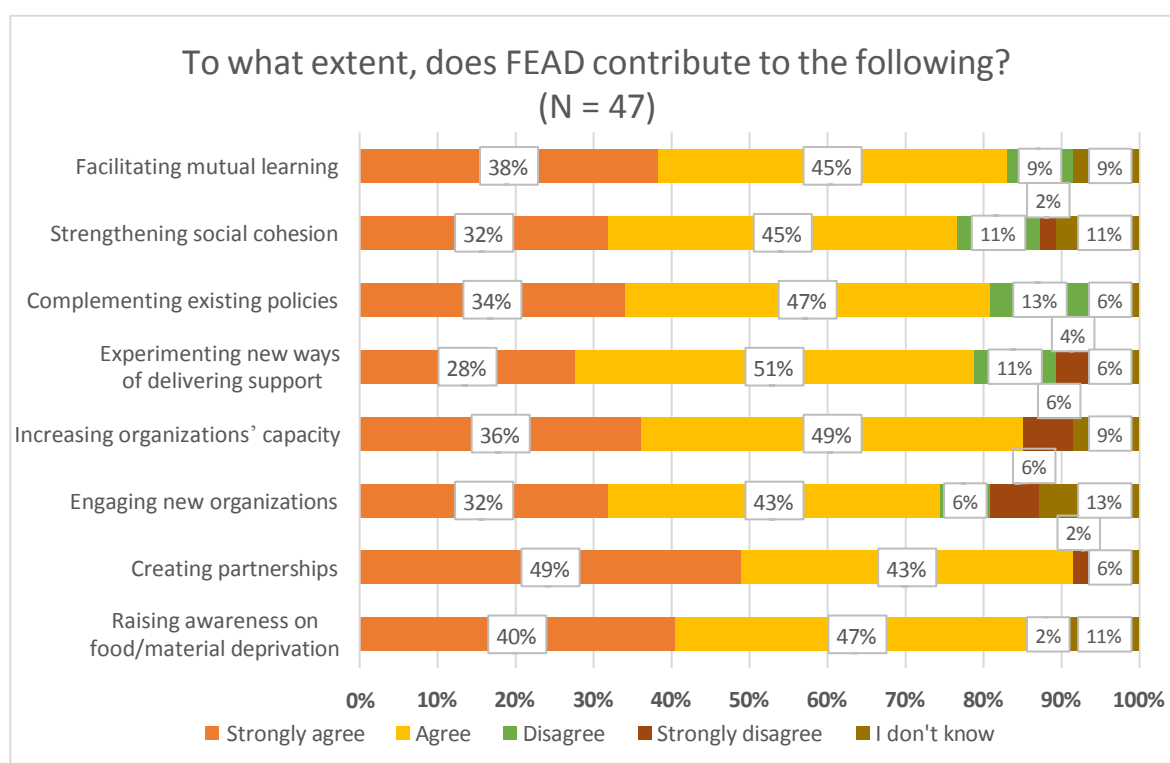
14.5. EU added value

A considerable majority of respondents²³² agreed or strongly agreed that FEAD contributed to increasing the capacity of organisations supporting the most vulnerable (91%; 283 out of 310); creating partnerships among social inclusion stakeholders (89%; 275 out of 310); complementing existing social inclusion policies (88%; 272 out of 310); raising awareness of food and material deprivation (87%; 269 out of 310); creating partnerships facilitating mutual learning, networking and dissemination of good practices in supporting the most deprived (84%; 259 of 310); strengthening social cohesion (84%; 260 of 310); experimenting with new ways of delivering support to the most deprived (80%; 247 of 310) and engaging new organisations to work with the most deprived (76%; 237 of 310).

The figures below zoom in on the specific opinions of Managing Authorities (N=47) and Partner Organisations (N=155) on EU-added value. They both agree and strongly agree that FEAD contributed to a different set of objectives. For Managing Authorities, this is especially true for **creating partnerships** (92%; 43 out of 47), raising awareness on food/material deprivation (87%; 41 out of 47) and increasing organisations' capacities (85%; 40 out of 47).

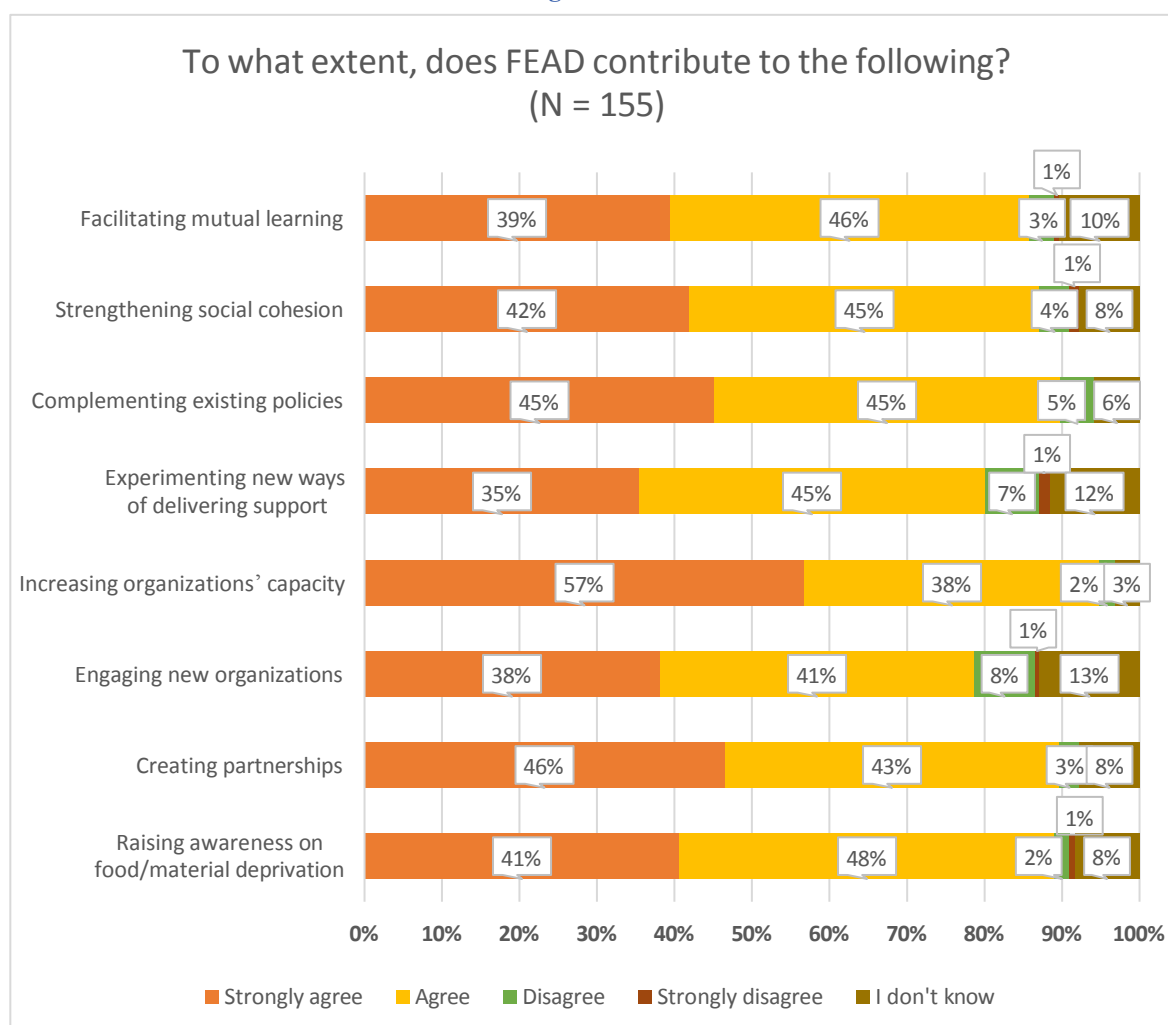
For partner organisations, this is especially true for increasing organisations' capacity (95%; 147 out of 155), creating partnerships (90%; 139 out of 155) and complementing existing policies (90%; 139 out of 155).

Figure A. 40 – The extent to which FEAD contributed to added value, according to Managing Authorities



²³² This question was asked to the respondents who selected: "I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions" and was not answered by 98 respondents.

Figure A. 41 – The extent to which FEAD contributed to added value, according to Partner Organisations



Respondents who identified themselves as individuals receiving or having received FEAD support were asked whether FEAD support made a difference to them or the members of their household. All four respondents who replied said yes.

14.6. Visibility

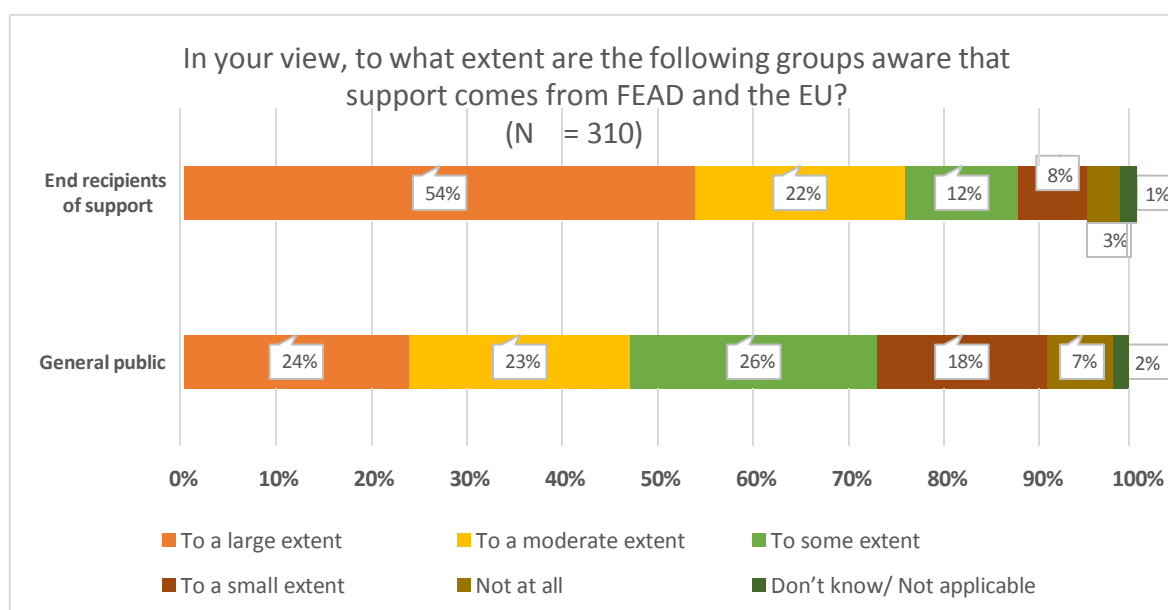
Respondents were asked to what extent the following groups were aware that support comes from FEAD and the EU (N=310²³³). A majority of respondents (54%; 166 of 310) think that **end recipients of support** are aware to a large extent that support is provided by FEAD²³⁴. Opinions are more divided on the awareness of the general public where the answer which was selected by the highest number of respondents was that the general public is aware to some extent of the source of FEAD support (26% of respondents; 80 of 310)²³⁵.

²³³ This question was not answered by 98 respondents.

²³⁴ Partner organisation delivering FEAD support to individuals" & "Managing Authority, Intermediate Body" & "Certifying or Audit Authority, coordinating body for EU funds" & "Other organisation involved in FEAD"

²³⁵ This question was asked to the respondents who selected: "I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions".

Figure A. 42 – Extent to which the following groups were aware that support comes from FEAD and the EU



Respondents could select the elements on FEAD support, which were visible to end recipients (N=586²³⁶ - multiple selections were possible). Respondents most commonly selected the following elements: **an EU flag present on the packaging of food/material assistance provided** was selected making up 37% of responses; 218), and **FEAD mentioned on the packaging of provided food/material assistance** (making up 36% of responses; 206) were most frequently chosen as elements visible on FEAD support to end recipients.

The question, which was directed at individuals who received support on how they learned about the received support was only answered by 6 respondents, making the findings limited.

²³⁶ This question was not answered by 114 respondents.

ANNEX VIII: FACTUAL SUMMARY REPORT

Factual summary report of the public consultation

This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions to the public consultation (PC) launched in the context of the study supporting the ex-post evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). It cannot be regarded as the official position of the European Commission or its services. Responses received to this PC cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population. It is publicly available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13715-Aid-to-the-most-deprived-evaluation-of-the-2014-2020-FEAD/public-consultation_en

²⁵¹ These questions were asked to the respondents who selected: “*I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions*” and were not answered by 98 respondents.

²⁵² This question was asked to the respondents who selected: “*I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions*” and was not answered by 98 respondents.

²⁵³ These questions were asked to the respondents who selected: “*I am familiar with FEAD and I have a detailed knowledge of FEAD objectives/ actions*” and were not answered by 98 respondents.

ANNEX IX: KEY DATA

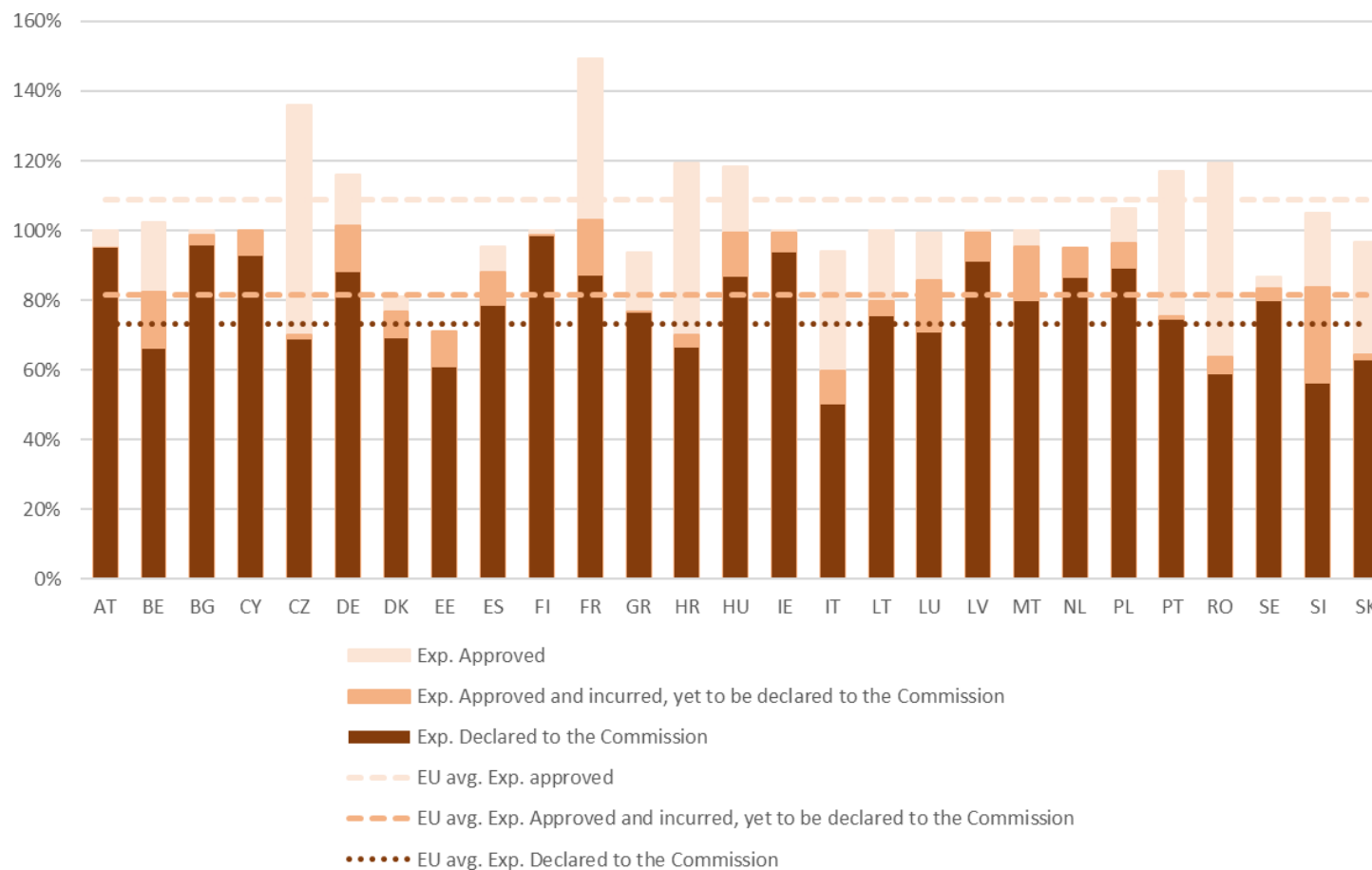
3.2.1 FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The EU average expenditure declared to the Commission is 73% of FEAD budget allocations by 2022 and 82% (4.2 billion) of approved total budgets of EUR 5.2 billion had been officially incurred by the end of 2022²⁵⁴. One reason why there is still quite a discrepancy between approved and actually incurred expenditure also lies in the potentially slower uptake of REACT-EU funds, which in many countries were used from 2021 onwards to combat the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The figure below shows the degree of financial implementation at the end of 2022 as a share of the FEAD allocated budget (EU and national cofinancing) as reported in the latest approved OPs.

²⁵⁴ Of the total allocations EUR 5.2 billion (EU and national funding included), the total approved expenditures reached EUR 5.6 billion, by the end of 2022, which is the equivalent of 109%. The difference in sums is due to the common practice of 'overbooking' to compensate for potential reductions.

Figure A. 46 – Financial implementation by the end of 2022²⁵⁵ (SFC2014 data)



²⁵⁵ The values for approved documents may be above the total allocated budgets: this is the 'result of a common practice towards the end of the programming period to ensure full implementation.' (FEAD synthesis report)

The table below shows the total amount of eligible expenditure incurred and paid in operations, by country and for OP I and OP II respectively. The largest share of funding was dedicated to OP I. Within OP I, funds were mainly allocated to food supply (3.75 billion EUR, 96.2%), with a much smaller share to the provision of basic material assistance (147.6 million EUR, 3.8%).

Table A. 24 – Total eligible public expenditure (EU + national) incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to OP I and OP II, by country, 2014-2022 (EUR)

Country	Basic Material Assistance (OP I)	Food Supply (OP I)	Social Integration (OP II)	Total
AT	25 429 786	-	-	25 429 786
BE	-	104 996 407	-	104 996 407
BG	-	151 897 127	-	151 897 127
CY	3 814 170	756 259	-	4 570 429
CZ	8 575 264	12 655 223	-	21 230 487
DE	-	-	94 116 106	94 116 106
DK	-	-	3 565 712	3 565 712
EE	-	10 560 337	-	10 560 337
EL	34 537 531	203 233 613	-	237 771 144
ES	-	706 107 442	-	706 107 442
FI	-	25 101 669	-	25 101 669
FR	-	709 673 882	-	709 673 882
HR	5 322 417	29 851 759	-	35 174 176
HU	14 085 025	95 127 265	-	109 212 290
IE	4 446 472	22 156 461	-	26 602 933
IT	14 712 833	557 134 753	-	571 847 586
LT	5 513 472	66 933 321	-	72 446 793
LU	933 938	3 024 001	-	3 957 939
LV	10 926 697	42 810 243	-	53 736 940
MT	-	4 172 401	-	4 172 401
NL	-	-	4 408 740	4 408 740
PL	-	535 809 850	-	535 809 850
PT	-	149 628 520	-	149 628 520
RO	18 134 500	245 226 378	-	263 360 878

Country	Basic Material Assistance (OP I)	Food Supply (OP I)	Social Integration (OP II)	Total
SE	-	-	7 722 579	7 722 579
SI	-	26 040 705	-	26 040 705
SK	1 209 494	52 908 613	-	54 118 107
Total Amount	147 641 598	3 755 143 069	109 813 138	4 012 597 805

Source: SFC2014 data

As a response to the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) allowed for flexibilities in using FEAD. A sequential initiative: the Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe (REACT-EU), extended the original initiatives through a top-up, which was used by 14 Member States.

3.2.2 SUPPORT PROVIDED AND TARGET GROUPS REACHED

By end of 2022, FEAD has delivered assistance in 27 Member States. Most Member States (23 out of 27) distributed food and/ or basic material assistance together with accompanying measures (OP I). Four Member States run social inclusion programmes (OP II).

Type of assistance

OP	Type assistance	Member State
OPI	Food	10MS: BE, BG, EE, ES, FI, FR, MT, PL, PT, SI
	Basic material	1MS: AT
	Both	11MS: CY*, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, RO, SK^
OP II	Social inclusion	4MS: DE, DK, NL, SE
*Cyprus completed food assistance in 2019, and since focused on basic material assistance		
^Slovakia provided basic material assistance between 2016-2019, and since only provides food support with FEAD support.		

Source: Annual Implementation Reports 2022 (SFC2014)

The operations funded under OP I and OP II were very diverse and often, especially regarding basic material assistance (OP I) and social inclusion activities (OP II), were adapted to the specific target groups they addressed. The Table below gives an overview of target groups as defined in Member States Operational Programmes.

Table A. 25 – Target groups by MS and OP

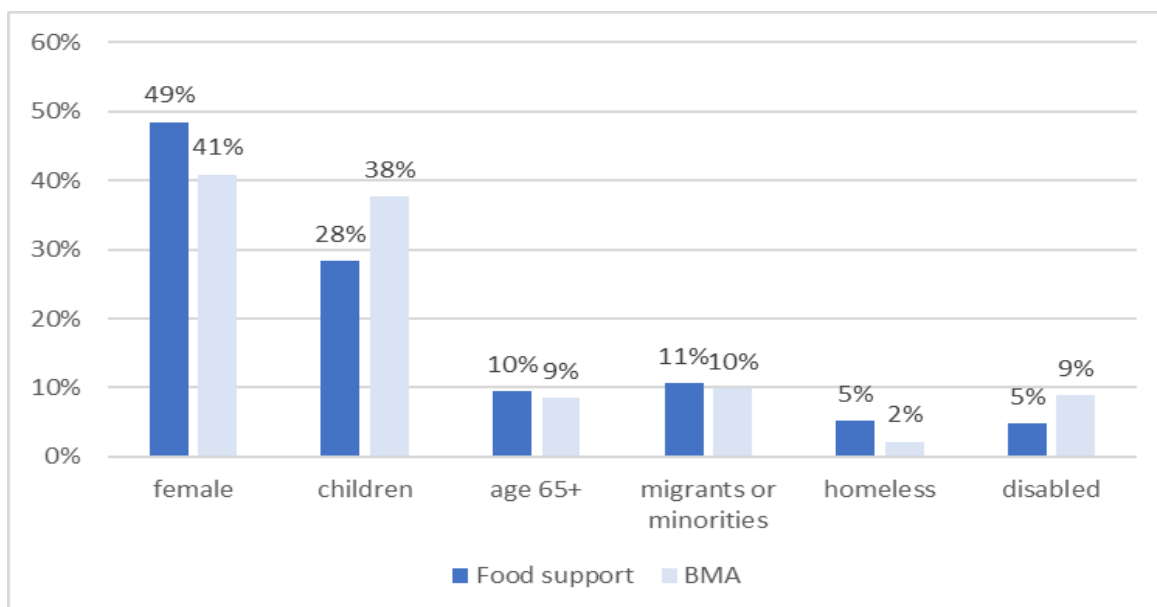
Target group	OP I	OP II	No. of OPs
Disadvantaged vulnerable individuals (e.g. below a certain income threshold)	BE, BG, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SI, SK		14

Target group	OP I	OP II	No. of OPs
Homeless persons	CZ, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, PT, RO, SK	DE, DK	13
Children aged 15 or below	AT, CY, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IE, LV, RO	DE	10
Workless households / households with low work intensity	IE, LU, MT		3
Migrants or minorities	BG, IE	DE, SE	4
Elderly persons	IE, RO	NL	3
Women	RO		1
Persons with disabilities	IE		1
Other	IE		1

Source: SFC 2014, period 2014-2022

In total, across OP operations, 120 million persons received food support, and 7.8 million received basic material assistance up to 2022. The share of OP I end recipients by type of support and target group is shown in Figure below.

Figure A. 47 – Share of OP I end recipients by type of support and target group, 2014-2022²⁵⁶



Source: own calculations based on SFC 2014 data

Food support (OP I)

²⁵⁶ Note that the same person may be included in several categories, while not all persons receiving support are necessarily to any of the indicated categories.

The total monetary value of food support in the 21 Member States which have chosen to use the Fund for direct distribution of food, amounted to EUR 4 345 942 740 (including national co-financing) and reached 119 905 708 persons. On average, 36.2 EUR were spent per person. OP I countries distributed around 3.3 million tonnes of food, 554 million meals, and 962 million food packages to the most deprived and vulnerable.

Across OP I Member States an average of 0.88 kg of food was distributed for every Euro paid in implementing operations relating to OP I food supply.

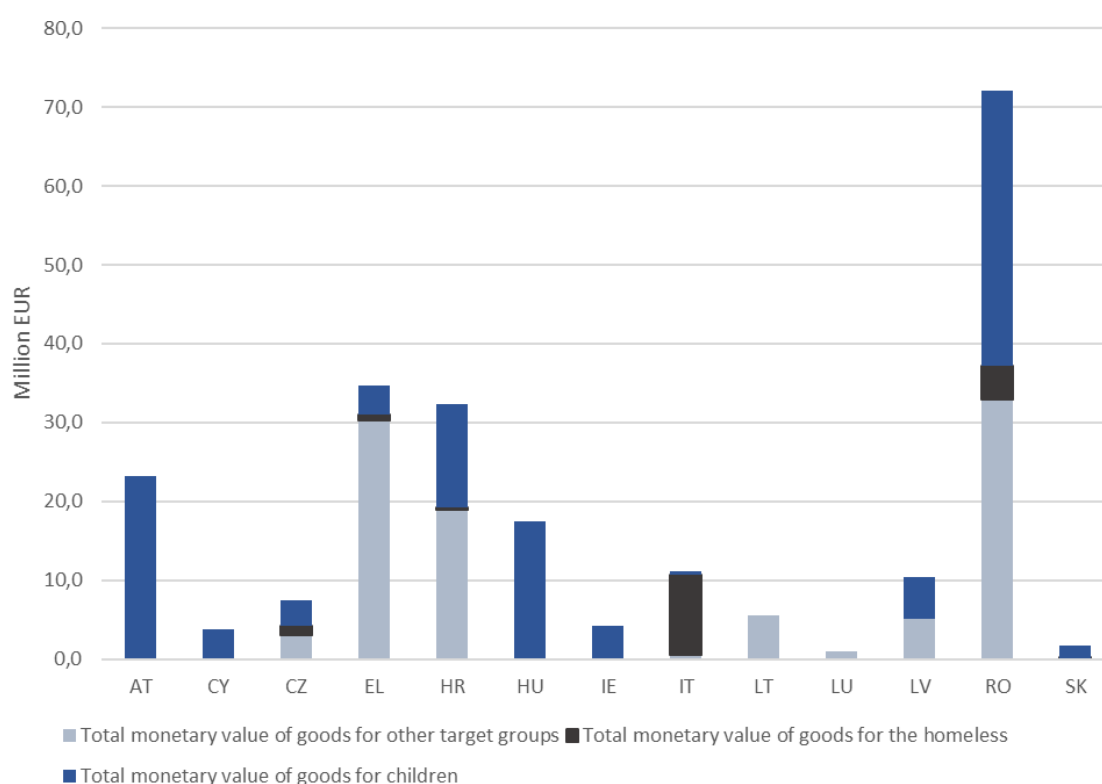
Basic material assistance (OP I)

The total monetary value of basic material assistance distributed in the 13 EU Member States amounted to EUR 221 165 046 (including national co-financing) and reached 7 776 324 persons. On average, EUR 28 were spent per person in 12 of the 13 Member States (excluding Cyprus).

The monetary value of provided goods for children across OP I Member States amounts to EUR 110 million and the monetary value of goods provided for other target groups to EUR 97 million respectively. However, the distribution of basic material assistance delivered to the different target groups varied over time. Especially during the period of COVID-19 and the respective lockdowns, homeless persons were targeted to a larger extent than in the years before and after, when the aid was more often dedicated to children.

As shown in the Figure below the total value of goods for children and the value of goods for ‘other’ target groups, e.g. migrants or people with disabilities, was significantly larger than the value of goods for homeless people. This distribution is also related to the size of the target group, with children comprising a larger share of the overall FEAD target group.

Figure A. 48 – Distribution of overall monetary value of basic material assistance



Social inclusion assistance (OP II)

The total monetary value of social inclusion assistance in the four EU Member States amounted to EUR 109 813 138 (including national co-financing) and reached a total of 209 913 persons. These are, however, very unevenly distributed among the four countries providing it, with Germany showing the highest number of participations by far: 199 308, which equals 95% of all participations. On average, EUR 525 were spent per person.

The main focus of the operations under OP II in three of the four countries were migrants, including minorities such as the Roma, and homeless people; while the Netherlands focused specifically on persons aged 65 years or above.

Germany succeeded in reaching more than the targeted participants in each of the programme-specific indicators, far surpassing the initial target for adult non-EU citizens advised (achieved by 623%). Denmark overall reached more than twice as many participants as targeted (215%). In the Netherlands, the target values were not reached, with 3 299 achieved from a target of 5 000 (66%). This was due to the recruiting of participants being more difficult than anticipated and the fact that many participants stayed in the project for longer than expected.

A more detailed description of operations and impacts under each OP II country can be found in the case studies.

Common Input Indicators OP I and OP II

Table A. 26 – Eligible public expenditure by type and Member State, 2014-2022

MS	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to basic material assistance provided directly to the most deprived	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to food provided directly to the most deprived	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission
AT	27 214 980	25 877 795	25 429 786	0	25 851 941
BE	137 323 985	110 442 312	0	104 996 407	88 590 622
BG	161 884 757	159 622 013	0	151 897 127	154 698 959
CY	4 640 777	4 640 777	3 814 170	756 259	4 294 529
CZ	42 628 133	21 958 227	8 575 264	12 655 223	21 568 258
DE	107 769 727	94 116 106	0	0	81 584 632
DK	4 612 743	4 290 536	0	0	3 920 831
EE	10 565 891	10 560 337	0	10 560 337	8 993 302
EL	309 443 823	253 202 357	34 537 531	203 233 613	252 485 758
ES	801 698 113	739 920 685	0	706 107 442	657 378 688
FI	26 519 000	26 184 497	0	25 101 669	26 098 946
FR	1 031 802 528	712 948 666	0	709 673 882	601 415 963
HR	63 433 762	37 193 831	5 322 417	29 851 759	35 182 794
HU	130 601 837	109 685 079	14 085 025	95 127 265	95 883 392
IE	26 783 915	26 638 598	4 446 472	22 156 461	25 068 880
IT	930 583 787	588 553 066	14 712 833	557 134 753	496 302 508
LT	90 857 522	72 446 793	5 513 472	66 933 321	68 307 304
LU	5 459 548	4 703 714	933 938	3 024 001	3 882 702

MS	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to basic material assistance provided directly to the most deprived	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to food provided directly to the most deprived	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission
LV	57 595 425	57 208 908	10 926 697	42 810 243	52 517 111
MT	4 640 777	4 431 228	0	4 172 401	3 694 157
NL	4 408 740	4 403 056	0	0	4 403 056
PL	591 850 452	535 809 850	0	535 809 850	496 302 892
PT	243 793 742	157 067 851	0	149 628 520	154 790 675
RO	686 655 264	365 464 829	18 134 500	245 226 378	338 443 696
SE	8 052 035	7 722 579	0	0	7 404 830
SI	34 716 365	27 696 117	0	26 040 705	18 498 089
SK	84 902 408	56 432 309	1 209 494	52 908 613	54 975 067
EU-27	5 630 440 035	4 219 222 309	147 641 598	3 755 806 231	3 782 539 582

Common Output Indicators OP I

Table A. 27 – Quantities of food support, meals and food packages distributed across EU27, by Member State 2014-2022

Member State	Total quantity of food support (in tonnes)	Total number of meals partly or totally financed by OP	Total number of food packages distributed partly or totally financed by OP
BE	84 016	10 115 096	17 648 057
BG	105 712	64 722 772	1 727 668
CY	153	722 386	-
CZ	5 762	4 549 921	1 702 684
EE	4 493	-	329 681
EL	71 842	16 067 696	4 444 751
ES	765 986	251 816 713	34 412 082

Member State	Total quantity of food support (in tonnes)	Total number of meals partly or totally financed by OP	Total number of food packages distributed partly or totally financed by OP
FI	12 339	288 331	2 012 601
FR	685 705	-	593 420 707
HR	16 640	18 021 390	847 864
HU	26 010	6 246 479	2 355 183
IE	6 272	8 677 571	1 613 246
IT	527 315	145 726 747	211 136 790
LT	48 289	-	9 775 689
LU	15 007	-	209 081
LV	19 832	2 567 561	3 012 635
MT	1 305	-	86 823
PL	463 108	13 093 543	47 716 434
PT	115 604	-	3 034 288
RO	283 595	11 027 838	18 618 986
SI	31 188	-	6 872 866
SK	18 609	410 445	1 435 952

Source: SFC 2014

Table A. 28 – Quantities of types of food support distributed, by Member State 2014-2022

MS	Total quantity of food support (in tonnes)	Fruits vegetables	Meat, eggs, fish, seafood	Starchy foods	Sugar	Milk	Fats, oil	Convenience food or other
BE	84 016	15 482	2 348	21 341	567	31 569	2 719	9 987
BG	105 711	29 111	13 758	46 684	5 873	4 370	4 558	1 355
CY	153	41	21	68	-	21	-	-
CZ	5 762	938	729	1 384	408	1 010	375	915
EE	4 493	360	1144	1369	498	41	435	646
EL	71 842	14 283	10 832	16 983	4 818	8 016	5 828	11 080
ES	765 986	137 779	37 895	102 892	-	313 804	45 196	128 418
FI	12 338	-	1 307	8 106	-	837	-	2 087
FR	685 704	92 533	45 962	100 419	23 324	348 056	26 779	48 627

MS	Total quantity of food support (in tonnes)	Fruits vegetables	Meat, eggs, fish, seafood	Starchy foods	Sugar	Milk	Fats, oil	Convenience food or other
HR	16 639	2 998	1 366	5 234	1 054	2 074	973	2 937
HU	26 010	3 370	598	8 099	1 804	1 759	1 859	8 517
IE	6 272	1 754	223	1 902	926	7	-	1 459
IT	527 314	34 203	14 556	215 435	16 204	140 708	24 530	81 678
LT	48 289	2 859	3 951	20 777	5 547	3 697	5 087	6 369
LU	15 007	3 147	1 619	2 576	493	4 076	663	2 430
LV	19 832	861	2 732	11 527	1 406	1 801	1 505	-
MT	1 305	425	121	538	-	147	-	73
PL	463 108	102 801	67 342	110 166	44 302	94 395	36 942	7 157
PT	115 604	38 831	12 960	19 921	981	36 665	3 223	3 020
RO	283 595	7 639	37 616	142 171	38 057	-	54 400	3 711
SI	31 188	-	-	10 962	-	13 847	3 076	3 302
SK	18 608	2 153	2 118	10 052	1 436	574	1 436	839

Source: SFC 2014

Table A. 29 – Number of persons receiving FEAD food support 2014-2022²⁵⁷

Member State	Persons total	Children	Age 65+	Women	Migrants or minorities	Disabled	Homeless
BE	3 156 993	926 047	240 323	1 149 004	972 620	93 591	165 776
BG	3 265 520	819 504	871 372	1 845 376	339 345	757 321	2 305
CY	5 533	5 079	-	2 767	2 158	-	-
CZ	547 266	249 712	51 723	229 715	185 018	44 677	104 122
EE	196 910	56 759	17 339	101 208	46 268	30 916	8 022
EL	2 190 897	493 735	160 330	1 135 865	107 844	42 058	35 132
ES	13 619 618	4 054 424	932 412	7 140 298	3 596 475	249 074	241 511
FI	2 001 767	274 502	579 190	821 762	209 019	44 495	16 302

²⁵⁷ Participants may be part of different groups at the same time (e.g. a child with disabilities, a woman aged 65+ etc)

Member State	Persons total	Children	Age 65+	Women	Migrants or minorities	Disabled	Homeless
FR	42 490 821	14 182 927	2 243 107	22 515 719	-	-	4 253 918
HR	436 450	189 325	84 135	221 422	34 852	12 040	1 151
HU	885 436	576 620	72 200	169 654	304 103	245 415	62 497
IE	938 857	332 637	95 325	319 848	130 488	43 834	155 025
IT	21 592 510	4 922 420	2 135 752	9 858 241	6 097 185	309 185	915 131
LT	1 916 483	474 218	127 693	870 545	32 823	187 986	2 690
LU	97 817	28 284	2 084	50 834	72 434	2 917	967
LV	629 367	118 261	125 286	311 311	39 880	84 496	5 347
MT	85 921	43 702	5 069	49 654	6 532	505	-
PL	10 748 634	3 060 237	1 000 343	5 481 943	214 894	1 714 966	228 418
PT	1 539 807	400 380	134 599	748 091	75 936	7 996	361
RO	11 350 951	2 272 600	2 308 912	3 997 369	192 044	1 753 496	8 639
SI	1 329 788	273 608	215 142	696 463	112 150	49 851	18 329
SK	878 362	313 096	20 076	441 549	-	42 248	30 331
Total	119 905 708	34 068 077	11 422 412	58 158 638	12 772 068	5 717 067	6 255 974

Source: SFC 2014

Table A. 30 – Number of persons receiving FEAD BMA support 2014-2022

Member State	Persons total	Children	Age 65+	Women	Migrants or minorities	Disabled	Homeless
AT	293 893	237 816	0	151 024	144 536	0	0
CY	3 196	3 196	0	3 196	1 711	0	0
CZ	403 431	164 229	57 622	183 417	141 804	35 728	72 493
EL	1 789 570	409 025	127 109	921 484	85 320	31 360	31 804
HR	193 689	57 757	42 982	99 876	19 066	9 262	937
HU	498 619	496 523	0	4 004	57 564	5 756	0
IE	182 119	179 672	0	95 352	11 255	0	0

Member State	Persons total	Children	Age 65+	Women	Migrants or minorities	Disabled	Homeless
IT	62 870	3 653	3 497	12 825	42 472	2 268	51 469
LT	981 246	245 636	99 519	511 473	23 783	116 577	1 169
LU	97 817	28 284	2 084	50 834	72 434	2 917	967
LV	423 965	116 637	83 202	199 305	38 620	50 033	607
RO	2 310 223	722 663	249 017	680 171	129 275	422 959	2 164
SK	535 686	267 034	124	267 015	0	11 206	4 874
Total	7 776 324	2 932 125	665 156	3 179 976	767 840	688066	166 484

Source: SFC 2014

Output Indicators OP II

Table A. 31 – Number of final beneficiaries of OP II, by Member State, 2014-2022

MS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2014-2022
DE	0	31	35 286	45 105	37 062	27 742	28 168	16 787	9 127	199 308
DK	0	0	474	484	454	757	277	570	0	3 016
NL	0	0	281	1211	769	579	366	93	0	3 299
SE	0	0	505	1097	414	658	1175	441	0	4 290
Total	0	31	36 546	47 897	38 699	29 736	29 986	17 891	9 127	209 913

Result Indicators OP II

Table A. 32 – Programme Specific Result Indicators for OP II countries, 2014-2022

MS	Programme Specific Result Indicator	Target value	Actual value
DE	Proportion of adult EU immigrants accessing counselling and support services as a result of accompaniment and counselling, out of all adult EU immigrants receiving counselling	70%	89%
DE	Proportion of parents of immigrant children of kindergarten age who were referred to parenting support services as a percentage of all contacted parents of immigrant children	50%	91%
DE	Proportion of immigrant children of kindergarten age receiving early education services as a percentage of all immigrant children of kindergarten age included in the study	50%	87%

MS	Programme Specific Result Indicator	Target value	Actual value
DE	Proportion of participating homeless persons who, as a result of accompaniment and counselling, are empowered to accept help and use social services, as a percentage of all homeless persons counselled	70%	82%
DK	Number of users who use other existing services (before and after intervention)	490	2135
NL	After one year participant is still in view of aid organisations and / or municipalities	65%	75%
NL	After participating indicates he/she has a stronger social network	40%	45%
NL	After participating indicates he/she has reinforced competencies	60%	56%
SE	Percentage of individuals stating that they have received support or assistance such as information, interpretation, directions, etc.	40%	76%
SE	Percentage of individuals who say that they have improved their health and hygiene management skills	40%	71%

Source: SFC 2014

15. How has the situation evolved over the evaluation period?

15.1. Development of poverty and social exclusion

This section presents the evolution of poverty and social exclusion in the EU, focusing on indicators that are relevant for FEAD, notably the at risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (**AROPE**), the material deprivation rate (**MD**), the severe material deprivation rate (**SMD**); the material and social deprivation rate (**MSD**) as well as the severe material and social deprivation rate (**SMSD**). Moreover, the evolution of individual **components of material deprivation** is also presented in this section.

15.1.1. Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion

Poverty and social exclusion in the EU are measured primarily using the AROPE indicator, which depicts the rate of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, measured in relation to the national median income (under 60%). The indicator can be used to track the evolution of poverty and social exclusion over time, as well as by location to show the level of wellbeing in a certain region or country. Figure A. 49 below shows the evolution of the indicator over time at EU level. The indicator was revised in 2021, defining a new severe material and social deprivation rate, and adjusting the age-range for jobless households. Comparable data for the newly revised indicator is available from 2015²⁵⁸.

In the EU27, the AROPE rate fell continuously and substantially from 2015 to 2019²⁵⁹, from 24% to 21.1%. In 2020 and 2021, during the peak years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate increased slightly to 21.7% in 2021 but remained below the peak of 24% in 2015. In 2022, there was again a (minor) reduction in the AROPE rate to 21.6%.

Figure A. 49 – Evolution of the AROPE rate in the EU27²⁶⁰ (2015-2022)



Source: Eurostat - People at risk of poverty or social exclusion [TIPSLC10__custom_7566228]

Although this overall trend is similar in all Member States, some have - and continue to have - AROPE rates significantly higher than the EU average. In 2015 (the first date from which data on the AROPE rate is available), 11 Member States (RO, BG, EL, HU, LV, ES, LT, IT, EE, PT, IE) had AROPE rates above the EU average of 24%. AROPE rates were significantly high in 2015 in Romania (44.5%) and Bulgaria (43.3%).

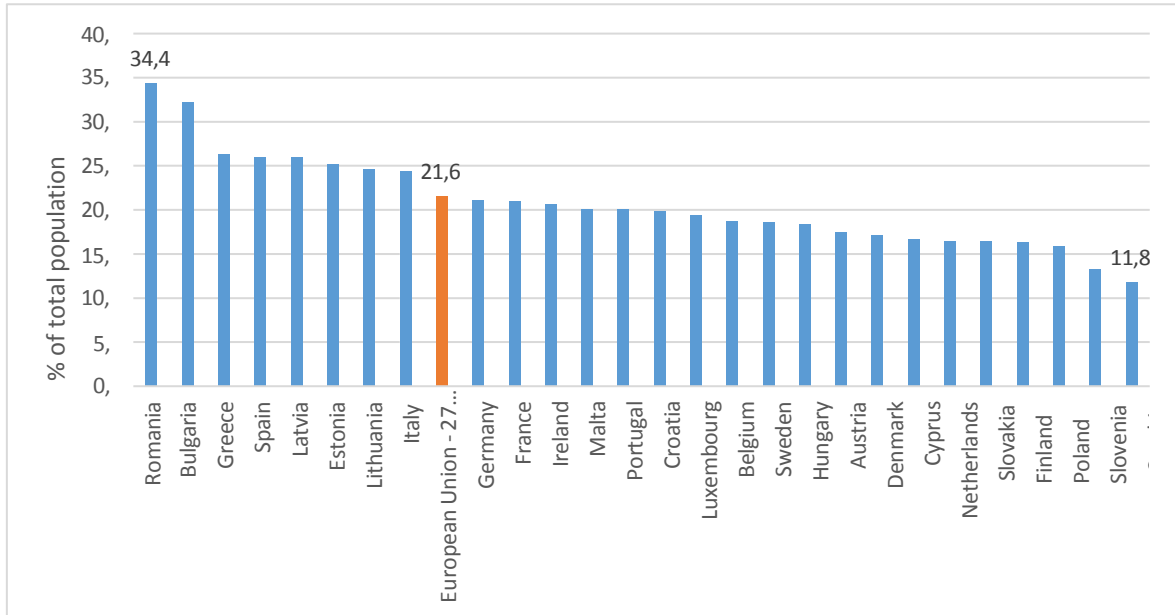
²⁵⁸ Eurostat-ILC 2021 https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/PPP_A%202030%20Agenda_Eurostat_AROPE_eng.pdf.

²⁵⁹ Indicator TIPSLC10: data available only from 2015.

²⁶⁰ As of 2020, i.e. excluding the UK.

As shown in Figure A. 50 below, in some Member States (RO, BG, EE, EL, ES, IT, LT, LV), AROPE rates were above the EU average in 2022, the end of the evaluation reference period. While in most of these countries the rate is only slightly above the average, the situation remained particularly acute in Romania and Bulgaria where, despite a declining trend, the AROPE rates stood at 34.4% and 32.2%, respectively.

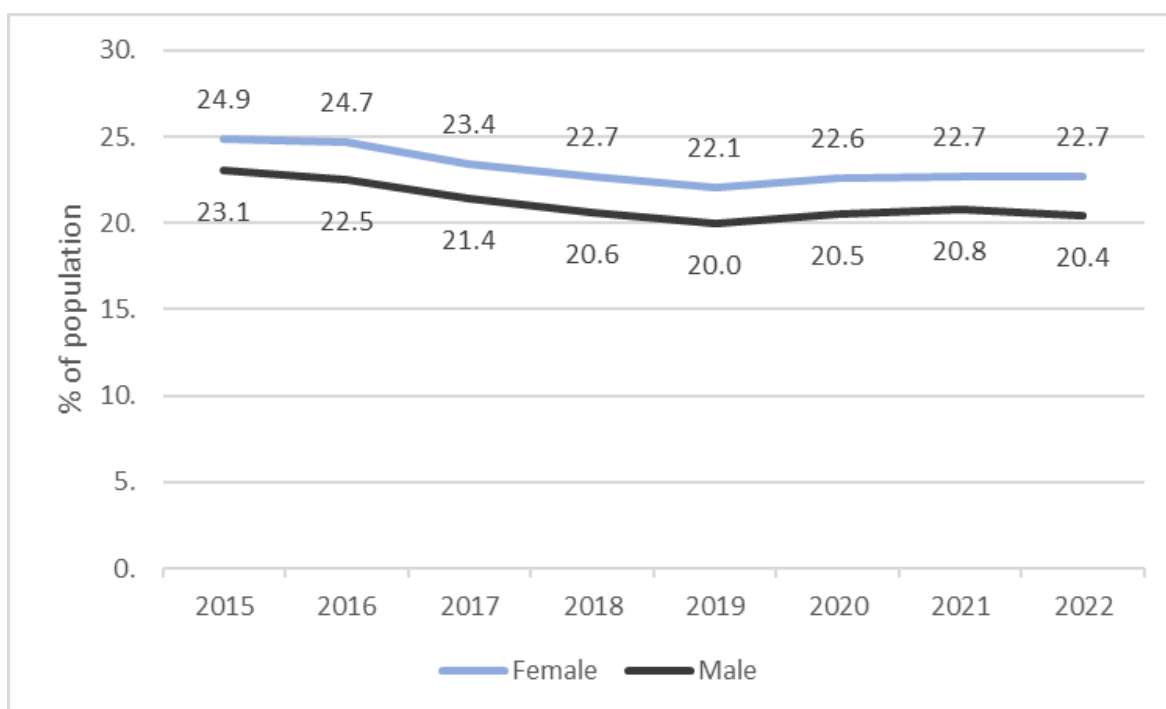
Figure A. 50 – AROPE rate in EU Member States in 2022, % of total population



Source: *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion [TIPSLC10]*

In terms of gender, the situation has consistently been worse for women than for men with no major changes to this trend from the date from which data on AROPE rates was available to the end of the evaluation reference period (2015-2022), as shown in Figure A. 51 below.

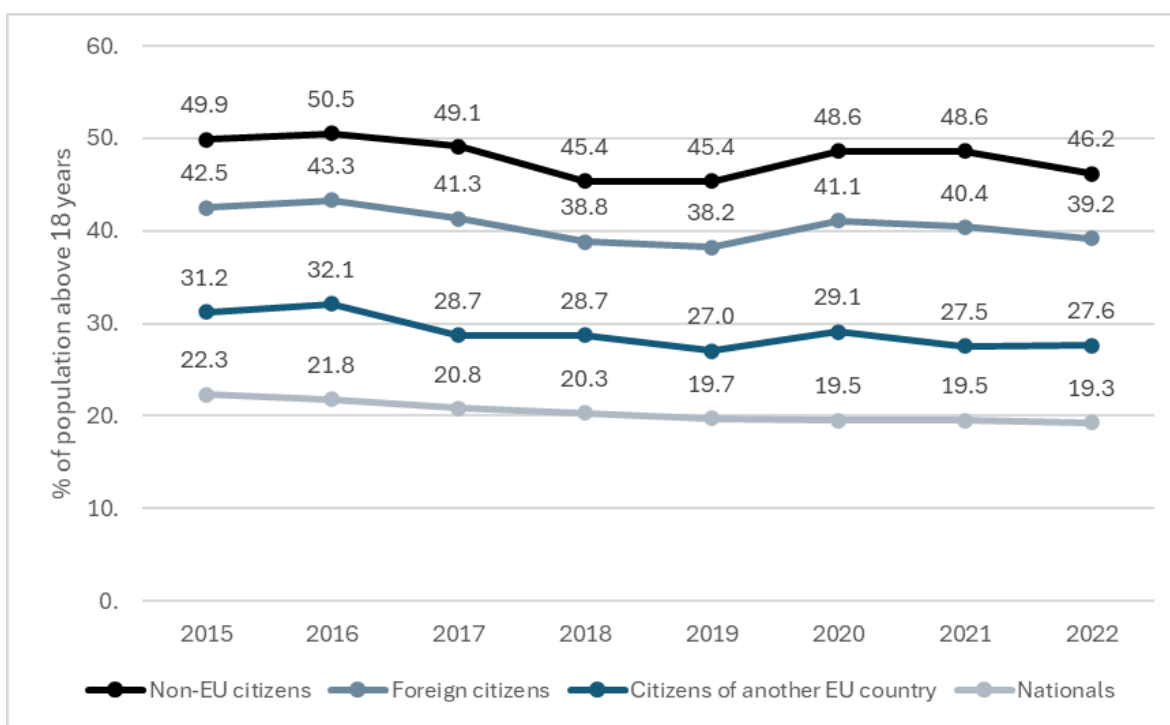
Figure A. 51 – AROPE rate by gender (2015-2022), % of population



Source: Eurostat - Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex
[ILC_PEPS01N_custom_7391002]

In terms of how **citizenship** affects poverty in the EU, the AROPE rate of foreign citizens (comprising both citizens of other Member States and of non-EU countries) was higher than that of nationals living in their own country in 22 of the 24 Member States for which reliable data is available. The two exceptions were Ireland and Poland. The situation has not changed substantially over the years, with between 38% and 42% of foreign citizens and between 45% and 50% of non-EU citizens at risk of poverty or social exclusion between 2015 and 2022 (Figure A. 52). While the AROPE rate of national citizens decreased steadily over the period, that of each of the categories of non-national citizens (foreign citizens overall, non-EU citizens and citizens of another EU country) declined until 2018-2019, then rose again in 2020, though remaining below the rate in 2015.

Figure A. 52 – AROPE rate by citizenship (data available since 2015)



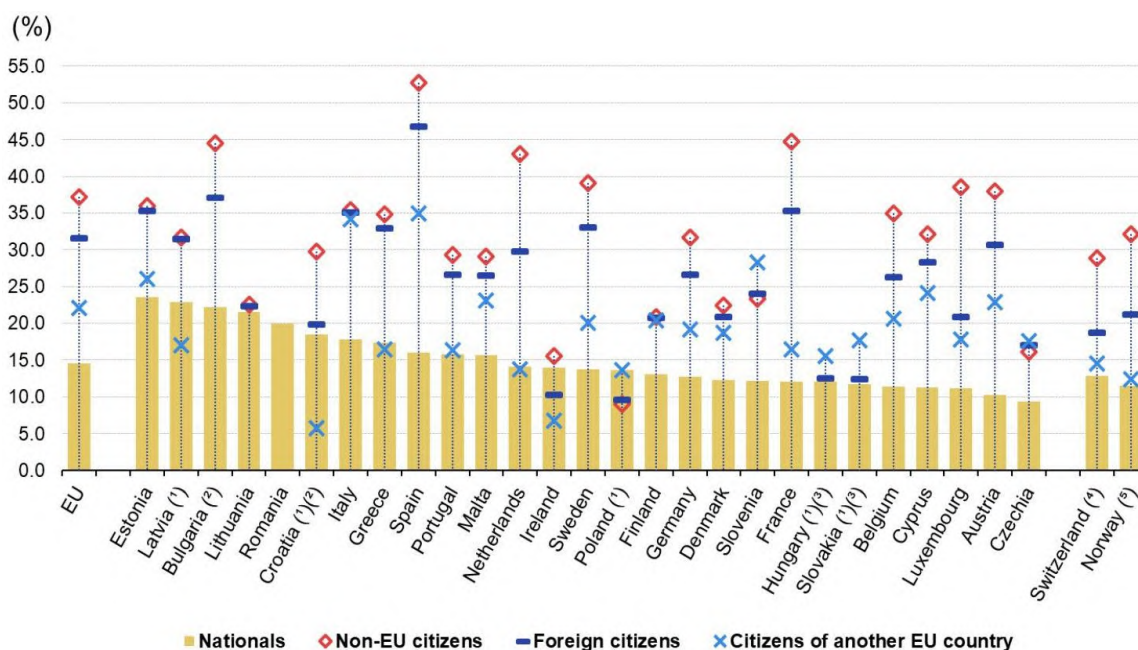
2022 break in series

Citizens of another EU country: 2015-2020, low reliability

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_peps05n)

The AROPE rates for non-EU citizens were far higher than EU citizens (living in their own or in another EU country), with the exceptions of Slovenia and Czechia, where there were similar rates for these groups over the evaluation period. The largest differences in the shares between these two foreign subpopulations were observed in France and the Netherlands. As can be seen in Figure A. 53 below, the share of non-EU citizens at risk of poverty in 2022 was highest in Spain, France, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands, while for foreign citizens in Spain, France, Sweden, Greece, Italy, and Bulgaria.

Figure A. 53 – AROPE rate of persons above 17 years of age²⁶¹ by citizenship (2022)



Note: the graph only shows the available data

(1) Citizens of another EU country: low reliability

²⁶¹ This specific dataset uses an age range above 17 years of age to refer to the adult population

- (2) Non-EU citizens: low reliability
- (3) Foreign citizens: low reliability
- (4) 2021
- (5) 2020

Source: Eurostat (online data code: *ilc_li31*)

In terms of minorities, **the Roma population** has also been at substantially higher risk of poverty and social exclusion over the evaluation period than the national and EU averages, based on quantitative and qualitative data available. According to the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) 2021 Roma survey²⁶² in a selected number of countries²⁶³, 80% of Roma were at risk of monetary poverty (AROP)²⁶⁴. This situation has not changed substantially between 2016 and 2021²⁶⁵, which are the two years for which data is available. There are large differences between Roma and the general population for this indicator. For instance, in Spain and Italy, 98% of the Roma population were at risk of poverty, both in 2016 and in 2021, compared to 21% and 20% for the general population, respectively. In Bulgaria and Romania, the difference in the AROP rate between Roma and the general population is smallest, but still comparatively large (47 percentage points and 53 percentage points, respectively): while in 2020, 24% (BG) and 23% (RO) of the total population were at risk of poverty, among Roma the share was 71% (BG) and 78% (RO) in 2021. While in Bulgaria the share of Roma at risk of poverty decreased significantly by 15 percentage points between 2016 and 2021, Romania saw an increase of 8 percentage points in the same period²⁶⁶.

Although there were no significant differences in terms of **gender**, there were differences in terms of age in some countries. For Roma children younger than 15 years old²⁶⁷, the risk of poverty is higher than for the rest of the Roma population, particularly in Croatia (90%) and in Czechia (85%). The survey also reveals that there is a large poverty gap between Roma children and other children. The situation for Roma boys and girls is generally similar, except in Romania, where 83% of Roma girls live at risk of poverty, in comparison to 75% of Roma boys.

In conclusion, although the risk of monetary poverty (AROP) and the risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROE) declined steadily from 2015 to 2019, it has since increased again and remained stable at 2018 levels up until 2022. There are several Member States with at least one fifth of their population facing this risk, and there are clear segments of the population which are much more severely affected by the risk of poverty than others.

15.1.2. Material deprivation

FEAD addresses material deprivation as outlined in the intervention logics (section 2.1), which Eurostat measures by:

- primary indicators of material deprivation and material and social deprivation
- secondary indicators including severe material deprivation, and severe material and social deprivation, among others²⁶⁸.

The **material deprivation rate (MD)**²⁶⁹ has been the standard measure for material deprivation since 2009, defined as a state of economic strain, that is the enforced inability (rather than the choice not to do so) to afford at least three out of the nine items, listed in Table A. 33. **Severe material deprivation (SMD)** is defined as the inability to pay for at least four of these items.

²⁶² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). Roma in 10 European Countries – Main results, Roma survey 2021.

²⁶³ EU: Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Non-EU: North Macedonia, Serbia.

²⁶⁴ Households with an equivalised income after social transfers that is lower than 60 % of the median income in their country.

²⁶⁵ Year of reporting 2021, no data for 2022 available.

²⁶⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). Roma in 10 European Countries – Main results, Roma survey 2021, p. 25.

²⁶⁷ As per the age definition used in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). *Roma in 10 European Countries – Main results, Roma survey 2021*, p. 24.

²⁶⁸ Full list: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=818&langId=en>

²⁶⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation

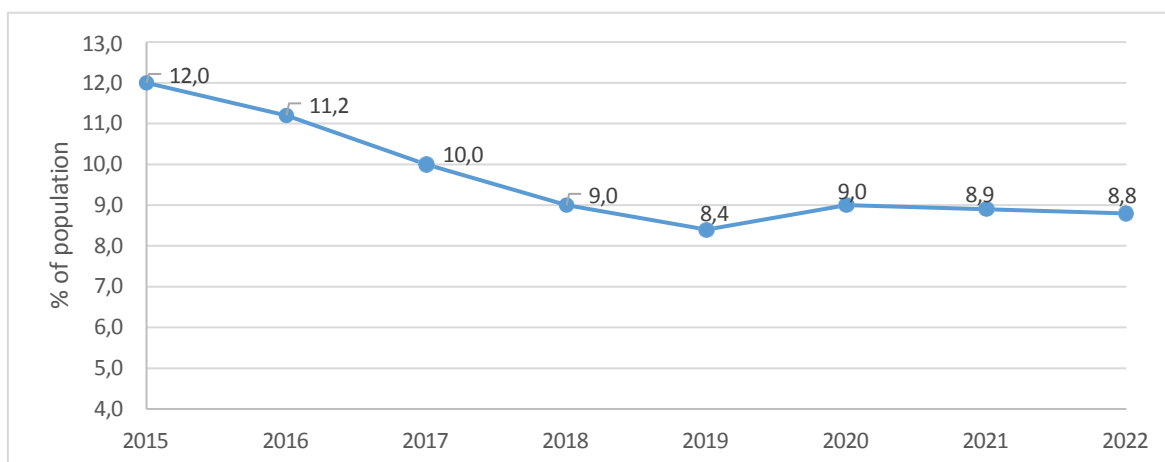
Table A. 33 – List of items determining material deprivation (MD) and severe material deprivation (SMD)

Items determining (severe) material deprivation
To pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills;
To keep their home adequately warm;
To face unexpected expenses;
To eat meat or proteins regularly;
To go on holiday;
To afford a television set;
To afford a washing machine;
To afford a car;
To afford a telephone.

Source: Ecorys, 2024, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation

Eurostat data shows that the **material deprivation rate (MD)** has declined overall (from 12% in 2015 to 8.8% in 2022)²⁷⁰ and across most Member States over the evaluation period for which data is available as seen in Figure A. 54. Despite the overall decrease, it has however been particularly high in certain Member States: in 2015, the MD rate in Bulgaria was 41.7% and that of Romania was 37.8%; although these rates dropped to 27.7% and 31.6% in 2022, respectively they remained considerably above the EU average.

Figure A. 54 – Evolution of the material deprivation rate (MD) in the EU27 (2015-2022)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: tessi080)

²⁷⁰ EU-SILC indicator tessi080, available from 2015.

Table A. 34 sets out the evolution of the severe material deprivation rate (SMD), measuring the percentage of population with an enforced lack of at least four out of nine material deprivation items, including for example the capacity to face unexpected expenses, or to afford a telephone. Data for this indicator is available from 2013 to 2020. As this indicator covers the situation before the launch of FEAD in 2014 up to the end of the programming period, we take a closer look at this indicator.

Bulgaria started the period with extremely high levels of severe material deprivation (43% in 2013, more than four times the EU average). This rate has reduced by more than half but is still the highest in the EU (19.4% in 2020, the last year for which data is available). Other Member States with high levels of severe material deprivation in 2013 were Hungary and Romania (just below 30% in 2013), followed by Greece (20.3%) and then Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, all of which had severe material deprivation rates of over 10%. Although there is a clear declining trend for almost all Member States, in 2020 Greece and Romania still had rates above 15%, while Croatia, Cyprus, and Hungary experienced rates higher than the EU average.

Table A. 34 – Evolution of the severe material deprivation rate (SMD) (2013-2020) ²⁷¹

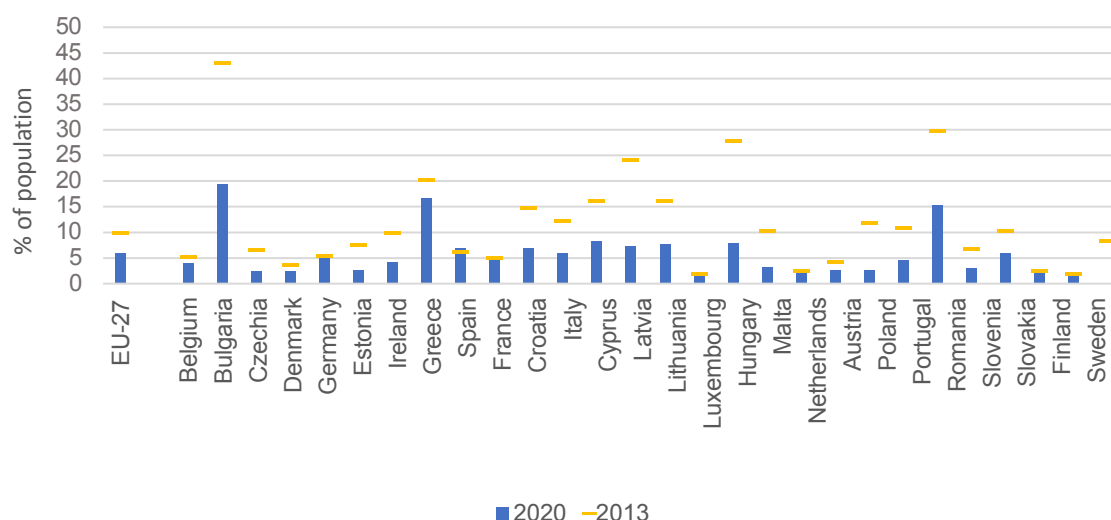
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
EU 27 (from 2020)	Total	9,8	9,1	8,4	7,9	6,9	6,1	5,5	5,9
EU 27 (from 2020)	Male	9,7	9	8,3	7,6	6,7	5,9	5,3	5,8
EU 27 (from 2020)	Female	10	9,3	8,4	8,1	7,2	6,2	5,6	6
Belgium	Total	5,1	5,9	5,8	5,5	5,2	5	4,4	3,9
Bulgaria	Total	43	33,1	34,2	31,9	30	20,9	20,9	19,4
Czechia	Total	6,6	6,7	5,6	4,8	3,7	2,8	2,7	2,4
Denmark	Total	3,6	3,2	3,7	2,6	3,1	3,4	2,6	2,4
Germany*	Total	5,4	5	4,4	3,7	3,4	3,1	2,6	5,6
Estonia	Total	7,6	6,2	4,5	4,7	4,1	3,8	3,3	2,7
Ireland	Total	9,9	9,2	8,5	6,7	5,2	4,9	5,4	4,1
Greece*	Total	20,3	21,5	22,2	22,4	21,1	16,7	16,2	16,6
Spain*	Total	6,2	7,1	6,4	5,8	5,1	5,4	4,7	7
France*	Total	4,9	4,8	4,5	4,4	4,1	4,7	4,7	5
Croatia	Total	14,7	13,9	13,7	12,5	10,3	8,6	7,2	6,9
Italy	Total	12,3	11,6	11,5	12,1	10,1	8,5	7,4	5,9
Cyprus	Total	16,1	15,3	15,4	13,6	11,5	10,2	9,1	8,3
Latvia	Total	24	19,2	16,4	12,8	11,3	9,5	7,8	7,3
Lithuania	Total	16	13,6	13,9	13,5	12,4	11,1	9,4	7,7
Luxembourg*	Total	1,8	1,4	2	1,6	1,2	1,3	1,3	1,7
Hungary	Total	27,8	24	19,4	16,2	14,5	10,1	8,7	8
Malta	Total	10,2	10,3	8,5	4,4	3,3	3	3,6	3,3
Netherlands	Total	2,5	3,2	2,6	2,6	2,6	2,4	2,5	2,1
Austria	Total	4,2	4	3,6	3	3,7	2,8	2,6	2,7
Poland	Total	11,9	10,4	8,1	6,7	5,9	4,7	3,6	2,6
Portugal	Total	10,9	10,6	9,6	8,4	6,9	6	5,6	4,6
Romania*	Total	29,8	25,9	22,7	23,8	19,7	16,8	14,5	15,2
Slovenia*	Total	6,7	6,6	5,8	5,4	4,6	3,7	2,6	3
Slovakia	Total	10,2	9,9	9	8,2	7	7	7,9	5,9
Finland*	Total	2,5	2,8	2,2	2,2	2,1	2,8	2,4	2,6
Sweden	Total	1,9	1	1,1	0,8	1,1	1,6	1,8	1,8

* Countries that experienced an increase between 2019 and 2020.

Source: Eurostat - Severe material deprivation rate by NUTS regions [ILC_MDDD21__custom_7420160]

²⁷¹ Data for this indicator is only available from 2013-2020.

Figure A. 55 – SMD rate by Member State, 2013 vs. 2020



Source: Eurostat - Severe material deprivation rate (ILC_MDDD11)

In terms of **gender**, severe material deprivation rates for women are slightly higher than for men, with however no substantial differences.

It is notable that 2020 was a turning point when the severe material deprivation rate increased in many countries, most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU average severe material deprivation rate increased in 2020 compared to 2019 and did so even in countries with relatively low rates prior to 2020, such as Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Finland. Other countries with high rates before 2020 also experienced an increase, notably Greece and Romania. Remaining countries, however, experienced declines of the rate of severe material deprivation. For these countries, it would be interesting to see what data for 2021 and 2022 shows, to rule out any time-lags regarding the effects of the pandemic, but this data is not available at the point of writing. When looking at the new indicator of severe material and social deprivation, however, this does not seem to be the case: in most countries, the rate remained relatively stable and later decreased, for example in Bulgaria: 22.1% of the population experienced severe material and social deprivation both in 2019 and 2020, with the rate declining from 2021 to 18.7 in 2022²⁷².

In terms of age, **children aged below 16 years**²⁷³ and **older people** (age 65 and above) have faced consistently higher severe material deprivation in comparison to the total population throughout the reference period. For example, the share of older people over 65 unable to afford a healthy meal has reduced over time but was still at around 12% in 2022 compared to 15.4% in 2013. Regarding children, the EU average severe material deprivation rate for children was 10.9% in 2013, compared to 9.8% for the total population. Although overall this rate declined and the gap was smaller by 2020, there were still more children facing severe material deprivation (6.7%) compared to the total population (5.9%). In some countries, the starting point in 2013 was extremely high, such as in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, with rates as high as 46.4% in Bulgaria and over 35% in the other two. Children in Greece, Latvia and Cyprus also experienced high rates of severe material deprivation of above 10% in 2013. Despite an overall decline in all Member States, children in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus still experienced relatively high levels of severe material deprivation in 2020.

For **minorities, notably Roma**, the FRA 2021 Roma survey²⁷⁴ found that 62% of Roma in the countries covered by the survey²⁷⁵ lived in severe material deprivation in 2016, with a decrease to 48% - still a very high rate - in 2021. This rate for Roma people is much higher than the rate for the general population. Although there were generally no differences in terms of gender, the difference in severe material deprivation rates between Roma children below 18 years of age, and children in the general population reached 47

²⁷² Eurostat, data code mdsd11.

²⁷³ The indicator MSD uses the age classification for children of below 16 years of age

²⁷⁴ The survey compared 2016 and 2021, hence there is no data going back to 2013.
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-findings>

²⁷⁵ Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, North Macedonia and Serbia.

percentage points in 2021. On average, in 2021, in the countries covered by the FRA survey, every second Roma child (54%) lived in a household that could not afford to pay for four of the nine items in the material deprivation index (see Table A. 33 above). In comparison with 2016 however, the situation for Roma children improved by 2021 in six of the nine countries for which comparable data are available (Czechia, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia).

In 2014, a new indicator to measure material deprivation was validated by the European Commission, which also included a focus on the social exclusion component of deprivation²⁷⁶: the **material and social deprivation rate (MSD)**. It is comprised of a list of 13 items, both household related and individual, enlarging the scope of measuring social exclusion. Items are listed in the table below²⁷⁷. Data for this indicator is available from 2015.

Table A. 35 – List of items determining material and social deprivation (MSD) and severe material and social deprivation (SMSD)

Items determining material and social deprivation at household level	Items determining material and social deprivation at individual level
Capacity to face unexpected expenses	Having internet connection
Capacity to afford paying for one week annual holiday away from home	Replacing worn-out clothes by some new ones
Capacity to being confronted with payment arrears (on mortgage or rental payments, utility bills, hire purchase instalments or other loan payments)	Having two pairs of properly fitting shoes (including a pair of all-weather shoes)
Capacity to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day	Spending a small amount of money each week on him/herself
Ability to keep home adequately warm	Having regular leisure activities
Have access to a car/van for personal use	Getting together with friends/family for a drink/meal at least once a month
Replacing worn-out furniture	Having internet connection
	Replacing worn-out clothes by some new ones
	Having two pairs of properly fitting shoes (including a pair of all-weather shoes)

Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) concerns people lacking at least 7 of the 13 items, showing a more dramatic level of deprivation²⁷⁸. As the MSD, this indicator is also available from 2015. The severe material and social deprivation rate declined over the evaluation period, but similarly remains high in specific Member States. As seen in Figure A. 56, the EU27 average declined from 9.7% in 2015 to 6.7% in 2022. Again, despite decreases over the period, Bulgaria and Romania have the highest rates of severe

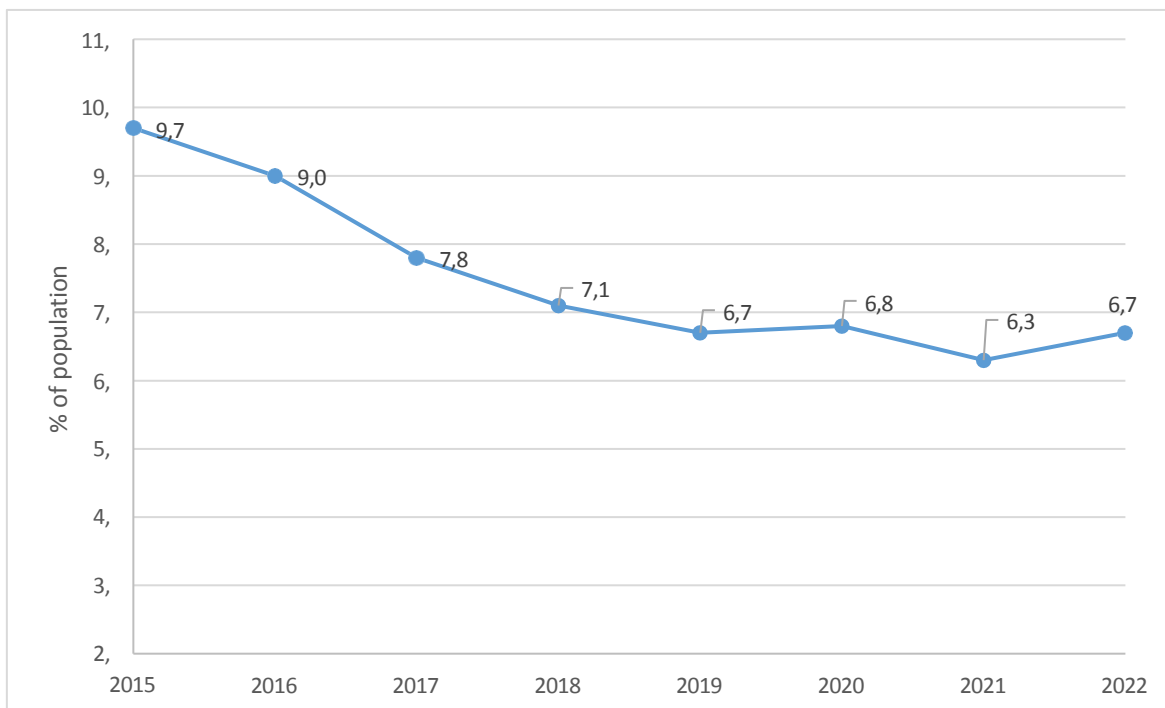
²⁷⁶ Fabrizi, E., Mussida, C. & Parisi, M.L. (2023). *Comparing Material and Social Deprivation Indicators: Identification of Deprived Populations*. Soc Indic Res 165, 999–1020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-022-03058-6>.

²⁷⁷ [Glossary: Severe material and social deprivation rate \(SMSD\) - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_(SMSD)).

²⁷⁸ The severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) is an EU-SILC indicator that shows an enforced lack of necessary and desirable items to lead an adequate life. The indicator, adopted by the Indicators' Sub-Group (ISG) of the Social Protection Committee (SPC), distinguishes between individuals who cannot afford a certain good, service or social activities. It is defined as the proportion of the population experiencing an enforced lack of at least 7 out of 13 deprivation items (6 related to the individual and 7 related to the household). See [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_\(SMSD\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_(SMSD)).

material and social deprivation, with a rate of 36.8% in Bulgaria and 34% in Romania, decreasing respectively to 18.7% and 24.3%. The lowest rates of severe material and social deprivation in 2015 were in Finland (1.0%) and Sweden (1.1%). Despite remaining very low compared to the EU average, these rates however rose respectively to 1.9% and 2.1% in 2022²⁷⁹.

Figure A. 56 – Evolution of the severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) in the EU27 (2015-2022)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: mdsd11)

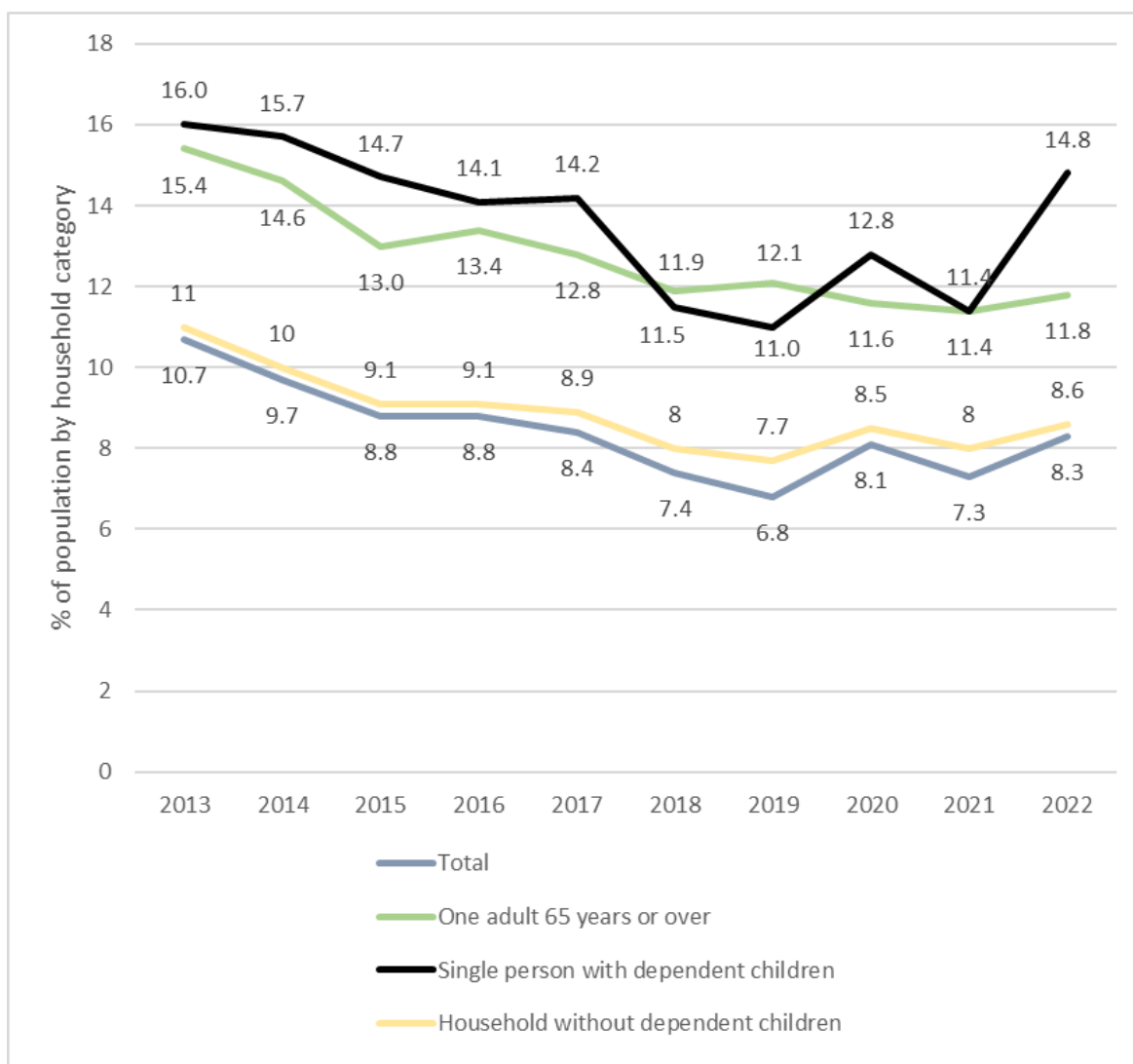
15.1.3. Components of material deprivation

Data is available for each individual component of material deprivation (see Table A.35) which provides additional insights in relation to the need for FEAD support. The most relevant of these items for FEAD is the **inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day**, as shown in Figure A. 57. below. Although, as seen above, the severe material deprivation rate has overall declined, there are groups of people who in 2021-2022 had a higher inability to afford a healthy meal every second day than in 2013. This included notably **single persons with dependent children**. The share of older **people over 65** unable to afford a healthy meal has reduced over time but was still at around 12% in 2022 compared to 15.4% in 2013. **Households without dependent children** have experienced a similar trend to the total population figures, i.e. an average of 9% between 2013 and 2022.

²⁷⁹

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_mdsd11_custom_9250986/default/table?lang=en.

Figure A. 57 – Share of the population that cannot afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, EU27 (2013-2022)



Source: Eurostat - Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day - EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03_custom_7420371]

The situation differs between Member States, as can be seen in Table A. 36 below. Bulgaria has been the Member State experiencing the most severe levels of deprivation based on this indicator. At the beginning of the reference period (2013), half of the population in Bulgaria was unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day. The situation has improved substantially over time but was still at 21.6% in 2022. In 2013, one third of the Hungarian population was unable to afford a healthy meal, followed by Romania and Slovakia with around one fourth of their population facing this inability, but the rates had declined significantly by 2022. In 2013, Greece and Lithuania had rates around 14% and 19% respectively and, despite a decline, still have 10% of their population facing this inability. There is also a group of Member States (Czechia, Croatia, Italy, Latvia) which had rates of over 10% in 2013, but which had experienced a significant decline (of at least 50%) by 2022 (e.g. going from 14% in 2013 to 7% in 2022 in Croatia). Finally, there are four countries (Germany, France, Spain and Sweden), which are worse off in 2022 compared to 2013, albeit at a relatively lower level. Between 2013 and 2022, the rate in France rose from 7.1% to 9.5% (with a very steep rise between 2021 and 2022), in Germany from 8.4% to 11.4%, in Spain from 3.5% to 5.4% and in Sweden from 1.9% to 2.4%.

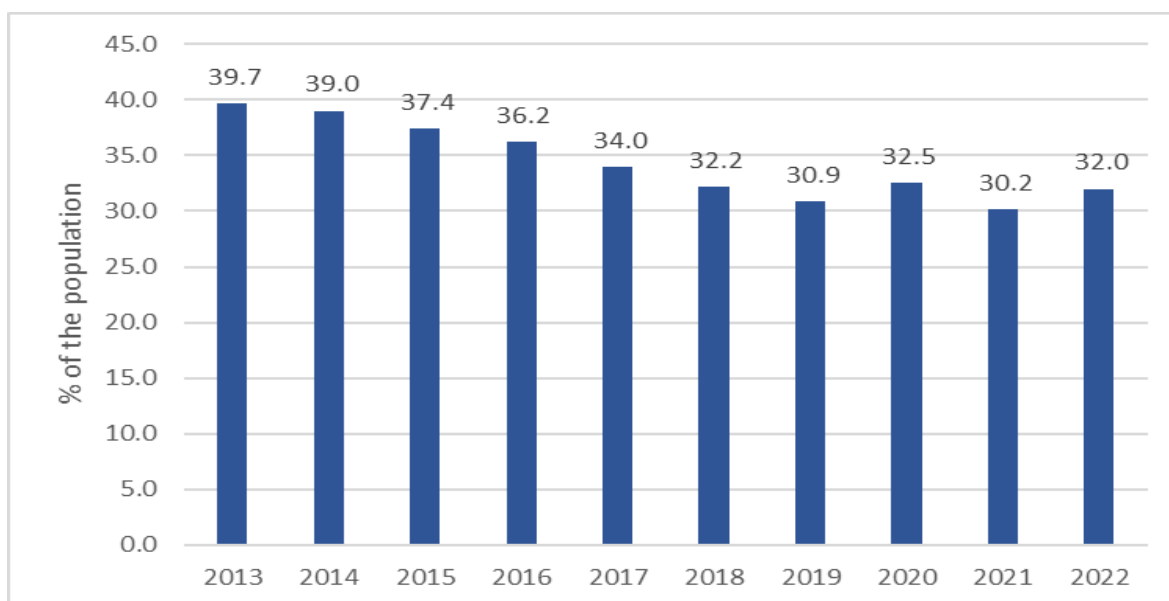
Table A. 36 – Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, by Member State (2013-2022)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EU27 countries (from 2020)	10,7	9,7	8,8	8,8	8,4	7,4	6,8	8,1	7,3	8,3
Belgium	4,6	5,1	5,1	6,1	5,7	5,5	3,6	3,7	3,7	4,1
Bulgaria	51,1	39,5	36,8	34,6	31,7	31,4	27,6	25,9	22,4	21,6
Czechia	13,1	12,8	11,4	9,5	7,1	5,3	4,9	4,1	3,9	4,4
Denmark	2,8	1,7	1,7	1,6	2,1	1,5	2,2	2,3	2,0	2,2
Germany	8,4	7,5	7,1	6,5	7,0	6,4	5,3	12,7	10,5	11,4
Estonia	9,5	7,5	5,0	4,6	5,3	4,4	5,3	5,5	3,5	5,5
Ireland	4,2	3,5	3,5	2,3	1,7	1,6	1,7	1,3	1,6	1,4
Greece	13,8	13,0	12,9	14,4	13,2	11,6	11,7	12,4	11,6	10,0
Spain	3,5	3,3	2,6	2,9	3,7	3,6	3,8	5,4	4,7	5,4
France	7,1	7,2	7,3	7,4	7,1	6,9	7,5	7,2	6,3	9,5
Croatia	14,0	12,7	14,4	12,5	10,5	10,1	7,9	7,9	5,6	6,9
Italy	13,9	12,6	11,8	14,3	13,4	11,1	9,9	9,1	7,9	7,5
Cyprus	7,9	5,9	3,9	2,6	3,8	2,0	0,8	1,1	0,4	1,5
Latvia	23,3	19,1	16,0	15,6	13,0	11,8	9,8	9,4	6,4	8,8
Lithuania	19,0	16,1	14,3	15,7	16,5	14,5	11,7	11,6	8,9	10,4
Luxembourg	2,4	2,5	2,2	2,6	2,2	2,2	2,3	4,5	2,3	1,8
Hungary	34,0	27,7	23,8	19,1	16,4	12,3	13,0	12,8	12,2	13,9
Malta	15,3	15,5	13,2	7,4	5,6	5,7	5,8	6,0	6,2	7,5
Netherlands	2,8	2,8	2,2	2,3	1,9	2,1	2,4	2,0	1,8	2,1
Austria	8,3	8,2	6,8	6,1	5,5	4,4	3,9	3,9	3,0	5,0
Poland	13,3	11,2	8,2	6,4	6,3	4,9	4,1	3,6	3,6	4,1
Portugal	3,3	4,0	3,5	3,4	3,0	2,4	2,3	2,5	2,4	3,0
Romania	23,0	22,7	19,7	21,8	19,2	16,3	14,2	14,7	19,2	22,1
Slovenia	9,7	7,9	6,4	5,7	6,5	5,9	3,9	4,3	4,2	3,5
Slovakia	23,7	21,5	20,1	17,0	14,8	15,1	12,3	11,8	12,7	15,8
Finland	3,2	2,7	2,9	3,3	2,6	3,2	2,5	2,9	2,3	2,6
Sweden	1,9	1,6	1,8	1,3	1,8	1,5	2,0	1,9	1,6	2,4

Source: Eurostat - Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day - EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03_custom_7420371]

The material deprivation item with the highest percentages is the **inability to face unexpected expenses**, which was at almost 40% in the EU27 in 2013 and still at 32% in 2022 as seen in Figure A. 58.

Figure A. 58 – Inability to face unexpected financial expenses (EU27) (2013-2022)



Source: Eurostat - Inability to face unexpected financial expenses - EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES04_custom_7421843]

In several Member States, the share of people unable to face unexpected expenses was consistently higher than the EU average between 2013 to 2022, as shown in Table A. 37 below. However, many of these countries were still able to significantly reduce this rate: these were notably

Bulgaria (with a sharp decline from 64% to 42%), Ireland (from 55% to 35%), Croatia (65% to 45%), Cyprus (54% to 40%), Latvia (69% to 44%), Lithuania (57% to 39%), Hungary (75% to 34%), Poland (50% to 27%), and Portugal (43% to 30%). In addition, Germany has had higher than EU average rates only in recent years (2020-2022).

Table A. 37 – Inability to face unexpected expenses (2013-2022)

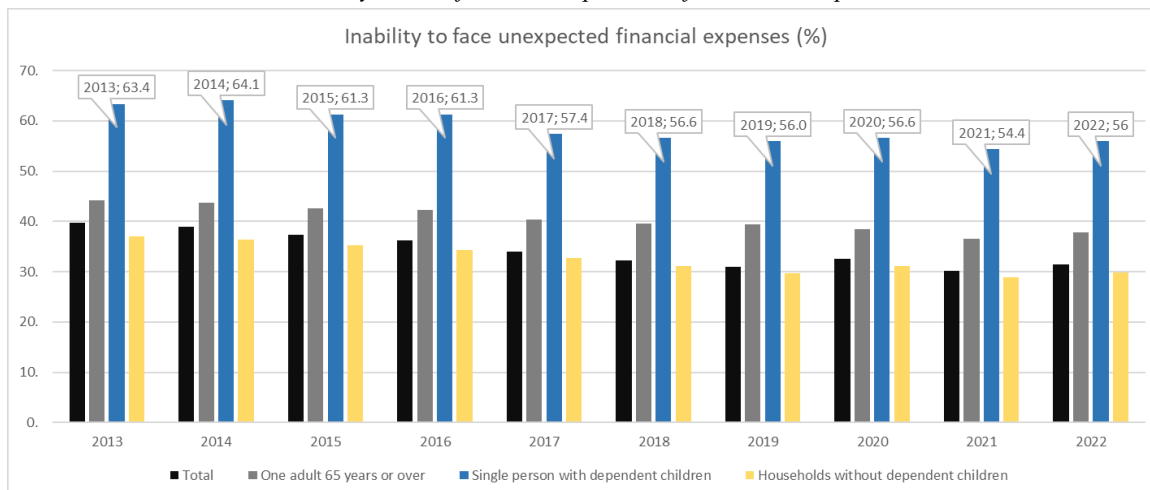
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EU (27 from 2020)	39,7	39,0	37,4	36,2	34,0	32,2	30,9	32,5	30,2	32
Belgium	24,2	24,0	25,7	26,0	25,5	24,5	25,3	23,3	22,3	23
Bulgaria	64,1	49,6	53,4	54,2	53,2	32,1	36,5	43,5	36,4	42
Czechia	41,7	40,8	36,0	32,1	28,1	23,7	21,8	19,6	18,1	18
Denmark	27,0	28,5	26,5	24,5	25,1	25,2	22,9	22,7	19,5	20
Germany	32,9	32,6	30,4	30,0	29,3	28,1	26,0	37,6	32,3	34
Estonia	41,9	39,1	36,7	31,6	36,3	34,7	31,4	30,5	27,1	31
Ireland	55,3	54,5	50,2	45,2	41,6	37,3	38,0	33,7	29,7	35
Greece	47,1	51,8	53,4	53,6	52,7	50,4	47,8	50,7	46,3	44
Spain	42,1	42,7	39,8	38,7	36,6	35,9	33,9	35,4	33,5	36
France	34,0	33,4	32,8	31,8	29,6	31,4	30,6	30,5	27,6	31
Croatia	65,1	63,7	59,8	57,7	56,2	52,9	51,7	48,9	46,5	45
Italy	40,2	38,8	39,9	40,4	38,3	35,1	33,8	32,3	32,7	33
Cyprus	54,3	59,8	60,5	56,6	50,1	49,5	47,5	44,6	43,4	40
Latvia	69,5	67,4	60,4	60,0	59,9	55,3	49,8	45,6	41,7	44
Lithuania	56,9	54,7	53,2	53,2	50,6	48,8	46,8	41,8	36,4	39
Luxembourg	23,8	23,8	23,0	21,9	20,4	19,7	16,7	22,5	21,3	19
Hungary	74,9	75,9	72,2	50,8	31,5	33,3	33,0	35,7	34,8	34
Malta	23,0	24,6	21,4	20,8	15,6	13,9	15,1	16,3	15,7	15
Netherlands	23,4	23,7	22,9	22,5	20,7	21,5	21,9	19,1	15,1	15
Austria	23,2	23,9	22,6	22,6	20,6	20,1	18,5	17,6	18,6	19
Poland	50,5	48,6	42,3	37,9	34,8	31,7	29,3	25,7	24,5	27
Portugal	43,2	42,2	40,7	38,3	36,9	34,7	33,0	30,8	31,2	30
Romania	53,0	52,7	51,4	54,5	52,5	45,9	44,3	47,3	47,3	48
Slovenia	45,8	45,8	42,9	41,7	37,1	33,1	33,0	29,6	24,6	25
Slovakia	39,5	38,9	36,7	37,9	34,6	31,5	30,0	26,1	27,0	27
Finland	27,5	27,2	28,4	29,4	28,5	27,2	26,4	25,4	23,5	23
Sweden	21,0	20,4	19,8	20,7	19,7	20,2	20,5	19,8	18,4	21

Source: Eurostat - Inability to face unexpected financial expenses - EU-SILC survey
[ILC_MDES04_custom_7421843]

The inability to face unexpected expenses is the most acute for **single persons with dependent children**, with rates that exceed 50% consistently over the last decade. The decline between 2013 and 2022 is not significant, as depicted in Figure A. 59 below. **Older people** are the next highest category experiencing an inability to face unexpected expenses. Households without dependent children are in a similar or slightly better situation than the total number of people facing this problem.

Figure A. 59 – Inability to face unexpected financial expenses for different target groups (2013-2022, in % of the population)

Source: Eurostat - Inability to face unexpected financial expenses - EU-SILC survey



[ILC_MDES04__custom_7421843]

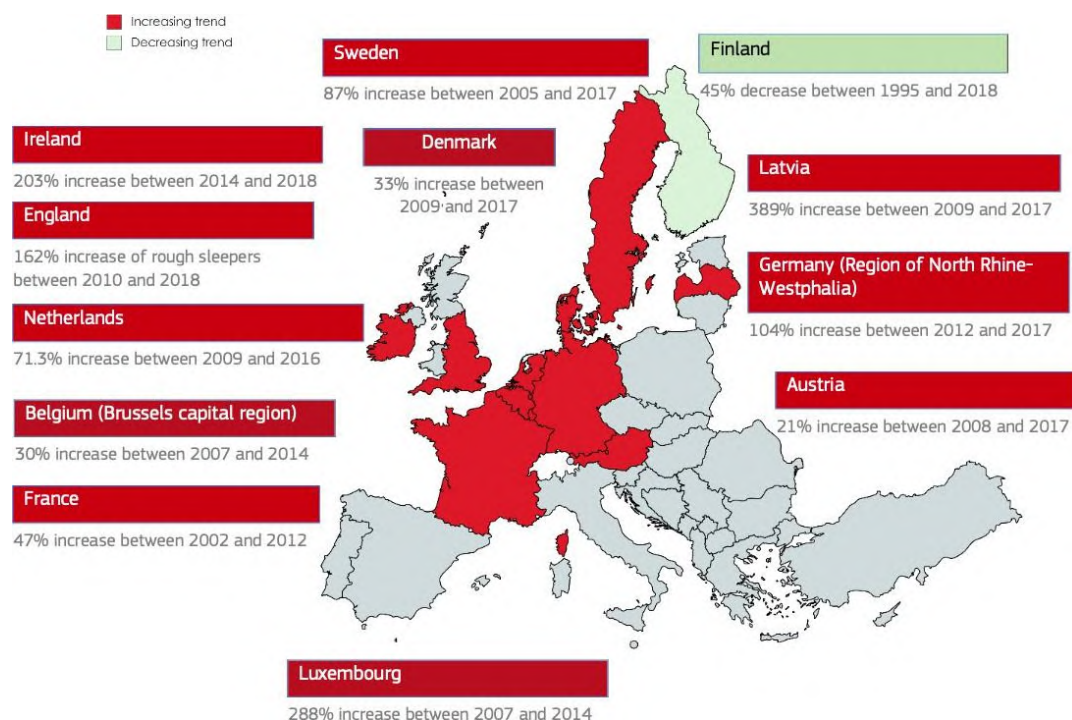
The data thus indicates that severe material deprivation due to the inability to face unexpected expenses has consistently been at high rates despite some decline from 2013 to 2022. It is also notable that, in almost half of the Member States, more than a third (in some cases more) of their population cannot face unexpected expenses.

Although, not specifically mentioned in the components of material deprivation as defined by Eurostat (see Table A. 33), homelessness is another indication of severe material deprivation. **Homelessness and housing exclusion are on the increase in Europe:** broadly speaking, European Social Policy Network (ESPN) experts reported that homelessness had increased in 24 out of the then 28 EU countries²⁸⁰. Several experts in the countries reported substantial increases (e.g. an increase of 30% in Belgium between 2007 and 2014 and 389% increase of homeless people using shelters in Latvia between 2009 and 2017)²⁸¹ in the number of homeless people over the last decades, based on existing statistics.

²⁸⁰ ESPN (2019). *Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe: A study of national policies*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2dd1bd61-d834-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

²⁸¹ ESPN (2019). *Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe: A study of national policies*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2dd1bd61-d834-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Figure A. 60 – Countries with substantial variations in homelessness over the last decades



Source: ESPN (2019). *Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe. A study of national policies.*

Finland is the only EU Member State where homelessness has decreased significantly over the last two to three decades. Three countries show either mixed patterns (Croatia and Poland) or a stabilisation of homelessness (Portugal) over recent years. The main reason for the increase in homelessness and housing exclusion is pressure from the housing markets and the subsequent scarcity of affordable housing and social housing supply. These pressures stem from various developments such as steep increases in property and rental prices, increasing lack of low-cost housing, changes in tenancy laws, liberalisation of rents, limited or reduced public investment in public and/or social housing. At the same time, poverty, rising unemployment and exclusion of homeless people from the labour market as well as precarious and low-wage short-term employment, increase the risk of homelessness. There are also some risk factors at the individual level, relating to individual vulnerabilities (e.g. mental illness, substance abuse) and adverse family dynamics (e.g. family violence, relationship breakdown and/or family conflicts).

15.1.4. Additional poverty and inequality indicators

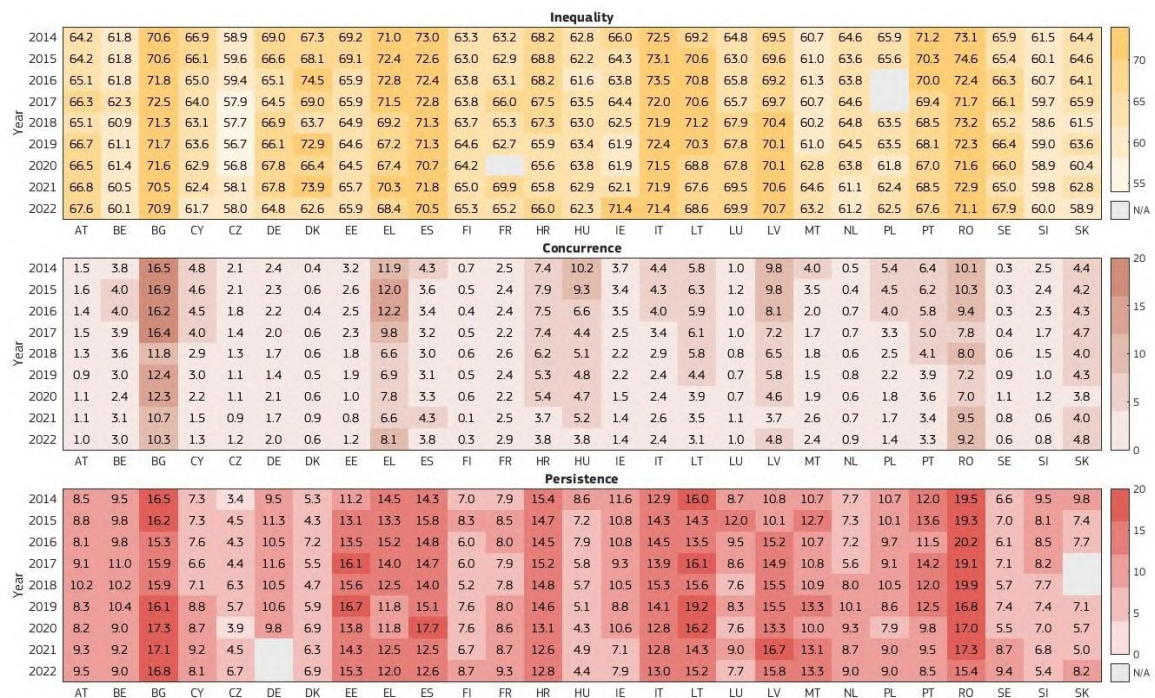
In addition to the AROP/E, (S)MD and (S)MSD rates, poverty can also be measured in terms of **persisting income inequality** (whether income is relatively evenly or unevenly distributed between the richest and poorest households²⁸²), **concurrence of poverty** (looking at both economic and material deprivation, calculated as the percentage of households that meet both monetary poverty criteria (AROP) and SMD²⁸³) and **persistence of poverty**, which captures the longitudinal dimension of poverty – whether households have experienced poverty also in previous years. This is explained in great detail in the recently published report by the JRC²⁸⁴ and summarised in Figure A. 61. As seen in Figure A. 62, the concurrence of poverty is most pronounced in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and to a lesser extent also Slovakia, although Hungary and Latvia in particular are showing a sharply declining trend.

²⁸² Measured as the disparity between households living below the poverty line and those above it, in terms of equivalised disposable income. See Joint Research Centre, European Commission (2024). *An ex-post evaluation of FEAD 2014-2020.*

²⁸³ Severe material deprivation refers to the inability of households to afford a set of essential items deemed necessary for daily living (four items from the list of items shown in Table A. 33).

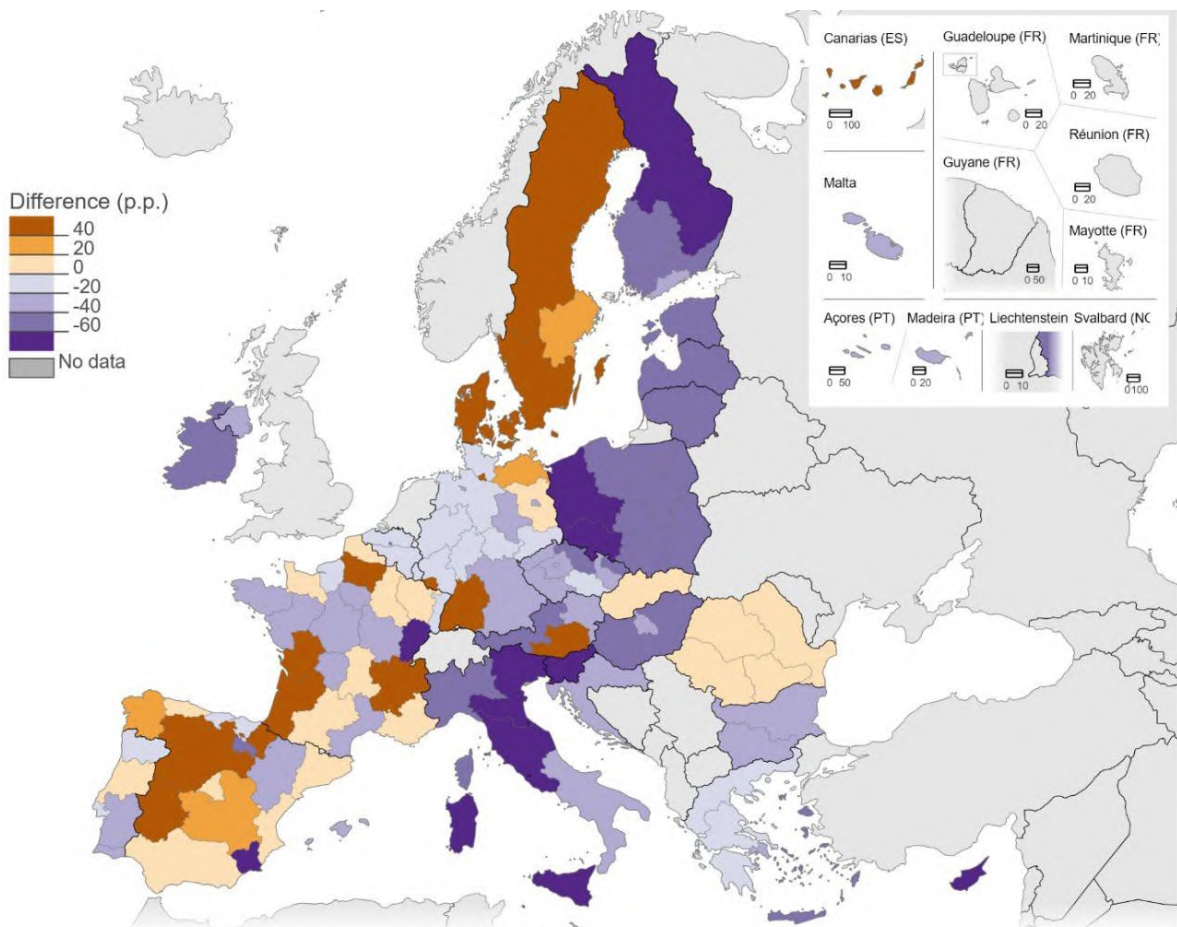
²⁸⁴ Joint Research Centre, European Commission (2024). *An ex-post evaluation of FEAD 2014-2020.*

Figure A. 61 – Poverty indicators in EU Member States, 2014-2022



Source: Joint Research Centre, European Commission (2024). An ex-post evaluation of FEAD 2014-2020.

Figure A. 62 – Concurrence of poverty by NUTS 2 region, 2014-2022 evolution



Source: Joint Research Centre, European Commission (2024). An ex-post evaluation of FEAD 2014-2020.

15.2. Financial and operational implementation of FEAD

With a total budget of EU and national funding of EUR 5.2 billion²⁸⁵ (EUR 3.8 billion initial EU funding plus 0.7 billion REACT-EU funding plus 0.7 billion national co-funding), FEAD has altogether supported 128 million individuals²⁸⁶. This chapter presents the status of financial implementation of FEAD, by examining the common input indicators reported by Member States in SFC as well as amendments to OPs in view of additional EU funding allocated via REACT-EU. It later describes the types of support provided under both OP I and OP II and the target groups reached by this support, by looking at the common output and results indicators covering in turn food support (OP I), basic material assistance (OP I) and social inclusion (OP II) and the programme-specific indicators set for OP II.

Data is derived from the SFC2014 database, considering OPs and Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) uploaded and approved by the European Commission. The latest dataset was shared with the study team in May 2024.

²⁸⁵ Total amounts allocated to FEAD OPs in 2022 obtained through the Cohesion data portal.

²⁸⁶ Cumulated SFC Data up to 2022 (latest dataset shared with study team in May 2024). Note that each end recipient may be reported only once every implementing year. However, if the same person receives support in another year, it is counted again.

ANNEX X: CASE STUDIES

1. Belgium
2. Bulgaria
3. Denmark
4. Germany
5. Greece
6. Estonia
7. France
8. Italy
9. Netherlands
10. Portugal
11. Romania
12. Sweden

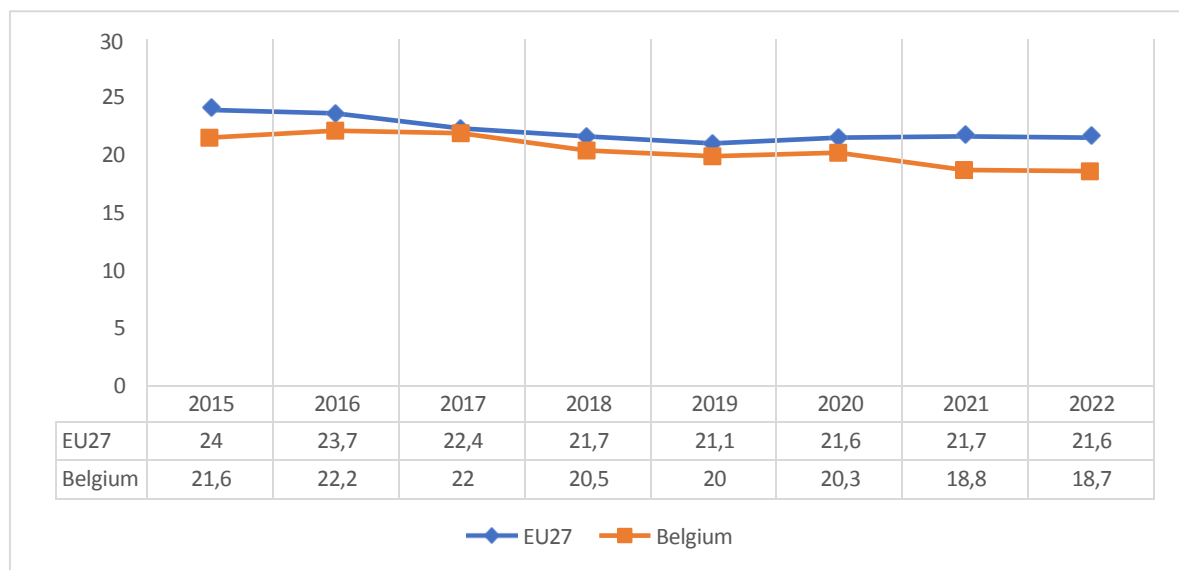
X.1 Belgium

16. Context and background

In this section, we will contextualise the implementation and effect of the European Fund for Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) in Belgium by assessing the socio-economic context of the country during the evaluation period (2014-2020), both at national and regional level.

Belgium's context was one of greater socio-economic wellbeing than other European Union Member States (EU27) throughout the evaluation period. For all indicators measuring social exclusion and economic stress (other than the rate of households with low work intensity), Belgian rates were lower than the EU27 average. For instance, while the rate of individuals At Risk of Poverty or social Exclusion (AROPE) was 21.6% for the EU27 in 2020, it was 20.3% for Belgium during the same year²⁸⁷.

Figure A. 63 – Percentage of People at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion, 2015-2022



Source: Eurostat

Despite the AROPE rate being lower than the EU27 average, it is important to note that the **Belgian AROPE rates both for adults and children were high throughout the evaluation period**, with a high of 22.2% in 2017²⁸⁸. The highest rate of AROPE children was reached in 2017 (23.7%), before decreasing to 19% in 2022²⁸⁹. The socio-economic indicators for Belgium did not show a gendered dimension, with 22.8% of women and 20.5% of men at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015. Belgium's FEAD Operational Programme (OP) established two groups as particularly vulnerable to poverty: single parent families (33.2% AROPE in 2013) and unemployed individuals (34.1% AROPE in 2013).²⁹⁰ In 2022, those most at risk of poverty were those above the age of 75 (21.6%), unemployed people (48.3%), single-parent families (30.54%), those with low levels of education (26.2%), and renters (29.1%).²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Eurostat.

²⁸⁸ Eurostat.

²⁸⁹ Eurostat.

²⁹⁰ Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2013). "Programme opérationnel belge pour le Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis : aide alimentaire, aide matérielle et mesures d'accompagnement"

²⁹¹ [Privation matérielle et sociale \(EU-SILC\) | Statbel](#)

Table A. 38 – Percentage of population at risk of monetary poverty in Belgium in 2020 and 2022

Population	2020	2022
Belgium (whole)	14.1%	13.2%
Brussels Capital Region	27.8%	29.8%
Flanders Region	9.3%	7.7%
Wallonia Region	18.2%	17.8%
Men	13.8%	12.9%
Women	14.4%	13.5%
Low education level	26.8%	26.2%
High education level	5.9%	6.7%
Employees	3.5%	2.8%
Unemployed	50.0%	48.3%
Property owners	7.7%	7.6%
Renters	31.0%	29.1%
Single parents	29.3%	30.5%
Single person households	23.2%	20.7%
Households with children	14.4%	14.1%
Children under 18	15.6%	14.1%
Persons aged 75+	24.4%	23.1%

Source: Statbel.

Indicators show that **Belgium's socio-economic situation improved over the evaluation period**, such as the AROPE rate, which decreased from 21.6% in 2015 to 18.7% in 2022. The Severe Material Deprivation rate (SMD) has been null (0%) since 2021, dropping from 5.9% in 2014. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic showed no negative impact on socio-economic indicators, as the AROPE rate, the Severe Material and Social Deprivation (SMSD) and the SMD rate decreased from 2018 to 2021 (AROPE rate: 20.5% to 18.8%; SMSD rate: 6.5% to 6.3%; SMD rate: 5% to 0%)²⁹². Furthermore, with poverty, social exclusion, and material deprivation rates lowering over the evaluation period, employment rates in Belgium rose from 61.9% in 2014 to 66.5% in 2022.

A particularly vulnerable group were those in **situations of long-term unemployment**, as socio-economic indicators demonstrated their more unstable financial background. For instance, in 2022, 22.7% of unemployed individuals could not afford clothes reparations, in comparison with 7.2% of the general Belgian population²⁹³.

Food insecurity in Belgium was lower than the EU27 average, with 5.1% of the population unable to afford meat in 2015, compared to 9.7% of the EU27 population. Furthermore, **the share of people unable to afford meat decreased throughout the evaluation period and reached 4.1% in 2022**²⁹⁴. However, the number of

²⁹² Eurostat.

²⁹³ Eurostat.

²⁹⁴ Eurostat.

organisations and individuals benefitting from food aid programmes marked food insecurity as a high priority for Belgium in the FEAD OP. Indeed, while 224,000 individuals received food aid in 2010, this number rose to 237,000 individuals in 2013. Food insecurity in Belgium varied according to family situations and household arrangements, with single parent families the most likely to experience food insecurity (10.5% of single adults with children were unable to afford meat in 2013, compared to the 4.6% national average)²⁹⁵.

Regional socio-economic differences between the three Belgian regions (Brussels Capital Region, Flanders, and Wallonia) were high throughout the period, with the Brussels Capital Region showing the highest AROPE rates, followed by Wallonia and then Flanders. Brussels Capital's AROPE rate was 38% in 2022 and has been consistent since 2019; Wallonia's was 25.8%, and Flanders' was 11.2%. Regional inequality is also noticeable in the 2020 SMD rates, where the Brussels Capital Region saw 8.8% of its population experiencing SMD, Wallonia 6.8% of its population, and Flanders 1.5% of its population. Despite the high differences in socio-economic contexts between regions, both the Wallonia region²⁹⁶, the Flanders region²⁹⁷ and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation²⁹⁸ have developed an anti-poverty plan for the years 2020-2024.

Figure A. 64 – Regional Percentages of AROPE Population



Source: STATBEL.

²⁹⁵ Eurostat.

²⁹⁶ Wallonie (2019), *Plan Wallon de sortie de la pauvreté*
https://luttepauvrete.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/field/plan_wallon_de_sortie_de_la_pauvrete.pdf

²⁹⁷ Flanders Regions, (2019), *Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding 2020-2024*
https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/sites/default/files/2020-11/VAPA_2020_2024.pdf

²⁹⁸ Wallonia-Brussels Federation (2021), *Plan de Lutte contre la Pauvreté et pour la Réduction des Inégalités Sociales 2020-2025*
https://www.federation-wallonie-bruxelles.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&hash=be119816ce69c7a95649d970ba83353f4476d5f3&file=fileadmin/sites/portail/uploads/PDF/Plan%20Pauvrete%20FW-B%202020-2025%20-%20Version%20finale%20%2810.02.21%20%29.pdf

Table A. 39 – Socio-economic context in Belgium

Belgium	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
1. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) Total		21.6	22.2	22.0	20.5	20.0	20.3	18.8	18.7	
2. AROPE Children		23.6	23.2	23.7	23.0	23.0	21.8	20.4	19.0	
3. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)		7.2	8.4	7.2	6.5	6.3	6.7	6.3	5.8	
4. Severe material deprivation rate (SMD)	5.9	5.8	5.5	5.2	5.0	4.4	3.9	0.0	0.0	
5. Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	5.1	5.1	6.1	5.7	5.5	3.6	3.7	3.7	4.1	
6. Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROPE	43.6	44.2	41.5	40.0	35.2	41.7	44.9	53.3	48.8	
7. Housing cost overburden	10.4	9.4	9.8	9.4	8.9	8.4	7.8	7.5	7.7	
8. Self-reported unmet need for medical care % of population 16+	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.0	
9. Households with very low work intensity		15.0	15.2	14.5	13.1	12.8	12.3	11.9	11.5	
11. Population in the EU could not afford unexpected financial expenses	24.0	25.7	26.0	25.5	24.5	25.3	23.3	22.3	22.7	
13. Share of total population having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4			
14. No indoor flushing	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4			
17. Persons who cannot afford a telephone	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2			
18. Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out clothes	8.1	7.6	9.1	7.5	7.1	6.9	8.0	7.9	7.2	
20. Persons who cannot afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month	11.5	10.6	11.7	11.1	9.7	9.9	10.2	8.5	8.2	
21. Persons who cannot afford internet connection for personal use at home	3.6	2.9	3.6	3.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	1.8	1.3	
22. In-work risk of poverty	3.9	3.7	3.7	4.2	4.7	4.1	3.2	2.8	2.7	
23. Long-term unemployment	3.9	4.0	3.7	3.1	2.6	2.1	2.1	2.6	2.3	
25. Employment rate	61.9	61.8	62.3	63.1	64.5	65.3	64.4	65.3	66.5	
26. Children (aged less than 18) living in households with very low work intensity		13.7	13.2	13.2	12.2	10.5	10.8	9.7	9.7	
27. At-risk-of-poverty rate for children		18.0	17.6	18.4	20.1	18.9	15.6	15.1	14.1	
28. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children		9.9	11.1	9.7	9.2	8.4	8.1	8.6	7.7	

Source: Eurostat

17. Reconstructing the intervention logic

In this section, we will reconstruct the FEAD intervention logic in Belgium, exploring the Fund's national objectives, target groups, actors, policy framework, development and delivery.

The intervention logic of FEAD in Belgium rests on the main objective of transmitting **non-material assistance to those in need through the means of nutritional assistance**. Of the two OPs, Belgium chose to administer and implement OP I, and deliver food aid to those most in need, without the provision of basic material support. Belgium made the decision to not use the 5% of FEAD budget allocated to the delivery of accompanying measures for end recipients. Instead, FEAD partner organisations (POs), such as the 'Centres Publics d'Aide Sociale' (CPAS) / 'Openbare Centra van Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW)' [*public social welfare centres*] and NGOs organising food and material aid activities, delivered their usual social integration activities for the benefit of FEAD end recipients, such as cooking or nutritional advice, debt alleviation advice, or poverty awareness and sensibilisation activities. CPAS/OCMW, being the main provider of social services at the municipal level, also provide financial, housing, and medical support services, as well as psycho-social counselling and crisis management services.

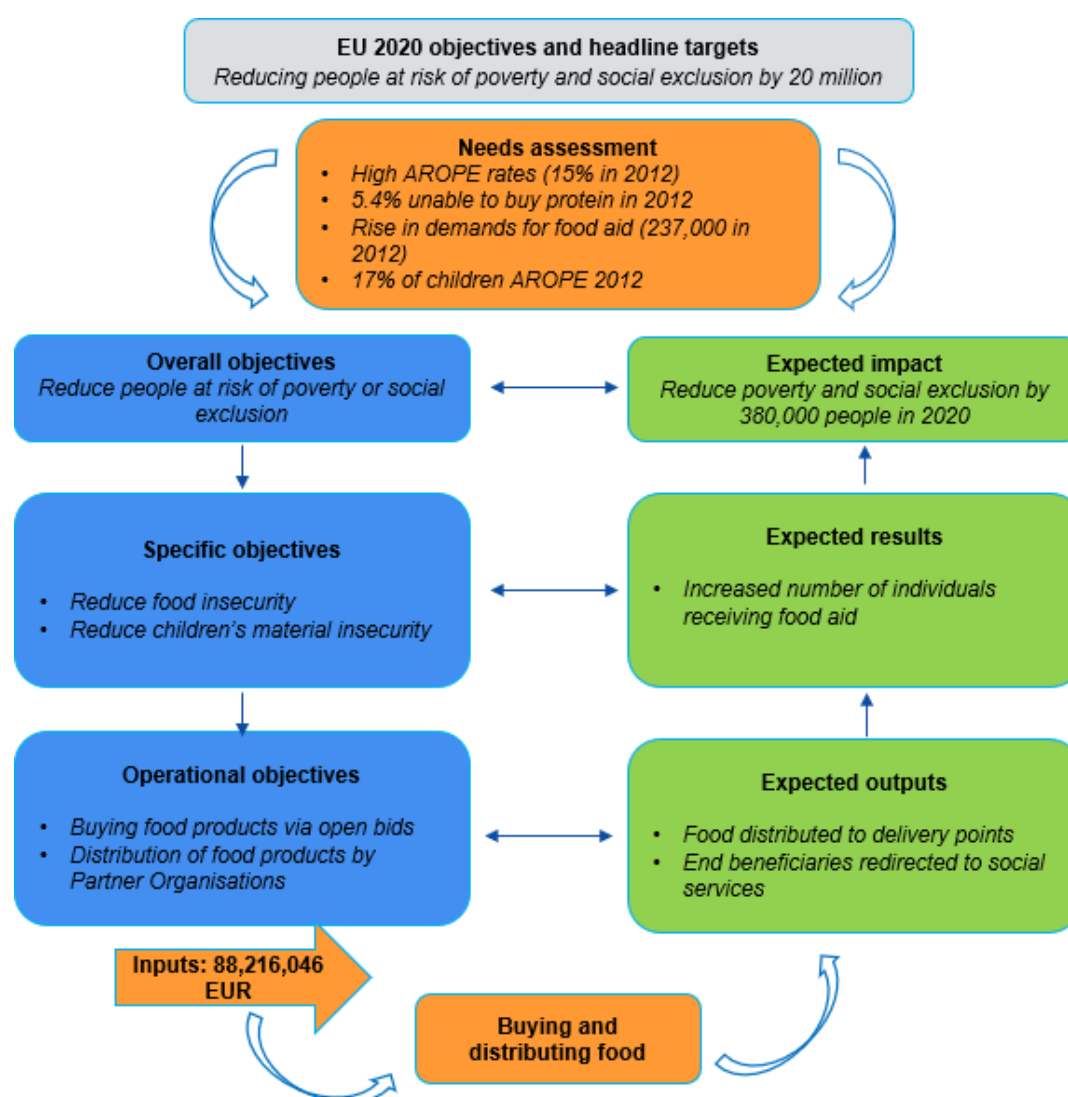
Belgium's OP defined the "most deprived" as those suffering from extreme poverty, those struggling to buy food, and children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Belgium FEAD OP). With this logic, the target group for Belgium was set as all AROPE individuals, which equates to all individuals under the poverty line²⁹⁹.

²⁹⁹ [Informations générales | Chiffrespauvre.be](https://www.chiffrespauvre.be/)

This poverty line is defined in Belgium as all individuals with an income below 60% of the annual median national income, as set by STATBEL. In 2022, the poverty line was 1,366 EUR per month for a single person.³⁰⁰

FEAD products were distributed to all individuals who were given access³⁰¹ to food delivery organisations partnered with the MA. To access the food delivery organisations such as food banks in Belgium, individuals need to provide proof of their need for state help to CPAS/OCMW (including through financial statements)³⁰². Access to FEAD POs (local, regional, or national non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross), was decided upon on a case-by-case basis and administered in several ways. Applicants could either apply to receive food aid from CPAS/OCMW and would then go through a process of financial checks from a social worker before being redirected to a FEAD PO, or applicants could apply directly to certain FEAD POs that oversaw their own end recipient lists.³⁰³

Figure A. 65 – FEAD Intervention Logic in Belgium



Source: adapted from FEAD mid-term evaluation.

³⁰⁰ <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/menages/pauvrete-et-conditions-de-vie/risque-de-pauvrete-ou-dexclusion-sociale#news>

³⁰¹ Based on income criteria as stated above

³⁰² FBBA | J'ai besoin d'aide (foodbanks.be)

³⁰³ https://www.voeren.be/upload/pdf/2019-12-19_reglement-voedselpakket_FR.pdf

17.1. National policy framework

The implementation of FEAD was coherent with Belgian policies covering poverty alleviation, social integration, and food aid. Coherence with Belgian national anti-poverty policy is evident in the values and objectives of the Belgian FEAD MA, the “Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale (SPP IS)” / “Programmatorische Federale Overheidsdienst Maatschappelijke Integratie (POD MI)” [*Public Planning Service for Social Integration*]. Belgium’s SPP/POD are federal services established to handle specific social issues which require coordination between several other federal services. The SPP IS/POD MI, therefore, acts as a coordinator for Belgium’s national and federal actions to combat poverty and social exclusion, and its main role is to support CPAS/OMCW³⁰⁴. On its website,³⁰⁵ the SPP IS/POD MI cites its objectives as: “upholding the right to social integration; tackling poverty in all its forms; acting for social cohesion; ensuring integration; and reimbursing the minimum income to the CPAS/OMCW”.

Several of the SPP IS/POD MI’s policies reflect the objectives of the FEAD OP, such as:

- The 2002 royal decree acting as a general ruling regarding the right to social integration, updated in 2017.³⁰⁶
- The 2020 ministerial decree granting a subsidy to CPAS/OMCW to support projects within the framework of the “Effectively and actively combating family poverty” call for projects.³⁰⁷

Other Belgian policies and state actions directly address social integration and poverty alleviation, both at the national and regional level. For instance, the Belgian government implements the “Revenu d’Intégration Sociale (RIS)” / ‘leefloon’ [*social integration income / living allowance*], which is a state-funded aid that can be received by individuals who either have no income, or whose income is less than the amount of the RIS / ‘leefloon’. As of 1 November 2023, the RIS / ‘leefloon’ is 1,263.17 EUR per month for a single person, and 842.12 EUR per month for a person within a shared household. The RIS / ‘leefloon’ acts as a last-resort state aid, as one of the conditions for receiving it is to have “done everything to receive other incomes within your rights, such as unemployment benefits, healthcare, handicap, or food aid”.³⁰⁸ Just as they oversee the delivery of food aid, CPAS/OMCW administer the RIS / ‘leefloon’.

Belgium established a **national plan to fight poverty** during the evaluation period, overseen by the SPP IS/POD MI. Covering the years 2016 to 2019, the Third Federal Plan to Fight Against Poverty quoted the definition of poverty provided by the EU’s 2015 “Joint Report on Social Inclusion”, which defined people living in poverty as those whose “income is so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live”.³⁰⁹ It also established six objectives in the national fight against poverty, as well as the monitoring methods used to ensure the success of the Plan. The six federal objectives were:

1. Social protection (including increasing the lowest net salaries, increasing the minimum income, combining benefits and work income, access to energy and water, automatic granting of rights, protection of independents, facilitating digital integration, and combatting debt overload);
2. Fighting child poverty;
3. Ensuring social and professional activity;
4. Fighting homelessness;
5. Accessible and quality healthcare;
6. Accessible public services.

Along with the federal bodies created to fight poverty, national plans to fight poverty in Belgium, and other social integration policies, the regions of Wallonia and Flanders established regional-level plans to fight poverty. The Wallonia region, through the Wallonian Service for the Fight against Poverty, centred their plan

³⁰⁴ ‘Centres Publics d’Aide Sociale’ (CPAS) / ‘Openbare Centra van Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW)’

³⁰⁵ <https://www.mi-is.be/en>

³⁰⁶ <https://www.mi-is.be/fr/reglementations/arrete-royal-portant-reglement-general-en-matiere-de-droit-lintegration-sociale-du>

³⁰⁷ <https://www.mi-is.be/fr/reglementations/arrete-ministeriel-portant-octroi-dune-subvention-aux-cpas-en-vue-de-soutenir-des-2>

³⁰⁸ <https://cpasevere.brussels/aides/revenus-allocations/#:~:text=Les%20montants%20du%20RIS,sa%20charge%3A%201.707%2C11%20euros>

³⁰⁹ Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2016). Troisième Plan Fédéral de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté.

against poverty on 11 thematic axes: housing, nutrition, energy, water, health, family policy, mobility, entertainment, digital, access to social rights, and partnership. In the thematic axis related to nutrition, the Wallonian Plan pledged to create social groceries and develop social food-buying platforms and policy related to unsold food items. Meanwhile, the Flanders poverty-reduction plan for 2015-2019³¹⁰ set out 17 objectives for poverty reduction, spread over 3 goals: Preventing individuals from falling into a situation of poverty and/or social exclusion; Effectively fighting poverty; and Supporting policy and “integrated governance”. Through its objectives, the plan focused on improving the image of those experiencing poverty and social exclusion, increasing the capacity of local services and administration, evaluating current anti-poverty policies, increasing cooperation amongst Flemish government bodies, and assisting families with children and young people. The plan mentioned access to quality and healthy food as a basic necessity and to combat infantile food insecurity, the Flemish government promised the rollout of 1 EUR meals and the redistribution of food to the most vulnerable. Finally, the Brussels Capital Region implemented an action plan for the fight against poverty for the 2014-2019 period³¹¹, with 5 key axes: 1. Reinforce the fight against poverty and social exclusion through specific actions; 2. Reinforce services for those in-need; 3. Reduce inequality and prevent social division; 4. Aim for professional and social integration and insertion; 5. Coordinate social actions and reinforce the participation of those in a situation of poverty. Within the first axe, the Brussels plan highlights the need for improved food aid services, with recommendations on reinforcing collaboration between actors in the food aid sector and diversifying the offer of food aid.

17.2. Objectives and target groups

According to Belgium’s OP, FEAD’s main objective was **to reduce the number of AROPE individuals in Belgium by 380,000 by 2020**.³¹² This objective follows from the EU’s overall objective of reducing the number of people experiencing poverty by 20 million by 2020.

To address the objective of reducing the number of people experiencing poverty in Belgium by the end of the programming period, Belgium opted for FEAD’s OP I, which focused on the procurement and distribution of food to the most deprived. Additionally, the Belgian FEAD implementation aimed to target horizontal principles, such as reducing food waste.

The first step in the implementation of the FEAD OP was the identification of end recipients. **Belgium granted access to FEAD products to individuals who had access to food banks, equivalent to all individuals deemed of being at risk of poverty or social exclusion.** Through interviews with the Belgian Red Cross, it was understood that an objective way to appoint FEAD end recipients, and therefore the main target group, was to target all those under the line of poverty (60% of the national median income; 15,403 EUR per year in 2021).³¹³ **POs were tasked with assessing whether potential end recipients fit this criterion**, before administering access to food banks and FEAD products. While the target group of “all those affected by or at risk of poverty and social exclusion” remained large, certain groups were specifically addressed by outreach activities, such as the homeless, single parents, or children. The definition of the target group did not change throughout the implementation period, but the poverty line criterion did evolve according to the yearly national median income, affecting the number of Belgian residents considered to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Based on the poverty line criterion, POs and CPAS/OMCW were responsible for verifying that end recipients met the requirements to benefit from access to food banks and FEAD products. Three types of verification mechanisms existed, all relying on cooperation between the CPAS/OMCW and each individual PO.³¹⁴ Either:

- End recipients of a PO were granted an individual access slip by the CPAS/OMCW (one per household).
- The PO’s end recipient list was approved by the CPAS/OMCW.
- The CPAS/OMCW and PO agreed that the PO could itself assess whether an end recipient met the eligibility criterion.

³¹⁰ Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding 2015-2019 (2015).

³¹¹ Programme d’Actions Bruxellois de Lutte contre la Pauvreté 2014-2019 (2018).

³¹² Food and/or Basic Material Assistance Operational Programme (2013).

³¹³ Interview with a representative of the Belgian Red Cross, in Belgium, conducted in August 2023.

³¹⁴ Interview with a representative of the Belgian Red Cross, in Belgium, conducted in August 2023.

17.3. Implemented operations and accompanying measures

The main objective of the FEAD programme in Belgium was the reduction of poverty through the distribution of food aid, and the FEAD OP established three operations to achieve this: 1. The buying of food and other articles through public procurement and providing them to POs; 2. The delivery of food and other items by POs; 3. Technical assistance.

According to the 2017 Annual Report,³¹⁵ **the first operation** – buying food items and other articles via public procurement and distribution to POs – first involved a yearly call for bids for suppliers of FEAD products. In 2017, these products were a mixture of dairy products, protein, ready-cooked meals, gluten-rich products, fruits and vegetables, and oils. The choice of products was made after discussions between FEAD actors, and with the advice of public health and nutrition experts. Additionally, the main FEAD POs met every four months with the MA to discuss the relevance of current FEAD products. Exceptionally, in 2015 and 2018, material aid was provided through the administration of hygiene kits and wet wipes.³¹⁶ Once bids were received, the MA selected contractors responsible for providing the yearly FEAD products, based on the most competitive prices per product. In 2017, these were four French contractors. Once the FEAD products were received by the SPP IS/POD MI, they would then be distributed to the CPAS/OMCW and FEAD POs. However, in 2022, the distribution method changed so that CPAS/OMCW and POs would collect their products from four centralised warehouses/delivery centres themselves.

The **second operation** was the distribution of food and other items by POs. In Belgium, selected POs were free to determine themselves how FEAD products should be distributed. The 2017 Annual Report³¹⁷ states that most Belgian POs distributed FEAD products through frequent food parcels (more than once per month) (52% of POs chose this method in 2017). If distributing in this manner, the quantity of food in each food parcel, or “pack”, depended on the size of each end recipient’s household. Alternatively, POs could also use a “self-service” distribution method, where end recipients could themselves choose which FEAD products they would like to receive (34% of POs in 2017). 11% of POs in 2017 opted for a blended method, wherein end recipients could edit the content of their food parcel according to food taste, allergies, or religious diets. Finally, 3% of FEAD POs in 2017 distributed FEAD products in the form of hot meals. The 2017 Report stated that one out of three POs distributed only FEAD products.

The budget allocated to technical assistance, covered the costs of civil servants overseeing FEAD implementation, monitoring and controls, translations, digital FEAD systems, and any travels of FEAD public servants across the country.

Aside from the acquisition and distribution of food aid, 5% of FEAD budget was designated by the EU to finance accompanying measures. In Belgium, these accompanying measures were not implemented by the MA through FEAD funding, instead dedicating the total amount of the FEAD budget to nutritional and material aid. However, the SPP IS/POD MI did instruct its actors to steer end recipients towards CPAS/OMCW, where they could benefit from the services usually provided. These proposed activities varied according to region and budget but included financial help, medical help, short-term housing aid, debt management, poverty-sensibilisation activities, cooking classes, or nutritional advice. An example of sensibilisation activities includes the “*Maman Zéro gaspi!*” (“Zero-waste mum!”) programme of the Berchem-Sainte-Agathe CPAS/OMCW, in collaboration with Nurtantio Projects, where end recipients could receive information, group classes and seminars on zero-waste cooking.³¹⁸

17.4. FEAD governance and delivery system

The budget for the FEAD programme in Belgium was **88.2 million EUR over the entire programming period**, rounding up to roughly 12 million EUR per year. Of the 88 million EUR budget, 73.8 million EUR came from FEAD, and 14.4 million EUR came from national funding. The budget allocation was as follows: 84.5 million EUR was allocated to the implementation of OP I, and 3.7 million EUR was allocated to technical

³¹⁵ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2017). *Programme opérationnel belge pour le Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis: aide alimentaire, aide matérielle et mesures d'accompagnement 2014-2020 – Rapport Annuel 2017*.

³¹⁶ SPP Intégration Sociale (2018). *Programme opérationnel belge pour le Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis: aide alimentaire, aide matérielle et mesures d'accompagnement 2014-2020 – Rapport Annuel 2018*.

³¹⁷ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2017). *Programme opérationnel belge pour le Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis: aide alimentaire, aide matérielle et mesures d'accompagnement 2014-2020 – Rapport Annuel 2017*.

³¹⁸ <https://www.justkeepit.be/MamanZeroGaspi.html>

assistance. Furthermore, Belgium received additional means in 2021 and 2022 through the allocation of REACT-EU funding (31.8 million EUR in 2021, 14.3 million EUR in 2022), which helped fund FEAD operations for 2022 and 2023, respectively. With this budget, the FEAD programme distributed more than 38 million tonnes of food, and a total of 3,143,646 end recipients were reached between 2014 and 2022.

The **FEAD MA in Belgium did not opt for the use of vouchers to simplify operations**. This decision was made in order for the MA to buy products directly from suppliers, through an open bid system, which would allow for FEAD products to be considerably cheaper than if end recipients were buying products at supermarket prices with the use of vouchers.

The FEAD programme in Belgium was overseen by two separate bodies: the MA and the Audit Authority (AA). The MA, SPP IS/POD MI, was responsible for overseeing and implementing the FEAD programme, as well as receiving and allocating the Commission's funding. This involved: determining the FEAD POs; buying FEAD products through open bids; agreeing on the methods used by CPAS/OMCW and POs to identify end recipients; defining the criteria for end recipients to receive FEAD support; monitoring and evaluating FEAD implementation. The MA also controlled the quality of FEAD products, so that they were in line with the 2005 Royal decree related to the hygiene of food aid, and organised checks and controls of FEAD product deliveries. The AA for the FEAD programme was the Inter-Federal Corps of the Inspectorate of Finance.

There were **765 partner organisations distributing FEAD products at the national, regional, or local level** across Belgium during the evaluation period. To be selected as a PO for the FEAD programme, organisations needed to have a status as a public organisation or a non-profit, promote social activities such as the distribution of food or material aid, and be recognised as a competent charitable organisation.³¹⁹ POs were tasked with: distributing FEAD products to end recipients in the manner they seemed fit; expressing the need for products to the MA; ordering FEAD products; delivering accompanying activities; and agreeing on a list of end recipients. The POs included:

- CPAS/OMCW: Their roles were: agreeing to end recipients receiving FEAD support and/or granting access to FEAD support for end recipients; ordering FEAD products; offering existing social integration activities to FEAD end recipients.
- The Federation of Food Banks: The Federation operated nine regional foodbanks and was involved with earlier European food aid programmes before FEAD. They owned the largest depot of FEAD products, with 85% of FEAD products being stored through the Federation.
- The Belgian Network for the Fight against Poverty (BAPN): The BAPN was invited to write the OP along with the Federation of Food Banks, the CPAS/OMCW and the Belgian Red Cross.
- Not-for-profits: The Belgian Red Cross, Alimen't, Food savers Antwerpen, etc.
- Several city or municipal associations.

18. Key findings on the implementation of FEAD

In the following section, we will lay out key findings on the implementation of FEAD operations in Belgium between the years 2014-2022. To do so, we will examine the implementation of FEAD in Belgium along the five criteria for EU evaluations: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and visibility. This will create a strong basis to inform lessons learned and add to the overall evaluation of the programme.

Through desk research and interviews with key stakeholders in the Belgian FEAD MA and POs, it is evident that:

- FEAD was **effective** in reaching its target group and those most in need of nutritional aid. However, there is limited evidence to support the idea that the nutritional aid provided by FEAD implementation reduced the rate of poverty in Belgium or had a poverty-alleviating effect on the end recipients.
- The implementation of FEAD in Belgium was very **cost-effective** and underwent a series of simplification measures to improve the efficiency of operations, such as the digitalisation of the ordering procedures, and the centralisation of the delivery system.

³¹⁹ Food and/or Basic Material Assistance Operational Programme (2013).

- FEAD food buying and distribution was **relevant** to end recipients, which is evident in feedback from end-user surveys across the evaluation period, as the FEAD MA in Belgium paid specific attention to the quality and usefulness of FEAD products.
- The **EU added value** in Belgium was seen in the upscaling of existing food aid operations and providing a new food aid basis for many non-profit organisations.
- FEAD operations were very **coherent** with national and European policies on poverty alleviation.

18.1. To what extent was FEAD support successful or not – and why?

Overall achievement of FEAD objectives [*criterion: effectiveness*]

The EU's overall objectives for the FEAD programme were to promote social inclusion, advance towards the eradication of poverty in the EU, alleviate the worst forms of poverty, and provide non-financial assistance to the most deprived through food aid and social inclusion activities. Specifically, the EU aimed to reduce the number of people experiencing poverty by 20 million by 2020. To work towards this goal, Belgium set out to reduce the number of people experiencing or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 380,000 by 2020.

FEAD operations managed to reach 3.1 million end recipients between 2014-2022, and while 225,549 end recipients were reached in 2014, this number rose to 449,372 end recipients in 2022. This represents an increase of 99,2%, indicating that the number of end recipients nearly doubled from the start to the end of the programme. This figure demonstrates the increasing importance of FEAD operations in Belgium over the evaluation period.

Interviews with the Managing Authority, Audit Authority, and partner organisation staff demonstrated a positive view of FEAD support among FEAD actors in Belgium, as interviewees expressed appreciation of the programme, and a concern that the effectiveness of the programme may diminish when merged into the ESF+. ³²⁰

According to the FEAD evaluation, ³²¹ however, **end recipients and stakeholders were reportedly uncertain of the effectiveness of FEAD operations in reducing the effects of poverty** on the lives of end recipients, as the distribution and buying of food were not seen as the most effective activities to reduce the number of people affected by poverty. In the evaluation, focus group participants expressed uncertainty that FEAD food aid, while helpful and necessary for end recipients, would change their socio-economic standing. However, through interviews, it is known that FEAD did allow end recipients to free up budget for expenses such as rent and healthcare, which alleviated some other effects of poverty, and redirected end recipients towards CPAS/OMCW, which could provide ways for them to structurally exit situations of poverty. ³²²

FEAD activities were also **effective in their ability to increase the social inclusion of end recipients**, who found being able to meet other end recipients through the activities proposed by CPAS/OMCW and the POs very positive. The FEAD programme also allowed end recipients to be redirected to CPAS/OMCW and introduced to non-profit organisations that performed additional activities, other than food aid.

³²⁰ Interview with a representative of SPP Intégration Sociale, conducted in August 2023.

³²¹ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2022). *Rapport Enquête Structurée du FEAD 2022 : Résultats Agrégés de l'Etat Membre Belgique*

³²² Interview with a representative of SPP Intégration Sociale, conducted in August 2023

Table A. 40 – FEAD end recipients in Belgium, 2014-2022

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2014-2022
Total number of persons receiving food support	225,549	273,121	300,526	311,205	393,824	358,726	381,951	449,372	449,372	3,143,646
Number of children aged 15 years or below	61,168	70,143	75,824	88,141	132,867	116,993	114,482	131,496	131,496	922,610
Number of persons aged 65 years or above	14,892	19,241	15,782	21,980	36,368	30,191	29,395	40,139	40,139	248,127
Number of women	69,589	89,980	87,331	98,913	168,206	138,073	138,855	177,334	177,334	1,145,615
Number of migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)	87,018	99,111	93,466	102,269	118,448	105,821	106,155	130,104	130,104	972,496
Number of persons with disabilities	5,013	5,858	10,611	9,788	12,658	12,620	10,639	14,575	14,575	96,337
Number of homeless	21,349	11,021	10,378	20,414	19,929	18,800	16,009	20,566	20,566	160,032

Source: SFC 2014 database.

The FEAD target group in Belgium was defined as all **individuals experiencing or at risk of poverty and social exclusion**. This was roughly equivalent to individuals below the poverty line, and/or individuals receiving the RIS. As discussed previously, this large target allowed for a great number of end recipients to be reached (3,143,646 in total). The evolution of the definition of the target group linked to the annual poverty line also allowed for a greater number of end recipients to be reached each year, with a 99.2% increase in end recipients between 2014 and 2022. Within this large group of end recipients, 922,610 were children under the age of 15, while 248,127 were seniors over the age of 65. 1,145,615 were female, 972,496 were migrants and/or minorities, 96,337 were persons with disabilities, and 160,032 were homeless people. According to Table A. 40, the number of FEAD end recipients for all categories mentioned above increased throughout the evaluation period.

Certain implementation decisions for FEAD in Belgium **increased the outreach to potential end recipients**. First, by selecting POs at national, regional, and community level that had experience in delivering social activities and were well-known by potential end recipients – such as the CPAS/OMCW or the Belgian Red Cross – end recipients were more likely to be made aware of FEAD support. Second, the objective and wide-reaching criterion for FEAD support enabled many potential end recipients to be reached. Furthermore, as the definition of the target group relied on the criterion of the poverty line, it evolved yearly. In interviews, the MA expressed that this flexibility in the definition allowed, for example, Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression arriving to Belgium to be eligible as end recipients of FEAD, as they were considered as below the national poverty line.³²³ This objective criterion allowed for specific socio-economic groups, such as single parent households, women, multiple-breadwinner households, refugees, and children, to be FEAD recipients.

FEAD end recipients received FEAD products either by approaching CPAS/OMCW, or by approaching POs directly. The OP did not account for outreach activities or advertising about FEAD activities to potential end recipients. As such, the FEAD programme was effectively able to reach individuals receiving state aid through CPAS/OMCW, as they were instructed with directing CPAS/OMCW visitors to the various POs delivering FEAD products. However, **individuals that were undocumented (and who could therefore not prove their financial situation), or individuals that did not visit either CPAS/OMCW or POs, could not benefit from FEAD support**. Groups particularly at risk and that were less likely to visit CPAS/OMCW and POs – due in part to fear of judgement or language barriers – were homeless people, migrants, or minorities.

Another barrier to receiving FEAD support, other than a lack of knowledge of the programme or an inability to access a CPAS/OMCW, was the **administrative burden of the selection process and the eligibility criteria**. Indeed, needing to provide documentation of one's financial situation to receive FEAD aid was seen as potentially stigmatising, and difficult for individuals who did not understand the eligibility process or who faced language barriers. According to the national evaluations, individuals who did not have the appropriate paperwork to prove their financial situation were excluded from receiving FEAD aid.

Finally, interviewees expressed that the **'objective' criterion of the poverty line excluded certain vulnerable groups from receiving FEAD support**, despite their need for food aid. These groups include

³²³ Interview with a representative of SPP Intégration Sociale, conducted in August 2023.

students or low-income households, whose revenue is slightly higher than the poverty line but who might still require social inclusion and nutritional aid.³²⁴

Adjustments to FEAD to address new challenges [*criterion: effectiveness*]

Following the various challenges during the evaluation period, notably the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the energy crisis, **FEAD operations in Belgium were adapted to mitigate the effects of these crises**. Such changes included the additional budget allocated to FEAD activities from REACT-EU funds. Belgium received 46.1 million EUR of REACT-EU funding and made use of 100% co-financing under CRII/CRII+. Both funds allowed for a continuation of FEAD activities.

Through the additional financial resources of REACT-EU and CRII+, the FEAD MA redistributed its FEAD budget for the seven years of the evaluation period: The REACT-EU and CRII+ funding would be used for the last two years of the fund, and the original budget allocated towards FEAD would be condensed into a five-year period. This, in turn, created an increase in buying budget for the MA, enabling the acquisition of larger quantities of food from their subcontractors.

Other changes to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic include **the provision of material aid in the form of facemasks and hand sanitiser gel** by the SPP IS/POD MI. POs such as the Belgian Red Cross also adapted the distribution of FEAD products, by allocating pick-up appointments for end recipients, or even by **delivering FEAD products to end recipients' homes**.

While REACT-EU and CRII+ allowed for a simplification, flexibilization, and prolongation of the FEAD programme, **interviewees expressed discontent with their limited ability to counter the effect of inflation** and the rising price of energy.³²⁵ Rising prices in Belgium were quoted as having a negative effect on the number of products the SPP IS/POD MI could buy with FEAD funding each year. To counter these conditions, the FEAD programme in Belgium greatly benefitted from additional budget provided by the state. According to the National FEAD evaluation,³²⁶ the Belgian government provided an additional 743,156 EUR for the continuation of FEAD activities in 2021 to address rising prices.

Horizontal principles of FEAD [*criterion: effectiveness*]

Throughout the implementation of FEAD, **Belgian MAs, POs, and food banks were able to respect certain, but not all, horizontal principles**. Attention was paid to the respect of the dignity of end recipients: the application process to receive FEAD products changed so that potential end recipients were guaranteed discretion and confidentiality when applying to CPAS/OMCW. In turn, MAs hoped that this would stop deterring potential end recipients from asking for food assistance due to stigmatisation. The possibility for end recipients to choose their products also diminished potential power imbalances between providers and receivers of help, as it brought end recipients closer to the position of customer. Specific attention was brought to the nutritional value of FEAD products, with MAs asking advice from nutritional experts and members of the Health Ministry on which products to provide under the buying scheme. The MA collaborated with experts to create yearly lists of products which were considered sustainable, fair trade, durable, and had good nutritional value.

While the **prevention of discrimination and the respect of equality are values of the organisations funded by the FEAD, no new activities were implemented to increase compliance with these horizontal principles**. Furthermore, while efforts were made to reduce food waste through initiatives such as a soup made from discarded food, these activities were cancelled due to logistical issues. The delivery of food products could also have paid more attention to food waste, as FEAD products were often distributed in quantities above those required by each end recipient, leading to waste. Through interviews, POs also said that the call for bids system established by the MA required the acquisition of new products, which is more wasteful than other food aid systems such as those based on food donations.³²⁷

Success and failure factors [*criterion: effectiveness*]

The effectiveness of the programme delivery was ensured by certain implementation decisions made by SPP IS/POD MI throughout the evaluation period. These were as follows:

- The MA selected FEAD **POs that had experience with charity work** and in social activities such as food aid. This ensured that the selected POs' values aligned with the horizontal principles of respect for the

³²⁴ Interview with a representative of the Interfederal Corps of the Inspectorate of Finances, conducted in August 2023

³²⁵ Interview with a representative of the Interfederal Corps of the Inspectorate of Finances, conducted in August 2023.

³²⁶ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2021). *Résumé du Rapport Annuel 2021 du FEAD*

³²⁷ Interview with a representative of the Belgian Red Cross, conducted in August 2023.

end recipients, and they were able to provide accompanying measures (outside the scope of FEAD funding).

- **Communication between the MA, FEAD POs, nutritional and health experts, and the Ministry of Health** ensured that the FEAD products provided to end recipients were of a good nutritional quality and answered to the needs of end recipients. The list of products increased from 14 in 2014 to 20 in 2019 and shows the continuous effort in providing end recipients with quality and helpful products. Other examples of appropriate and helpful products include the hygiene products of 2015 and 2018.

- **The allocation of FEAD budget solely towards the buying and distribution of food** increased the effectiveness of the programme by increasing the MA's budget for buying products. In turn, a greater amount of food bought by the MA allowed for the increasing number of end recipients throughout the programme to be adequately supported. Additionally, the decision to procure FEAD products directly from producers, and not through supermarkets (as would be the case if the use of vouchers was implemented) allowed for advantageous prices on FEAD products.

- **The broad eligibility criterion for receiving FEAD support** contributed to the effectiveness of the programme by allowing for many individuals to receive FEAD products.

On the other hand, several implementation decisions could be seen as negatively affecting the FEAD programme's effectiveness in Belgium:

- **The distribution of food products** was done in large quantities, and before changes to the distribution system, POs were expected to hold orders in their own storage facilities, which were not always equipped to store the deliveries efficiently. End recipients could receive the same one product twice in a row and the quantities were larger than necessary for each household. Furthermore, as food products were delivered in large quantities, some end recipients expressed issues transporting their FEAD food products from the delivery points to their individual homes.

- The national FEAD evaluation reported that there were **inefficiencies in the ordering system** that created issues with distribution.³²⁸ These included orders with missing products, or orders including expired products.

Overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations [*criterion: efficiency*]

FEAD operations in Belgium were cost effective, and conscious efforts were made throughout the evaluation period to reduce the costs of programme implementation. Several actions from both the MA and the POs throughout the programme, whether during the buying or distribution of food, ensured that the costs of implementation were kept as low as possible.

Most of the MA's implementation decisions were made to free up the FEAD budget for the buying of food, with the aim of distributing, as much as possible, large amounts of food to many end recipients, at low prices. To accomplish this goal, the **MA increased the food-buying budget by redirecting the 5% of FEAD budget allocated by the European Commission to implementing accompanying measures to the acquisition of food**. The capacity to buy greater amounts of food products was also guaranteed with the open bid system to select food providers, as producers were chosen based on the lowest price. The open bid system and the MA's role in the buying of products also allowed for economies of scale to reduce the price per item of FEAD products. Finally, low prices were guaranteed by the choice not to implement the voucher system in Belgium. Indeed, throughout interviews, members of the MA explained that this decision was taken to ensure that end recipients did not have to pay the "20% mark-up price"³²⁹ charged by supermarkets on food products but could instead benefit directly from the products bought at low prices by the MA.

The **cooperation between the MAs and the POs ensured a cost-effective implementation** of the FEAD programme. Through this cooperation, the MA changed its distribution method to reduce the transport costs associated with FEAD product delivery. Prior to 2022, the MA would receive products from its distributors and would deliver these products to each PO. This system was changed so that the distributors delivered FEAD products to four centralised delivery centres throughout the country, from which each PO could collect their individual orders. Lower transport prices were equally helped by the relatively small size of the country.

Actions taken by POs also ensured cost-effectiveness. By partnering with CPAS/OMCW and other well-known organisations such as the Red Cross and the Federation of Food Banks, the **MA reduced the need for outreach activities to end recipients**, as potential end recipients were redirected from these known

³²⁸ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2022). *Rapport Enquête Structurée du FEAD 2022 : Résultats Agrégés de l'Etat Membre Belgique*.

³²⁹ Interview with a representative of the Federation of Food Banks, conducted in August 2023.

organisations to the FEAD programme. The POs were also selected based on their capacity to implement charitable or social enterprise activities. In so doing, most POs already had the infrastructure and staff on hand to deliver FEAD products. Throughout interviews with members of the Belgian Red Cross,³³⁰ it was found that most PO workers were volunteers, which considerably reduced the price of FEAD distribution. However, interviewees also remarked that volunteers were more likely to need additional training, or tended to be individuals who, due to age or language restraints, were unfamiliar with digital monitoring and stocking systems.

Administrative burden of monitoring and reporting requirements [*criterion: efficiency*]

Administrative requirements for FEAD monitoring and reporting were more or less burdensome for organisations depending on their role in the FEAD implementation process, their size, and their previous knowledge of EU funds.

While the Belgian national evaluation of FEAD (2019)³³¹ found that **no gold-plating took place** in Belgium, Managing Authority (MA) and partner organisations (POs) expressed during interviews that the **eligibility rules, monitoring, auditing, and evaluation requirements were burdensome for their organisation and/or end recipients**. The time allocated towards FEAD administration represents roughly one month a year for those in charge of FEAD activities, both in the MA and in the POs.

Interviewees from the MA, Audit Authority, and POs expressed discontent with the inconsistency of FEAD requirements across the year, as periods closer to national evaluations or reports represented a heavy time-burden. Interviewees also expressed **dissatisfaction with the lack of additional resources allocated towards administrative or technical assistance**. However, while the administrative requirements for FEAD may have been burdensome, interviewees regularly repeated understanding for the necessity of such requirements, as they were seen as vital for ensuring the quality of the programme.

The Belgian FEAD OP describes the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities as such: POs were tasked with collecting and sharing information on FEAD end recipients with the MA. Data requested from POs included the quantities and types of food distributed, the number of end recipients, their age, and their gender. This information was then compiled and updated yearly by the MA, in the form of reports. A digital system was used throughout the programme, which contained information on deliveries, orders, ongoing operations, beneficiaries, and allocated funding per beneficiaries, accessible by the MA and updated by POs.

Throughout interviews with individuals working for Belgium's FEAD POs, it was found that the collection of data on end recipients for yearly reports represented a burden for volunteers and workers from POs. Indeed, individuals distributing food aid in POs were mostly volunteers, who might not have skills or knowledge in data collection and information handling. The MA reported that, in the first years of the programme, additional help was required from the MA to train PO workers in the distribution of surveys and the collection of personal data on end recipients. Furthermore, the data received by POs and non-profits distributing food aid needed to be cleaned and verified once received by the MA, which represented additional time and labour for the MA. To increase the quality of the data collected by beneficiaries and POs, they were later required to submit data on end recipients to receive FEAD aid.

FEAD operations did represent an **administrative burden for end recipients, who struggled with the verification process to access food banks and FEAD products**. Indeed, end recipients were asked to prove their financial status and were assessed as “in need” by a member either of a CPAS/OMCW or a PO, which proved difficult for individuals with language difficulties or who did not keep records of their incomes and expenses. Interviewees stressed that the administrative burden and the inquiry into end recipients' finances may deter some from applying for FEAD aid. The national evaluation also reported that despite efforts to mitigate this problem, all end recipients describe the process of accessing the food aid as particularly stigmatising, embarrassing, and disrespectful.³³²

Simplification measures [*criterion: efficiency*]

In Belgium, **several initiatives were made to simplify the buying and distribution of food**, which improved the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations.

First, there have been **continuous efforts to digitalise the FEAD programme**, across various steps of the programme's implementation. A digital ordering system was introduced, so that POs could order FEAD

³³⁰ Interview with a representative of the Belgian Red Cross, conducted in August 2023.

³³¹ SPP Intégration Sociale. (2019). *Evaluation de la politique d'achat et de la distribution des denrées alimentaires en vertu du Programme opérationnel belge 2014-2020 dans le cadre du FEAD*

³³² Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy and Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2019). *Evaluation de la politique d'achat et de la distribution des denrées alimentaires en vertu du Programme opérationnel belge 2014-2020 dans le cadre du FEAD*.

products in a simplified manner. These digitalisation measures were well appreciated throughout all interviews and were seen as necessary for the continuous effective implementation of the programme. Digitalisation measures included the use of a digital platform for ordering of food products by POs, and the introduction of two apps, “e-Tendering” and FOOD-IT.

Second, after several years of the programme being implemented, the **MA introduced a centralisation of delivery centres**. During the first years of the programme, suppliers of food products would deliver products to the MA, who would then deliver to each PO. From 2022, POs would instead collect FEAD products from four delivery centres across the country, greatly reducing the MA’s transport costs. While this newer system may have benefitted the MA, it is noted in the 2019 national FEAD evaluation³³³ that POs expressed discontent with the idea, as collecting food products from centres would increase their own transport costs.

Coherence of FEAD with other interventions [*criterion: coherence*]

As mentioned in Section 1, **FEAD operations were coherent with Belgian policies for the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion**. Prior to and throughout the implementation period, several measures and policies implemented in Belgium demonstrated the importance of poverty alleviation as a priority in the Belgium government, at national and regional level. Such policies include the national and regional plans to address poverty and social exclusion. The coherence of the programme with national initiatives is also evident in the role of the Belgian state as a financial help for the programme. Indeed, the government set out, during the elaboration of the FEAD programme budget, to provide 14.4 million euros for the programme. This sum increased throughout the programme, to address challenges such as rising inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic.

FEAD was also coherent, more specifically, with the overall food aid delivery system in Belgium. Indeed, throughout the implementation period, FEAD-funded food aid operations and food products were seen as the “basis” of food aid in Belgium, to then be complemented by other forms such as un-sold supermarket products or food donations. According to the Federation of Social Services³³⁴, European funds including FEAD are one of the five main sources of food aid in Belgium, along with: donations from producers; collections of unsold food items; products bought by non-profit organisations and social organisations; donations from supermarkets and other stores. Certain of the FEAD POs also benefitted from other sources of food aid, such as the Belgian Federation of Food Banks. According to the national evaluation of FEAD,³³⁵ one third of the POs involved in FEAD receive only FEAD food products as their source of food aid.

18.2. Is FEAD still relevant?

Relevance to target groups [*criterion: relevance*]

In both the national evaluation of FEAD in Belgium³³⁶ and the 2022 structured survey,³³⁷ the **FEAD programme was found to be relevant to end recipients**, as the products offered were both appreciated and useful. In the 2019 national evaluation, 30% of end recipients reported themselves as very satisfied with FEAD products, and 70% reported being satisfied. The usefulness of the products can be explained by the great attention paid by the MA to establishing the yearly list of products. Indeed, the MA consulted with nutritional experts, health experts, and representatives from the POs to collect feedback that would serve to collate a list of nutritional, quality, and useful products for the end recipients. This list of products was created to act as a “basis” for end recipients’ nutrition, including essential household products such as rice, pasta, milk, and coffee. End recipients participating in the 2019 national evaluation equally expressed appreciation for dietary considerations, including religious diets.

Interviewees from FEAD POs in Belgium also noted that distribution centres, due to their nature as food banks, social enterprises, or charities, often **considered the comfort and dignity of end recipients**.

³³³ Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy and Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2019). *Evaluation de la politique d’achat et de la distribution des denrées alimentaires en verty du Programme opérationnel belge 2014-2020 dans le cadre du FEAD*.

³³⁴ <https://www.fdss.be/fr/concertation-aide-alimentaire/laide-alimentaire-en-belgique/>

³³⁵ Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy and Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2019). “*Evaluation de la politique d’achat et de la distribution des denrées alimentaires en verty du Programme opérationnel belge 2014-2020 dans le cadre du FEAD*.”

³³⁶ Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy and Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2019). “*Evaluation de la politique d’achat et de la distribution des denrées alimentaires en verty du Programme opérationnel belge 2014-2020 dans le cadre du FEAD*.”

³³⁷ Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2022). *Rapport enquête structurée du FEAD 2022: résultats agrégés de l’état membre Belgique*. [“2022 Report on the FEAD Structured Survey: Aggregated Results of the Belgium Member State”].

Distribution and delivery centres would often provide waiting rooms, access to hot drinks, and act as meeting places for end recipients in need of a community and contact.

Despite the usefulness of FEAD products and the ability for delivery points to act as centres of social inclusion, certain elements of the distribution chain hindered the relevance of the FEAD operation for end recipients. First, **PO representatives reported that FEAD end recipients had no need for the FEAD deliveries of certain products**, if they did not match their need for said product, increasing the potential for food waste.

Second, as food distribution relied on the delivery of food products to various storage locations, fresh food was not included in the list of FEAD products, and only 3% of POs distributed the products in the form of hot meals. **As the food aid was distributed in the form of raw ingredients, this negatively affected end recipients who did not dispose of the necessary equipment and resources to cook their ingredients** (including homeless people, individuals without a kitchen, or individuals unable to pay for electricity, gas, or heating).

Furthermore, while the products were found to be overall useful to end recipients, the 2022 structured survey results demonstrated that **FEAD support did not alleviate end recipients from their situation of poverty**. End recipients reported needing greater support in addressing the structural causes of poverty, which may be helped by granting greater attention to accompanying measures and social inclusion activities.

Relevance of FEAD now and in the future [criterion: relevance]

The **future relevance of FEAD in Belgium is still high**, given the continued high rates of individuals at risk of poverty and exclusion, and the increasing number of FEAD recipients throughout the evaluation period. FEAD operations in the programming period 2014-2022 demonstrated a concentrated effort at reducing food insecurity in Belgium, and the buying and distributing of food from the MA and its POs are still reported as relevant today.

Interviews with the MA, the AA, and members of Belgium's major POs (the Red Cross and the Federation of Food Banks) drew insights on potential socio-economic phenomenon that might affect the relevance of FEAD operations in the future. First, national and regional political changes have the potential to affect the coherence of FEAD operations, ESF+ operations, and other EU social policies. A member of the Federation of Food Banks highlighted the **potential of the upcoming Belgian elections to create policy differences between the Walloon region and the Flanders region**, as poverty and social exclusion are less prevalent in Flanders. Second, all interviewees expressed concern with the allocated budget for FEAD operations in the upcoming programming period. Indeed, as the FEAD budget increased due to additional CRII+ measures, and as FEAD operations are incorporated into the new ESF+ programme, the budget allocated for FEAD operations will be comparatively reduced in the new programming period. This is a cause of concern both for the MA and for POs, as it represents a potential obstacle if FEAD operations are to help the same number of end recipients in the upcoming years.

While the FEAD programme is not seen as a solution to poverty in Belgium, either by MAs or POs, **the discontinuation of the FEAD programme would result in major financial issues for its existing end recipients**, including the risk of food deprivation. A potential discontinuation would also result in a serious decrease in motivation of volunteers thus far involved in the programme.

18.3. Did FEAD make a difference and to whom?

EU added value [criterion: EU added value]

FEAD operations in Belgium represented **added value in their ability to support, upscale, and start new food aid operations throughout the evaluation period**. Indeed, the FEAD budget represented a significant resource for SPP IS/POD MI's food aid system, as 30% of their budget corresponded to food bought with FEAD funding. Throughout the evaluation period, there was a net increase in end recipients. Furthermore, for many POs and non-profit organisations, FEAD operations were the only food aid programme they had participated in. This demonstrates the ability of FEAD programmes in Belgium to increase the activities and infrastructural capacity of national NGOs. The interviewee from the Red Cross, for instance, stated that their participation in FEAD activities increased their reach by bringing new individuals to their centres, who would not have known of the Red Cross would it not have been for their food aid activities.

Food aid bought through FEAD funding also significantly helped end recipients through its nature as a continuous source of aid. Compared to the changing and unreliable resource of food donations, **the regularity and consistency of FEAD product deliveries was a positive** both for POs and for those regularly in need of food aid.

The FEAD programme also created added value for POs in its ability to **increase cooperation** between them. Furthermore, POs such as the Federation of Food Banks or the Red Cross were granted certain decision-making powers during the drafting of the OP. For example, in 2014, representatives from the Federation of Food Banks, the CPAS/OMCW, the Belgian Network for the Fight against Poverty and the Red Cross joined to discuss the OP, suggesting amendments, and agreeing on its final form. Cooperation between the MA and its POs was also ensured throughout the programme, for example during agreements on end recipient lists or through the feedback process elaborated when creating the yearly list of FEAD products, as mentioned earlier. The Belgian Federation of Food Banks, the Red Cross, the Federation of Social Services, Alimen't, the BAPN, and others were also invited to meet quarterly to share information on FEAD operations.

Visibility

Visibility of the European Union and awareness of its involvement in FEAD were actively promoted in Belgium through different means. For instance, the SPP IS/POD MI's page dedicated to the FEAD included a large EU logo, and the tagline "Co-financed by the European Union". The SPP IS/POD MI's newsletter dedicated to FEAD activities equally contained the flag and the tagline "with the support of the FEAD". According to interviews with Red Cross representatives, food banks differentiated FEAD products from other food donations by labelling them with flags and mentions of the EU. This physical distinction of FEAD produce created a differentiation in the mind of end recipients, who were reported to naming them as the "European products".

While FEAD products were differentiated by explicit labelling, it is unclear whether this translated into an awareness of FEAD activities or the role of the EU in distributing FEAD products both for the general public or for FEAD end recipients. Indeed, all Belgian interviewees explained that **end recipients mostly did not care about the provenance of food aid**.

19. Good practices

Throughout the implementation of the programme, certain logistical decisions were made by the MA, that increased the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, added value, coherence, relevance, or visibility of the FEAD programme. Such decisions include:

The centralisation of delivery

In 2022, the delivery of FEAD products changed. While during the first years of the programme, deliveries were sent directly from the MAs to the beneficiaries, following the changes, beneficiaries would collect their FEAD orders from four centralised delivery centres across the country. This improved the cost-efficiency of the programme, as it allowed for the MA to reduce the costs of transport. Furthermore, not all end beneficiaries had the infrastructure to store food products for extended periods of time, and in large quantities. By centralising the delivery system with the use of four large delivery and storage centres, beneficiaries were no longer required to store large amounts of FEAD products in their own locations.

A digitalised ordering and data collection system

The ordering system for FEAD products in Belgium relied on a digitalised system. Notably, the FEAD POs could order the necessary quantities of FEAD produce using the hospitality phone application "FoodIt", which allowed customers to order from a restaurant's menu. In the case of FEAD, the MA would display the available produce on a menu through the application, which POs could digitally order. The digitalised ordering and reporting systems helped the implementation of FEAD in two ways. First, the use of "FoodIt" allowed for a removal of administrative backlog and paper trails, by removing the need for paper orders between the POs and the MA. Second, by using a digital feedback and reporting system, MAs could access data on end recipients and the ongoing operations in real time. This helped monitoring and evaluation activities.

Buying food products through open-bid system

The use of an open-bid system for the distribution of FEAD-bought products was highlighted as a beneficial activity by all interviewees. The open-bid system ensured that low prices were there for FEAD products, by choosing the producers of FEAD food aid based on the lowest price.

Increasing the relevance of the product list through communications with experts, PO workers, and end beneficiaries.

The FEAD MA in Belgium paid particular attention to the creation of a relevant food list for end recipients. This was done through yearly consultations with a variety of individuals, who collectively gathered knowledge on nutrition and the needs of end recipients. Through a collaborative back-and-forth process

between the MA, POs such as the Federation of Food Banks, and nutritional and health experts, lists of products were adapted from the previous year to correspond to the needs and nutritional requirements of the end recipients. The list-making took into consideration several elements, including:

- The overall quality and nutritional value of the products: products were often fair-trade and organic. Furthermore, items which were not considered to provide nutritional value, such as sugar, were removed from the product list.
- The relevance of the products to the needs of end recipients: by communicating with the larger non-profits and POs such as the Federation of Food Banks and the Red Cross, the MA gathered the overall sentiment of end recipients on the previous year's FEAD products. Comments, recommendations, and complaints were considered when elaborating new lists.
- Composing and complementing a food "basis": the MA attempted, as much as possible, to create a list of FEAD products that would represent for end recipients a basis for their daily nutrition. All food groups were represented in the list of products, and items that could easily be bought elsewhere or that end recipients were thought to already have in their homes were not included (such as flour).
- Dietary requirements and inclusivity: the MA ensured that food products were adaptable to all end recipients. For example, canned fish was seen as an inclusive protein, which could be eaten by all religious diets. The list also included products which corresponded to religious diets, such as halal or kosher products.

20. Conclusions and lessons learned

In conclusion, this case study of the implementation of FEAD in Belgium has demonstrated that several choices made by the MA, the Belgian state, the AA, and FEAD POs increased the success of the programme throughout the implementation period.

The **focus of the programme on the delivery of food to a wide, objective target group aimed to alleviate poverty for a large number of individuals**. The increasing number of individuals reached can be considered a success of the programme, in this regard. The food delivered by FEAD funding was relevant to the target group and answered their need for a stable basis of quality food. Thanks to the use of REACT-EU and CRII+ funding, the amount of food bought by the MA increased to meet the needs of the population following the Covid-19 pandemic. Simplification measures were considered by the MA on a yearly basis, based on feedback from its POs, and a conscious effort to digitalise the programme was made throughout the evaluation period. The programme acted as a core element of the national food aid system and was entirely coherent with the Belgian strategy to fight poverty. Finally, the implementation of FEAD majorly upscaled existing food aid operations and allowed many organisations to start enacting food aid activities, with one third of the FEAD POs only distributing FEAD aid.

Lessons learned from desk research and interviews with the MA, the AA, and POs, include:

- The need to **include end recipients and their feedback to a greater extent** when preparing the product lists. Currently, and as reported in the national evaluation of FEAD operations 2014-2020³³⁸, end recipients may not feel represented by the POs and there is a greater need for variety in the list of products currently bought by FEAD funding.
- Interviews with members of the Belgian Red Cross and the Belgian Federation of Food Banks found that, in order to better address the structural causes of poverty, **end recipients would welcome greater investment into accompanying measures**.

³³⁸ Service Public de Programmation Intégration Sociale. (2018). *Programme opérationnel belge pour le Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis : aide alimentaire, aide matérielle et mesures d'accompagnement 2014- 2020 – Rapport Annuel 2018*

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

To conduct this case study, we used a mixture of desk research, quantitative analysis, and interview analysis. The first step in conducting the case study was to familiarise ourselves with the socio-economic data for Belgium (including AROPE rates, etc...). This data was the main evidence for the writing of Section 1: Context and background.

The evaluation of Belgium's FEAD implementation was then written based on data provided by interviews with members of the Belgian MA and AA, as well as the Belgian Red Cross and the Belgian Federation of Food Banks. Data from interviews was complemented by the findings of national evaluations of the FEAD programme. Finally, a final round of desk research provided crucial information to bolster claims made in interviews. The desk research provided relevant information from the Belgian FEAD PO, its national plan for poverty alleviation, and the yearly monitoring reports on FEAD implementation.

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Appendix 3: FEAD indicators

Table A. 41 – Input indicators for the implementation of FEAD in Belgium in 2014-2022

Indicator	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission (EUR)	Implementation rate (expenditure declared as share of allocated budget)
2015-2022	74 066 728,43	93 073 826,00	89 346 137,00	121%

Source: SFC 2014 database.

Table A. 42 – FEAD output indicators in Belgium in 2014-2022, per year

Common output indicators	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Quantity of fruits and vegetables	516.2	1 101.0	1 198.1	2 422.2	1 296.5	1 753.7	2 234.2	2 244.9	2 716.1
Quantity of meat, eggs, fish, seafood	582.3	389.8	249.6	256.4	69.5	209.0	177.2	191.1	223.6
Quantity of flour, bread, potatoes, rice and other starchy products	775.7	1 078.8	2 252.2	3 640.4	1 904.6	2 490.2	2 512.2	2 869.2	3 817.8
Quantity of sugar	0.0	0.0	0.0	488.3	79.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Quantity of milk products	2 154.0	3 177.4	1 815.7	3 893.1	3 606.8	3 337.6	3 898.1	4 421.9	5 265.2
Quantity of fats, oil	131.6	142.9	422.7	420.5	351.4	331.6	272.2	337.1	309.2
Quantity of convenience food, other foodstuff (not falling in above-mentioned categories)	449.2	791.7	599.6	1637.9	952.8	1037.6	1356.6	1421.9	1740.2

Common output indicators	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total quantity of food support distributed	4 608.9	6 681.6	6 537.8	12 758.9	8 260.7	9 159.7	10 450.4	11 486.2	14 072.1
Share of food for which only transport, distribution and storage were paid for by the OP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proportion of FEAD co-financed food products in the total volume of food distributed by the partner organisations	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Total number of meals distributed partly or totally financed by the OP	1 570 522	1 136 460	1 111 363	978 223	776 690	889 677	857 736	1 343 278	1 451 147
Total number of food packages distributed partly or totally financed by the OP	1 377 488	1 695 777	1 702 987	1 789 069	1 953 248	1 908 284	2 021 607	2 439 554	2 760 043

Source: SFC 2014 database.

Table A. 43 – Number of FEAD participants in Belgium in 2014-2022

Result indicators on food support distributed	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of persons receiving food support	225 549	273 121	300 526	311 205	393 824	358 726	381 951	449 372	462 719
Number of children aged 15 years or below	61 168	70 143	75 824	88 141	132 867	116 993	114 482	131 496	134 933
Number of persons aged 65 years or above	14 892	19 241	15 782	21 980	36 368	30 191	29 395	40 139	32 335
Number of women	69 589	89 980	87 331	98 913	168 206	138 073	138 855	177 334	180 723
Number of homeless	87 018	99 111	93 466	102 269	118 448	105 821	106 155	130 104	130 228

Source: SFC 2014 database

1. Context and background

Bulgaria is one of the countries in the European Union with **the highest percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)** – 32.2 % in 2022³³⁹. Even though the rate has dropped by more than 10% since 2015, it remains significantly high, with people with only primary or secondary education being more at risk. According to data on the level of poverty for 2022, the relative share of the poor is highest among single-member households with a person over the age of 65 - 61.3%, single-member households with females - 56.2%, and households with two adults and three or more children - 48.5%. For Roma, this share is even higher – 71%³⁴⁰. **Almost one-fifth of the population suffers from severe material and social deprivation**, while for Roma this rate was 61% in 2021³⁴¹. However, we can see a significant percentage decrease – from 38.8% in 2015 to 18.7% in 2022. 21.6% of the Bulgarian population cannot afford meals with meat, chicken, and fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.³⁴² This percentage has dropped significantly since 2015, when it was nearly 40%.

Among the plausible reasons for the decrease in the number of people in Bulgaria suffering from severe material and social deprivation is the introduction of various supporting mechanisms like those funded by FEAD, the implementation of smaller-scale regional projects by municipalities and non-governmental organisations, and the overall efforts of the government to stabilise the economic performance of the country and attract investments to the poorest regions, thus, increasing the level of employment and improving the infrastructure. Nonetheless, **half of the population remains unable to deal with unexpected financial expenses**. This share has gradually declined from 73.12% in 2013 to 32.1.6% in 2018, followed by an increase to up to 46.7% in 2023 according to Eurostat (EU-SILC survey).³⁴³ The share of people in employment at risk of poverty in Bulgaria is 9.93%, which is comparable to the average for the EU, but there have been no significant changes throughout the evaluation period.

The AROPE by degree of urbanisation **for the period from 2015 to 2022 shows a decreasing trend for Bulgarians living in cities** – from 32.7% in 2015 to 23.7% in 2022.³⁴⁴ For people living in rural areas, the rate has also decreased significantly, (57.9% in 2015 and 43.1% in 2022), especially in recent years, declining from 48.8% in 2020 to 43.1% in 2022). Information published by the National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria indicates that the AROPE is highest in some of the most rural **regions**: in the Severozapaden region, the region with the highest percentage of rural population³⁴⁵, 41.4% of the population were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2022.³⁴⁶ This percentage was lower for more urban regions, such as the Yugozapaden region (approx. 83.8 % of the population live in urban areas, with 22.2% at risk of poverty and social exclusion) and the Severoiztochen region (74.6 % of the population live in urban areas, with 28.7% for at risk of poverty and social exclusion). The dynamics of the percentage of people living in poverty or social exclusion in both categories can be attributed to several social, economic, and demographic factors, among which the most prominent being the declining population in the country, people shifting from the cities to the rural areas during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, and permanent and seasonal labour migration processes. Nonetheless, both statistical sets of data showcase that the number of people living in poverty and social exclusion is considerably higher in rural areas compared to the cities.

In Bulgaria, **the risk of poverty and severe material deprivation is especially acute in several vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, the Roma, people with disabilities, and people without housing**. The proportion of **children** at risk of poverty or social exclusion is 32.2% in 2022 as per the data published

³³⁹ Eurostat (2023a). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230614-1>

³⁴⁰ FRA (2021) *Roma Survey*

³⁴¹ FRA (2021) *Roma Survey*

³⁴² Eurostat (2023b). *Income and living conditions*: Database. Available at [Database - Income and living conditions - Eurostat](#)

³⁴³ Eurostat (2024a). *Inability to face unexpected financial expenses – EU-SILC survey*. Available at: [Statistics | Eurostat](#)

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³⁴⁵ National Statistical Institute (2023). *Structure of the population by place of residence, sex ratio and age coefficients of age dependence* (“Структура на населението по местоживее, пополово съотношение и възрастови коефициенти на възрастова зависимост”). Available at: [Структура на населението по местоживее, пополово съотношение и възрастови коефициенти на възрастова зависимост | Национален статистически институт](#)

³⁴⁶ Eurostat (2023a). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022*. [People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2022](#)

by Eurostat for people aged less than 18 years.³⁴⁷ The income poverty rate was 26.1% (statistics for 2019-2020), according to latest data from UNICEF published in December 2023³⁴⁸ The income poverty rate remains significantly higher than that of other EU countries but has decreased considerably since 2014: by 8.3% according to UNICEF. The AROPE has decreased by 11.1% according to Eurostat data - from 43.3% in 2015 to 32.2% in 2022.

In 2015, the proportion of children in Bulgaria living in severe material and social deprivation was 36.8%, but this rate declined significantly to 18.7% in 2022. However, this rate is still substantially higher than the EU average of around 8.4% (in 2021).

The UNICEF report links the decrease of children living in poverty to economic growth at a national level and the overall improvement of macroeconomic indicators. Still, the organisation recommends introducing more social protection actions explicitly aimed at children and their families and guaranteeing access to educational services, especially for children from minorities.

Older people form another vulnerable group at significant risk of poverty or social exclusion. According to data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI), 24% of the population in Bulgaria is aged 65 years or more.³⁴⁹ In 2022, 45.5% of older adults were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. No significant changes have taken place since 2014 with this rate remaining high throughout the whole evaluation reference period.

In Bulgaria, the percentage of the **Roma** population is among the highest in the European Union, and they continue to face numerous challenges.³⁵⁰ The concentration of this vulnerable ethnic group in distinct neighbourhoods leads to social exclusion, educational and spatial segregation, and substandard housing and sanitation conditions.³⁵¹ 71.1% of the Roma population is at risk of poverty, and 24.1% of the Roma live in households where at least one of the family members has gone to bed hungry at least once a month due to lack of money for food. **Roma children** are particularly affected by poverty, with 77.2 % of them living at risk of poverty and material deprivation.

Another large group at risk of poverty are **homeless people**. In recent years, the number of homeless adults in the country has been increasing, and one of the leading causes of homelessness is undoubtedly poverty.³⁵² The available data from the National Network for the Children and National Statistical Institute is based solely on those who have passed through temporary accommodation centres and shelters, but this far underreports the actual number of homeless people. In 2011, there were 1 370 registrations for homeless people in Bulgaria; in 2022, the number of registered people was 4 664. An individual approach was applied to each specific case, as a result of which 3 840 persons were offered the use of social services, health services, food, accommodation in social/municipal housing, financial support, referral to the Labour Office, etc.³⁵³

Across EU Member States, Bulgaria has the highest share of **people with disabilities and severe limitations** at risk of poverty and social exclusion.³⁵⁴ Almost half of those with severe limitations (43.3%) and a slightly

³⁴⁷ Eurostat (2024c). *Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps01n_custom_10333508/default/table?lang=en

³⁴⁸ UNICEF (2023). *More than 1 in 5 children live in poverty in 40 of the world's richest countries*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/en/press-releases/more-1-5-children-live-poverty-40-worlds-richest-countries>

³⁴⁹ National Statistical Institute (2023). *Structure of the population by place of residence, sex ratio and age coefficients of age dependence* ("Структура на населението по местоживее, полове съотношение и възрасто коефициенти на възрастова зависимост"). Available at: <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/2991/структура-на-населението-по-местоживее-полово-съотношение-и-възрастови-коефициенти-на-възрастова-зависимост>

³⁵⁰ European Parliament (2023). *Romani people in the EU*. Available at: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/package/romani-people-in-eu_20901

³⁵¹ Tomova, Ilona, Stoytchev, Lubomir (2022). *Thematic report on Roma. Program: Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups 2014-2020*. Available at: https://www.noveleea.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Tematischen-doklad-za-romite_BG.pdf

³⁵² National Network for the Children (2015). *Homeless In More* („Бездомни в повече“). Available at: <https://nmd.bg/bezdomni-v-povetche/>

³⁵³ Petrova, Reni (2023). *4,600 people were registered as homeless in 2022, 3,800 were offered help from ASP. Offnews*. Available at: <https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/4600-dushi-sa-registrirani-kato-bezdomni-prez-2022-g-na-3800-e-predl-793829.html>

³⁵⁴ Eurostat (2022). *Disability: higher risk of poverty or social exclusion*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20221214-2>

lower proportion of those with less severe limitations (39.6%) are at risk of poverty.³⁵⁵ The main factor determining the risk of poverty among people with disabilities is age. Another important factor is gender, as more women with disabilities (45.5%) are at risk of poverty than men (33.2%). Single-person households with people with disabilities are three times (75.1%) more likely to be affected by poverty than households with two to four people.³⁵⁶

Table A. 44 – Socio-economic context in Bulgaria

Bulgaria	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
1. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) Total		43,3	41,0	38,0	33,0	33,2	33,5	31,7	32,2	
2. AROPE Children		47,5	47,9	42,4	33,2	35,6	36,2	32,8	33,9	
3. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)		36,8	33,5	30,0	22,3	22,1	22,1	19,1	18,7	
4. Severe material deprivation rate (SMD)		33,1	5,8	31,9	30,0	20,9	20,9	19,4	0,0	
5. Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day		39,5	36,8	34,6	31,7	31,4	27,6	25,9	21,6	
6. Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROPE		20,2	22,5	17,9	19,9	25,4	23,7	20,4	29,8	
7. Housing cost overburden		12,9	14,8	20,7	18,9	17,9	16,0	14,4	11,6	
8. Self-reported unmet need for medical care % of population 16+		5,6	4,7	2,8	2,1	1,9	1,4	1,4	1,0	
9. Households with very low work intensity			11,5	11,5	11,1	9,0	9,2	8,4	8,4	
11. Population in the EU could not afford unexpected financial expenses		49,6	53,4	54,2	53,2	32,1	36,5	43,5	36,4	
13. Share of total population having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling		12,5	11,6	11,2	10,4	9,4	7,9	7,4		
14. No indoor flushing		12,5	11,6	11,2	10,4	9,4	7,9	7,4		
17. Persons who cannot afford a telephone		3,8	3,1	2,8	2,7	2,5	2,2	2,1		
18. Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out clothes		42,4	39,6	35,4	32,9	32,3	28,8	28,3	27,1	
20. Persons who cannot afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month		29,8	24,9	23,0	19,6	20,7	18,1	17,3	14,9	
21. Persons who cannot afford internet connection for personal use at home		19,3	15,7	14,5	12,6	10,7	10,6	10,1	8,6	
22. In-work risk of poverty		8,1	6,7	10,2	8,3	8,6	7,8	8,4	8,9	
23. Long-term unemployment		7,4	6,1	5,0	3,9	3,6	2,9	2,7	2,6	
25. Employment rate		60,2	62,1	62,6	66,0	66,8	69,2	67,6	68,1	
26. Children (aged less than 18) living in households with very low work intensity			14,1	14,9	13,8	10,6	11,3	10,7	10,6	
27. At-risk-of-poverty rate for children			25,4	31,9	29,2	26,6	27,5	28,3	24,2	
28. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children			41,7	40,2	35,8	20,5	22,8	24,8	20,0	

Source: Eurostat

2. Reconstructing the intervention logic

The intervention logic of FEAD in Bulgaria is visually presented in Figure A. 66 to provide an overall understanding of the way the FEAD's objectives were translated in the Bulgarian national context and how they address the needs outlined above. The logic also presents the intended outputs, results, and impact of the programme in Bulgaria. FEAD's main objective for all EU countries in 2014-2020 was to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million. The overall objective of FEAD was to stimulate social cohesion in the EU by contributing to eliminating the most severe forms of poverty in the Union. The Fund alleviated those forms of extreme poverty that contribute most to social exclusion, such as food insecurity, homelessness and child poverty.

From this general objective, the **specific objective** was derived, with the support of the Fund, to support national programmes that provide non-financial assistance to the most vulnerable persons. For the socio-economic context of Bulgaria, this overall objective remained identical on a national level, expanded by the following four specific objectives:

- Reducing the number of children aged 0-18 living in poverty;
- Reducing the number of people aged 65 and above living in poverty;
- Reducing the number of unemployed aged 18-64 living in poverty;
- Reducing the number of employed aged 18-64 living in poverty.

The FEAD Regulation (EC) № 223/2014 allowed each Member State to choose whether to provide food and/or basic material assistance under Operational Programme (OP I) I or social inclusion activities under Operational Programme II. Bulgaria chose to implement OP I. The concrete operations defined by the Managing Authority in Bulgaria and approved by the Commission included the distribution of individual packages with food products, provision of warm meals through municipality canteens, offering of

³⁵⁵ Eurostat (2023c). *Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion&oldid=584082

³⁵⁶ Tomova, Ilona, Stoytchev, Lubomir (2022). *Thematic report on Roma*.

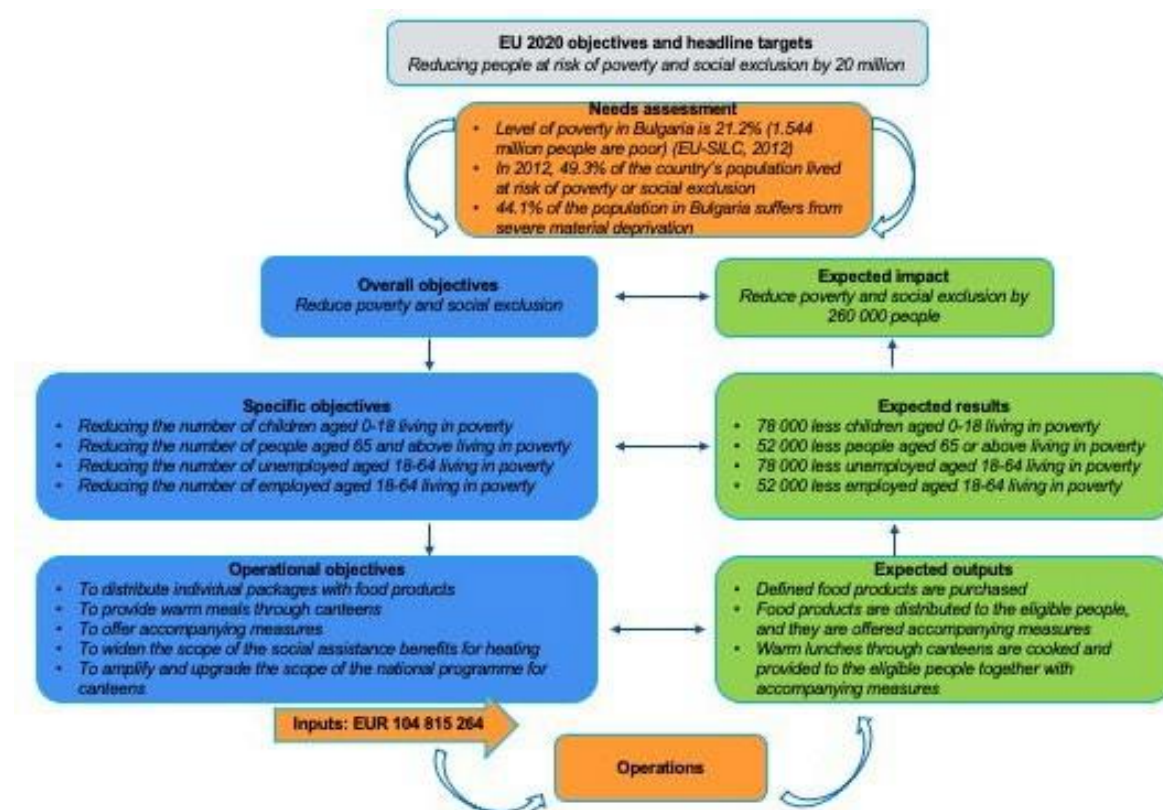
accompanying measures and amplifying and extending the scope of the national programme for creating and maintaining municipality canteens.

The Managing Authority expected various outputs, the most significant being purchasing the defined food products, distributing these food products to the eligible people, and cooking and providing warm lunches through the canteens to the eligible people. Providing accompanying measures is another cluster of expected outputs that depend on the recipient's circumstances and needs. Logically, the expected results correspond to the set specific objectives and are defined in a quantifiable manner as pictured in the diagram, with the groups of people living in poverty targeted: children, people aged 65 and above, unemployed and employed.

The expected impact for the past period was to reduce the number of people in poverty and social exclusion by 260 000.

The intervention logic of FEAD in Bulgaria reflected the observed needs and trends in the country in 2014: children represented about a quarter of all the target recipients of the food package support. People aged 65 or over were the other significant group targeted by the actions for distributing food packages and warm lunches. In contrast, the main target groups for selected accompanying measures were unemployed persons and employed people living in poverty.

Figure A. 66 – Intervention logic of FEAD in Bulgaria as per 2014



Source: Adapted from Operational Programme for Food 2014-2020 in Bulgaria as prepared in 2014.

2.1. National policy framework

The Operational Programme for Food and Basic Material Assistance in Bulgaria, funded by FEAD for 2014-2020, was approved by the European Commission on the 5th of May 2014.³⁵⁷ The programme was developed per FEAD requirements. It is a strategic document that served as a framework for using financial resources, co-financed by the Fund and the national budget, within the programme period 2014-2020 and covered the entire country's territory.

³⁵⁷ Agency for Social Assistance (2014). Operational Programme Under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014 – 2020. Available at <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

FEAD in Bulgaria **widened the effective scope of the social assistance benefits and social services for vulnerable groups granted under the national legislation** by aiming to reach significantly more people than before 2014, to prolong the operability of the canteens all year round instead of only during the winter months and to create new canteens in many municipalities. Social benefits are resources which supplement or substitute one's income up to an amount sufficient to meet the basic necessities of life or to meet incidental needs of the beneficiary persons and families. Community-based social services provided in specialised institutions were aimed at supporting individuals in their daily activities and improving their social inclusion.

For example, in the Municipality of Plovdiv, since the launch of FEAD in 2014, the number of canteens expanded to 11, thus covering 6 regions in and around Plovdiv.³⁵⁸ That allowed the municipality's administration to increase the number of people they could cater for and extend the partnering network on a local level. Furthermore, all of the interviewed partnering organisations pointed out that FEAD benefits the most vulnerable people and the local municipalities that are always short on budget.³⁵⁹

2.2. Objectives and target groups

The programme contributes to achieving the **national goal of reducing the number of people living in poverty by 260,000 persons by 2020**, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. In fulfilment of this objective, the programme targets persons living in the highest degree of poverty and social isolation. **Four specific sub-goals** were formed under the national goal:

- reduction of the number of children aged 0-18 months living in poverty by 78 000;
- reduction of the number of persons aged 65 and over living in poverty by 52 000;
- reduction of the number of unemployed people aged 18-64, living in poverty, by 78 000;
- reduction of the number of employed persons aged 18-64 living in poverty by 52 000.

The **mechanism for identifying the most vulnerable people** is based on national legislation's criteria for access to social assistance included in the Law on Social Assistance and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Social Assistance. Most social benefits in Bulgaria are governed by the rules for implementing this law, with the exception of targeted heating allowance, which are governed by an ordinance of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Personal Assistance for persons with disabilities, or child benefits.³⁶⁰ As a result, the primary target group is very broadly defined and encompasses various sub-groups of individuals and families that are eligible for social assistance. Assistance under the programme is provided to the following persons:

- Individuals and families who have received assistance under Regulation No. RD-07-5 of 2008 governing the conditions and procedure for granting targeted heating allowances;
- Uninsured persons living alone with their children, assisted under the Family Allowances for Children Act; and persons living alone, receiving minimum pensions (for retirement, disability, social, and inheritance), wandering and homeless children and persons;
- Based on the established individual level of material deprivation, individuals and families impacted by disasters and accidents due to force majeure circumstances are eligible for lump-sum assistance under the Social Assistance Act.

The secondary target group is made of the following persons: individuals and families who, due to lack of income or low income, are unable to meet their basic life needs, including and persons and families with low incomes who have been denied social assistance, as well as persons and families who have received one-time assistance pursuant to Art. 16 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Social Assistance to satisfy incidental needs; persons and/or groups of persons with low incomes, using social services according to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Social Assistance; and persons from vulnerable groups - citizens of third countries (as per the additional provisions of the Act on Asylum and Refugees).³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Interview with a representative of implementing organisation, in Bulgaria, Sofia, conducted in August, 2023.

³⁵⁹ Interviews with representatives of implementing organisations, in Bulgaria, Sofia, conducted in August and September, 2023.

³⁶⁰ Law on Social Assistance (2023). Available at: <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134405633>

³⁶¹ Regulation No. Rd-07-1 of April 4, 2016 on the Procedure and conditions for determining the target groups under the Operational Programme for Food and/or Basic Material Assistance, co-financed by the Fund For European Aid to the Most Deprived [Lex.bg](https://lex.bg) - [Закони, правилници, конституция, кодекси, държавен вестник, правилници по прилагане](https://lex.bg)

Effectively, covered by the programme are single people, people with permanently reduced working capacity, people over 65 years old, children (including orphans), single parents of children up to 18 years old, children with permanent disabilities, single parents caring for a child up to 3 years old, children placed in a family of relatives or a foster family under Article 26 of the Child Protection Act.

Moreover, FEAD was adequately adapted to assist Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression and those affected by COVID-19 and the energy crisis.³⁶² During the COVID-19 outbreak, additional FEAD funding was made available and used to extend warm lunch service to **a broader group of people in need**, including people from at-risk populations of infection:

- people in difficulty due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country;
- people who, due to their age or disability, are at higher risk of infection;
- people placed in quarantine without income or with low income below the poverty line who have no relatives to support them;
- people subject to social assistance, for whom the need for additional support has been identified and in the conditions of an emergency epidemic, cannot meet their basic living needs.

Following the expansion of the scope of the programme, the following groups were covered: families that are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, seniors over 65 who live alone, people with low income or income below the poverty line who are required to remain in quarantine, people who are ill or have had contact with COVID-19, and elderly users of the ESF's operation "Patronage care for the elderly and persons with disabilities".

The scope of targeted support provided under FEAD was expanded in 2014-2020 to include financial assistance for heating in the winter months. Usually, this is a type of financial mechanism funded within the national budget, but it was assessed that more people need such support, and it was therefore included in the scope of FEAD. Financial support for heating was granted after an assessment of income, financial status, property rights, health, age and marital status for each case. The majority of the recipients of this financial assistance were persons living alone, persons with permanently reduced working capacity; persons over 65 years; families with children, incl. orphans; single parents of children under 18; families with children with permanent disabilities; a parent caring for a child up to the age of 3; and children placed in a family of relatives and friends or a foster family.

With the start of **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, the programme's scope was further expanded to include those most negatively impacted by it, such as migrants, including minors, who are Ukrainian nationals protected by temporary protection.³⁶³

2.3. Implemented operations and accompanying measures

The analysis of the country's poverty level and the groups at risk of poverty led the Bulgarian Managing Authority to decide that FEAD funds in Bulgaria should be used for food assistance as the primary material deprivation. The following types of activities were implemented under the programme:

- Purchase of food products.

³⁶² Agency for Social Assistance (2021). *Annual Report for 2020 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2020 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

³⁶³ Agency for Social Assistance (2022). *Annual Report for 2021 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2021 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

- Provision of individual food packages; accompanying measures include budgeting advice, referral to other social services (some of them delivered with ESF funding), assistance with educational and healthcare services, and additional material assistance based on the specific needs of individual cases. In addition, for people with mobility issues, the partnering organisations delivered food to their homes.
- Provision of hot lunches. In parallel with the provision of hot lunch, the primary commitment of the partner organisations was to support the end recipients by providing additional support for finding opportunities for future integration through concrete activities to overcome social exclusion and reduce poverty.
- With the amendment of the Guide for Partner Organisations under Operation 3.1, activities aimed at environmental protection and the green and digital transition were included as part of the types of accompanying measures provided under the operation. These measures aimed to raise people's awareness that their actions can change the course of events and limit climate change through more efficient use of resources and conservation of nature in the context of unprecedented changes in the global climate and their detrimental impact on wildlife and people's quality of life.
- Technical assistance: support of the Managing Authority for the successful execution of the programme through support, planning, performance monitoring, control and assessment of the programme and its promotion, including the contribution of the funds and increasing the administrative capacity of the managing authority and the beneficiaries.³⁶⁴

After the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, additional resources were secured to help those most affected through the implementation of the following additional activities and operations:

- **Warm Lunch at Home in Emergency 2020:** New activities include identifying those in greatest need and delivering a warm lunch to their homes. The MA adapted the delivery of warm lunches and individual food packages to end recipients' homes, developing guidelines for partner organisations regarding the implementation of the activities under the two operations. This enabled FEAD' to reach all those in need during COVID-19 measures. The adapted operation also included new accompanying measures - for example, COVID-19 information materials, personal hygiene materials, and the provision of necessary clothing. Furthermore, under this operation, healthcare workers organised in mobile groups monitored the health status of some of the social services' end recipients.
- **Distribution of food to individuals and families that were most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.** The operation was modified to ensure delivery of individual food packages to the beneficiaries' homes during the pandemic, as well as to include several accompanying measures. More concretely, in addition to the usual accompanying measures an emphasis was placed on additional forms of support related to the prevention of socially significant diseases, including limiting the spread of COVID-19. COVID-19 infection prevention leaflets were developed and distributed, including "Protecting yourself and others from COVID-19," "Protecting your health when travelling during the COVID-19 epidemic," and "How to deal with stress during the COVID-19 epidemic." Blood pressure monitors and electronic scales were used to check the weight during the provision of the accompanying measures to determine the presence of risk factors endangering individual health. Interactive information methods were used to reach a more significant part of the target groups. An animated film titled "Clean and Healthy" was shown at food parcel distribution points, introducing everyone to the importance of personal and household hygiene, disease prevention measures, the use of personal protective equipment, and so on. Individual and telephone consultations on the subject were also conducted.
- **Purchase of personal protective equipment and disinfectants (new activity).**
- **Provision of vouchers for food and essential goods for displaced persons from Ukraine (new operation)** - food, clothing (including for children), school supplies, hygiene materials, and other necessities were purchasable with the voucher. The voucher was of one-time use per person from the target group, including children, with some exceptions based on individual circumstances. In justified cases, individuals might also have received an additional voucher provided of the following conditions applied: there were unallocated vouchers, and individuals were unable to meet their basic life needs and their integration was difficult and/or impossible. Vouchers were valid for two months from the date of issuance. Accompanying measures included coaching and workshops, mainly to improve integration in education or the labour market.

³⁶⁴ Agency for Social Assistance (2023a). *List of the operations* ("Списък на операциите"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/spisak-na-operatsiite/>

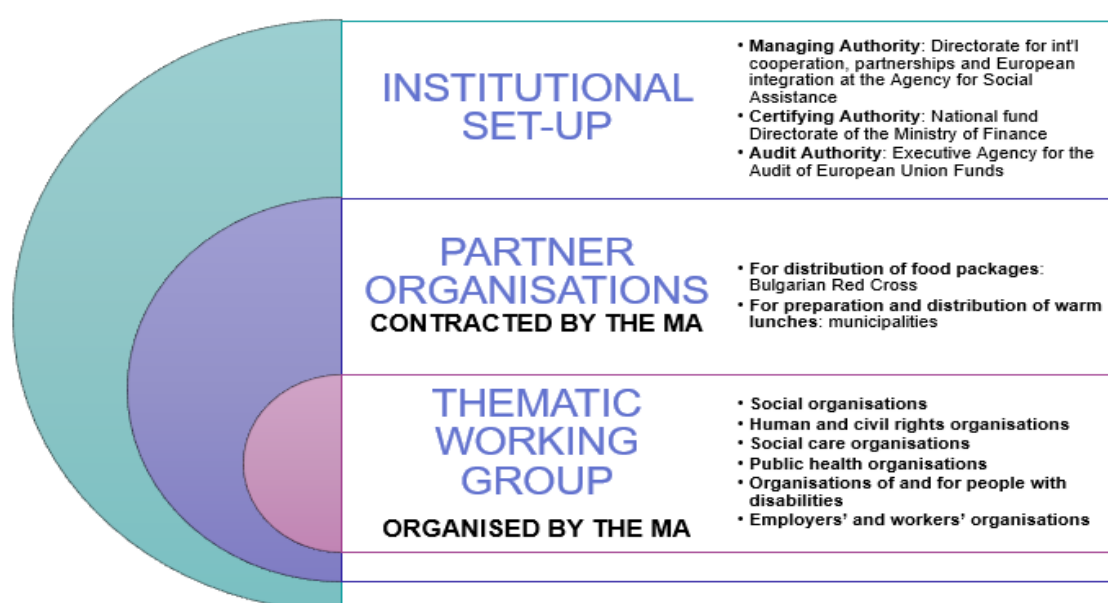
2.4. FEAD governance and delivery system

FEAD's governance and delivery system in Bulgaria consisted of the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority.³⁶⁵

The functions of **the Managing Authority** of the Operational Programme co-funded by the FEAD were performed by the Directorate for international cooperation, partnerships and European integration of the Agency for Social Assistance at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

National Fund Directorate of the Ministry of Finance performed the role of **the Certifying Authority**. The Executive Agency for the Audit of European Union Funds presented **the Audit Authority**, and it was responsible for carrying out audits on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the operational programme, as well as for carrying out audits on an appropriate sample of operations based on declared expenditure. The body to which the EC made payments was the National Fund Directorate, Ministry of Finance.

Figure A. 67 – Groupings of key stakeholders involved in FEAD delivery



As evident from Figure A. 67, the Managing Authority was supported by several partner organisations within the separate operations. **The partner organisations for distributing individual packages with food products** had to be a public legal body or a non-profit organisation actively pursuing its objectives for at least 2 years. They had to demonstrate experience in the distribution of basic material assistance in-kind and/or proven experience in food distribution to the population. Among the most critical requirements that the partner organisations had to meet was to demonstrate appropriate capacity (technical, administrative and financial) organisational work processes, storage facilities secured, capacity for management of public funds, as well as the ability to ensure full territorial coverage of the Republic of Bulgaria, individually or in association with other partner organisations. The **Bulgarian Red Cross** was the most experienced organisation in Bulgaria that covered all essential requirements and was selected to distribute the individual food packages.

Distribution of warm lunches was undertaken by **municipalities on the territory of Bulgaria** that have appropriate facilities and equipment for food preparation (or alternatively, municipalities with contracts with third-party companies for preparation and/or delivery of ready-made food upon prior request for the needs of social service) and the distribution of food as well as the appropriate capacity—technical, administrative and financial capacity, organisational work processes, storage facilities secured. The partners under this operation were also required to demonstrate the proper capacity to distribute warm meals to the end users' homes or to wandering and homeless people on the territory of all settlements within the municipality.

³⁶⁵ Agency for Social Assistance (2014). *Operational Programme Under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014 – 2020*.

Apart from the partner organisations and the participants in the institutional set-up, various stakeholders (regional, local and other public competent bodies and non-governmental organisations) were involved in developing the operational programme. They were organised in a **thematic working group** responsible for drafting the new operational programme. In total, there were **35 stakeholder representatives** from the following sectors:

- Social organisations (organisations operating in the area of minority ethnic groups and immigrants' integration; organisations working in the area of gender equality and non-discrimination; organisations operating in the area of social inclusion; organisations operating in the area of youth) (Commission for Protection against Discrimination; Social Foundation "Indi-Roma 97");
- Organisations operating in the area of human and civil rights and freedoms (National Network for the Children; Association National Centre for Refugees);
- Organisations operating in the area of social care (Social Protection Fund, Bulgarian Food Bank);
- Organisations operating in the area of public health (Ministry of Health, Bulgarian Food Safety Agency);
- Regional structures, organisations of and for people with disabilities, representative employers' and workers' organisations (Agency for People with Disabilities; Foundation SOS Entrepreneurs; National Association of People with Acquired Disabilities; Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria).

3. Key findings on the implementation of FEAD

3.1. To what extent was FEAD support successful – or not – and why?

Overall achievement of FEAD objectives [*criterion: effectiveness*]

Overall, there is no doubt that the implementation of FEAD in Bulgaria for 2014-2020 achieved its goal to alleviate material deprivation, especially that was the case for at least 78 000 children and 52 000 people aged 65 or over. According to the last reporting period for FEAD 2014-2020 (2021), the **food packages operation reached 459 039 people from the primary target group**, including members of their families, and **22 600 people from the secondary target group**, including members of their families.

24.45% of all recipients were children up to 15 years old, and 31.26% were people aged 65 or above. 215 806 of the above-mentioned supported persons were provided with individual and/or group consultations under the accompanying measures, with the **total number of consultations amounting to 588 323**. The total number of persons who received a hot lunch in 2021 was 71 805, of whom 61.56% were people aged 65 or above. **The most significant aspect of the programme was its flexibility to meet the arising needs** as they come and the availability of the managing authority to lead and support the partner organisations throughout the changes, COVID-19 and the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine being the most substantial determinants for the modifications of FEAD.

All forms of poverty and social exclusion need alleviation, and at the same time, the personal circumstances of people are often incomparable. Hence, the MA of FEAD in Bulgaria faced the challenge of introducing selection criteria that were elaborate enough to differentiate the people experiencing the worst forms of poverty and social exclusion. Although the income criterion remained the main eligibility criterion when applicants for social services and benefits were considered, **the local units of the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA) were given the prerogative to consider applications based on unique personal circumstances** (for example, income of the person and/or their family, their property status; marital status; the state of health; work and study employment; the age; other ascertained circumstances). This approach contributed towards the improved ability of ASA to support people in various ways by providing them food and the most appropriate accompanying measures.

The primary operations funded by the programme would not allow ASA or their partners to improve the living conditions of the most deprived people directly. Nevertheless, **accompanying measures contributed to positive changes for the most deprived indirectly**. For example, people were given advice on how to apply for available social services and benefits such as targeted heating allowance in the winter or the national programme "Supported by an assistant". This specialised social service includes daily hourly support for up to 4 hours a day, every working day, in a home environment. Consumers are provided with social services to meet their daily needs for self-care, mobility, relocation, communication, household activities, organisation of everyday life and participation in public life.

The MA reported that in 2022 alone, people living in poverty or social exclusion received 279 996 individual social services and benefits. As a result of the allocated social services and benefits, 13 040 concrete results were reported that ultimately contributed towards supporting the most deprived persons to improve their living conditions and overall wellbeing. In 2021, ASA conducted a satisfaction survey among the recipients of social services and benefits, and it was reported that **93% of them were satisfied with the quantity of the food packages and 94% with the contents of the packages**. 98% of the recipients were satisfied with the organisation for distribution of the food packages. As per the accompanying measures, 89% of the recipients of such measures reported their positive outcomes and impact.

According to interviews with partner organisations, **the individual contact between representatives of their organisations (municipality employees, volunteers, NGO officials) and target groups was the key factor that significantly impacted people's wellbeing**. Most of the recipients of food packages were older people living alone with minimal to no regular human contact. Receiving a food package and the accompanying measures allowed them to interact with another person and break the pattern of social isolation. Although this is not captured in the annual reports of ASA, and FEAD monitoring data, interview data clearly shows that it is the work of the partner organisations on site that contributed to developing and fostering support structures for alleviating poverty and social exclusion in Bulgaria. Several of the partner organisations shared that local people rely on and trust their representatives because these are people they know, and with whom they have built reliable relationships over time. Moreover, local representatives are able to identify new people in need, to determine their actual needs and to then bring these to the attention of ASA to provide further support according to each person's unique circumstances.

Reach of target groups [criterion: effectiveness]

According to the Operational Programme under the Fund For European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014 - 2020 support is allocated to operations available to people who comply to the criteria for access to social assistance defined in national legislation (the selection is based on their income and accompanying/specific personal circumstances). The programme thus reached **broad groups of people living in poverty**: children, persons aged 65 and over, unemployed and employed persons. Within the grouping of unemployed people also fall single parents with no social insurance (especially of children up to 3 years old) and eligible for financial support as per the provisions of the Family Child Benefit Act. Other groups that are mentioned as having been reached by FEAD operations in the annual reports of ASA, but were not differentiated within the four sub-target groups are:

- parents who take care of a child with special needs and/or disabilities;
- persons with permanently reduced working capacity;
- children who live in foster care, with relatives or with friends;
- wandering and homeless children and adults;
- persons and families accidentally injured by accidents, natural disasters, or other force majeure circumstances; they would usually qualify for temporary support as per the essence of the accident and its impact on their household and income;
- persons who have received fixed financial aid for heating.

The interviewed partner organisations identified **the most prominent group as per the above-listed sub-goals to be people older than 65 years**. It should be noted that after the last legislative changes (Ordinance № ПД-07-1 from 4.04.2016) to the eligibility criteria, access to social services and benefits not only affects a particular individual but their entire family. This means that a family of 2+ people would receive a bigger food package than a recipient living alone with no immediate relatives in the household.

FEAD operations in Bulgaria were launched in the first half of 2015.

Table A. 45 below presents all FEAD operations in the country and the numbers of persons reached, as well as the shares by target group. In 2015 and 2022, Operation 2 activities were not delivered.³⁶⁶ The Annual Report for 2018 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria does not include any statistical information about the recipient groups' split for Operation 2 as in the previous annual reports, which is why information for this year is missing in the table below.³⁶⁷ Neither the annual report nor the interaction with the managing authority during the evaluation process has revealed why the statistical data sequence breaks.

Generally, the **number of female recipients of the support funded by FEAD is slightly higher than that of male recipients**. Likely reasons for this are that women in Bulgaria continue to be the primary caregivers in the family, which usually makes them eligible for social support services and benefits. Women also have a longer lifespan than men. The proportion of older people among the recipients of the support measures is also understandable considering the ageing population of Bulgaria and their low income (pensions, disability pensions/compensation, etc.).

³⁶⁶ Agency for Social Assistance (2016). *Annual Report for 2015 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2015 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

³⁶⁷ Agency for Social Assistance (2019). *Annual Report for 2018 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2018 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

Table A. 45 – Statistics of target groups reached via FEAD operations in Bulgaria

Year (Operation)	Total No. of persons who received the service*	Women (%)	People aged 65+ (%)	Children up to 15 y/o (%)	Migrants, persons with different nationality, minorities (incl. Roma) (%)	Roma persons only (%)	Persons with disabilities (%)	Wandering and homeless persons (No.)
2015 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	6,536.00	55%	33%	8.6%	35%	15%	24%	No info
2016 (Operation 2 – Food packages)	267,314.00	66.22%	38.07%	1.71%	18.57%	No info	7.6%	No info
2016 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	8,291.00	54%	33%	8.5%	36%	14%	23%	114
2017 (Operation 2 – Food packages)	316,747.00*	68.10%	32.31%	1.97%	14.72%	No info	12.18%	850
2017 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	42,300.00*	58%*	48%*	4%**	34.3%*	No info	23%**	259**
2019 (Operation 2 – Food packages)	452,046.00*	57.34%	23.69%	28.25%	7.35%	No info	27.41%	0.001%
2019 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	65,036.00*	60.6%*	58.8%**	2.3%**	21.5%*	10.5%**	21.1%**	49**

Year (Operation)	Total No. of persons who received the service*	Women (%)	People aged 65+ (%)	Children up to 15 y/o (%)	Migrants, persons with different nationality, minorities (incl. Roma) (%)	Roma persons only (%)	Persons with disabilities (%)	Wandering and homeless persons (No.)
2020 (Operation 2 – Food packages)	488,712.00*	58.06 %	33.27 %	22.42 %	6.04%	No info	31.11 %	0.004%
2020 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	39,973.00	59.4% **	60.1% **	2.8% **	12.1%* *	9.7% **	22.5% **	18**
2021 (Operation 2 – Food packages)	481,639.00*	59%	31.26 %	25.45 %	5.8%	No info	29.99 %	0.01%
2021 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	71,805.00	59.23 %	61.56 %	2.18 %	12.37%	9.51 %	22.83 %	0.12%
2022 (Operation 3 – Warm lunch)	68,107.00	56.26 %**	55.33 %**	3.79 %**	12.16% **	7.46 %**	18.90 %**	0.19%* *

Source: Agency for Social Assistance, Republic of Bulgaria.

*Please note that the quoted statistics refer to the total number of persons who received the service, including all previous and new service recipients.

**Please note that the statistics at times refer only to the newly included recipients of the service and do not consider the percentage distribution among all recipients.

The overall text of the programme does not include any particular guidelines for the providers of social services on reaching the most vulnerable groups that fall within the programme's scope. As long as the applicants for social support services and benefits meet the eligibility criteria per the national legislative framework, they are catered for – either by receiving food products and/or getting access to the warm lunch service. However, the additional flexibility that local branches of the ASA got in 2016 through the legal changes of the Social Assistance Act in determining the eligibility of the applicants for social services as per their unique circumstances allowed them to reach out more effectively than before to the most vulnerable people and overall, it made the FEAD programme more inclusive. No findings from the interview data suggest

such occurrences or trends, which de facto can be viewed as information supporting the observation that FEAD in Bulgaria does reach the most vulnerable groups.

Adjustments to FEAD to address new challenges [*criterion: effectiveness*]

Considering the state of emergency in Bulgaria that started in March 2020 and the subsequent implementation of measures to reduce the risk of infection and spread of COVID-19, **ASA changed the way warm lunches and individual packages of food products were provided to the end recipients to allow transportation to their homes instead of using canteens and going to collection points.**³⁶⁸ This helped FEAD support to reach all those in need while following the anti-epidemic measures put in place.

The financial allocation under the FEAD OP 2014-2020 was modified under the REACT-EU mechanism³⁶⁹. **An additional resource of EUR 19 940 383 / BGN 39 000 000 was allocated to FEAD, which aimed at providing the service of warm lunch to more people as an identified significant measure for the citizens most affected and vulnerable by the pandemic.** In the period April and June 2020, 73 036 persons, including family members, were distributed 1 404 921 tons of basic food products as part of the measures taken to support socially weak persons and families.

The undistributed food packages with a total weight of 137.93 tons were provided in the period from January to February 2021 to 9 089 individuals and family members from **the additional target groups**:

- high-risk groups of infection with COVID-19 were included as a priority, including dependent persons over 65 years of age, persons with various diseases, migrants and users of social services and specialised institutions;
- families with children, with no or low income (income of a family member below the poverty line, current at the time of distribution - BGN 369), who were unable to meet their basic life needs and had been refused targeted support with heating aid during the 2021/2022 heating season;
- families in a difficult financial situation, for which the Administrative Board has been notified by the "Trust for a Social Alternative" Foundation - mainly from the Roma community;
- persons with low income, using social services by the Law on Social Services;
- persons from vulnerable groups - citizens of third countries within the meaning of § 1, item 17 of add. provisions of the Law on Asylum and Refugees (the group includes refugees from the Middle East);
- persons and families who accidentally suffered from the heavy rains that caused flooding in the Smolyan and Blagoevgrad regions during the distribution of packages.

In addition to the accompanying measures usually provided, **in 2020, an emphasis was placed on preventing socially significant diseases, including limiting the spread of COVID-19.** Leaflets on the prevention of infection with COVID-19 were developed and distributed. During the provision of the accompanying measures, blood pressure measuring devices and electronic scales were used to check the weight of the users to establish the presence of risk factors threatening the health status of the persons. To reach a wider part of the target groups, interactive information methods were used.

The provision of warm lunches in 2021 was made through the acceptance of funding applications announced on 30.11.2020 under the procedure for the direct provision of non-grant financial assistance **"3.1 - Warm lunch in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic"**. The operation was carried out by the rules for operations of type 3 according to PMS No. 37 of 23.02.2015 for determining the terms and conditions for implementing FEAD for 2014 - 2020. Eligible target groups were people without income or with income below the poverty line, who were unable to provide for their basic life needs, did not have relatives to support them, and the risk of infection or the adverse course of the infection from COVID-19 was higher for them. The target of 3.1 was set at 50 000. **By the end of the last reporting period, municipalities and districts of municipalities provided warm lunches to 68 107 persons from the target groups thus exceeding the target.**

³⁶⁸ Agency for Social Assistance (2022). *Annual Report for 2021 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2021 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

³⁶⁹ By Decision of the Council of Ministers /RMS/ No. 573/14.08.2020, amended by No. 847 of 23.11.2020 and RMS No. 892 of 04.12.2020,

An additional EUR 18.6 million was allocated for the programme under the REACT-EU mechanism for 2022, which ensured the extension of the measures to provide the warm lunch service until 30.06.2022 and for the new support measure to Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression, with the status of temporary protection granted, who entered the country after 24.02.2022³⁷⁰.

Table A. 46 – REACT-EU funds allocated to Bulgaria

	EU funding for FEAD (EUR)	REACT-EU funds allocated (EUR)	Total funding (EUR)	Share of REACT-EU compared to 2014-2020 EU funding
Bulgaria (*)	104,815,264	38,564,594	143,379,858	37%
EU28	3,811,370,399	686,059,308	4,497,429,707	18%

Source: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2014-2020-Finances/ESIF-2014-2020-EU-payments-daily-update-/gayr-92qh/data>

On September 29, 2022, Order No. ПД01-1872/September 29, 2022, was issued to provide non-reimbursed financial assistance with a beneficiary - the Social Assistance Agency, through its territorial divisions. **Target groups were persons, including children, granted temporary protection status.³⁷¹ Priority vouchers were provided for the needs of children and persons who are their parents, guardians, or persons where the children are accommodated with on a temporary basis under the Child Protection Act.**

The budget was BGN 4 400 000 (the equivalent of EUR 2 249 752), and the value of 1 voucher was BGN 100 (equalling to approx. EUR 51). Food products, clothes, shoes, children's food, children's clothes, school supplies, hygiene materials and other first-class products could be purchased against the provided voucher necessity of the store network in the country with an explicit ban on the purchase of medicinal products, tobacco products, wine, spirits, beer. The voucher was provided once per person from the target group, including children. In justified cases, individuals might have also received an additional voucher provided in the presence of the following cumulative conditions:

- There were unallocated vouchers.
- The individuals were unable to meet their basic life needs.
- Their integration was challenging and/or impossible.

In addition to the provision of vouchers, persons from the target groups also received accompanying support, such as individual counselling and/or provision of information on how to access social assistance and services, specific support for people with disabilities and children, legal assistance, assistance for inclusion in the labour market and other forms of social integration.

Horizontal principles of FEAD [*criterion: effectiveness*]

The MA's monitoring activities showed ³⁷²that the **horizontal principles were applied through all activities of FEAD in Bulgaria**. Additional checking was done to ensure thorough application of all horizontal principles as part of the verification procedures. Furthermore, ASA did not receive a single appeal or signal for cases of breaching the FEAD's horizontal principles, further confirming that horizontal principles were achieved from the point of view of all stakeholders. Moreover, the partnership within the programme grew to such an extent that the MA and partner organisations continue to work collaboratively regularly to seek feedback and improve their processes, so that they are in line with FEAD's horizontal principles.

³⁷⁰ Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 850 of 07.12.2021,

³⁷¹ In implementation of the Implementing Decision of the Council of the European Union /EU/ 2022/382 of March 4, 2022, to establish the existence of a mass influx of Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression in the sense of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC and for the introduction of temporary protection, who entered the country after 24.02.2022.

³⁷² Evident from the annual reports of ASA for the implementation of FEAD.

To ensure the quality and safety of food products, each partner organisation that provides the warm lunch service owns or uses appropriate equipment for preparing food and carrying out the feeding process under Art. 12 of the Food Law. Moreover, to avoid food waste, all partner organisations have developed internal control mechanisms and protocols for handling undistributed hot lunch to ensure that it reaches the most vulnerable people and does not go bad/unused.

Regarding the principle of **equal opportunities**, the mechanism for determining the target groups under the operational programme strictly follows the national legislation in Bulgaria, which guarantees compliance with gender equality and non-discrimination principles.

When determining the users under Operation 3. (Provision of warm meal), **avoiding discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities** to participate in the projects are strictly observed regardless of gender, age, physical disabilities, ethnicity or religious characteristics. During the preparation of the hot lunch, an opportunity was provided to structure a varied and nutritious menu corresponding to the ethnic characteristics of the regions of implementation of each contract and to consider the taste and religious restrictions that the consumers express. The planning and provision of accompanying measures were also based on the identified specific needs of each user. This prevented any cases of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The support provided to users was done in a sensitive and non-intrusive way, with respect and understanding of users' age, physical, mental, psychological and ethnic differences.

Success and failure factors [*criterion: effectiveness*]

Success factors

The MA considers one of the main supporting factors for the effectiveness of FEAD operations in Bulgaria to be **the investment of time and staff capacity to educate the municipalities** and share good practices to motivate partner organisations to benefit from FEAD's activities in Bulgaria on a local level. As a **result**, FEAD-funded activities took place in most municipalities in Bulgaria (over 200 out of 265 in total).

Several of the municipalities claimed that with the support of the MA, they **accumulated experience in delivering the services within the FEAD programme**, making their provision successful. It was assessed as positive that the programme was regularly implemented over the course of seven years, thus, allowing them to provide a continuous service to people in need of support without gaps in time.

Another key enabling factor was that the MA maintained **regular communication with the partner organisations** and remained open, approachable, and flexible in adverse and daily situations, addressing any issues that appeared throughout the programme's implementation in the period 2014-2020.

Another crucial facilitating factor was **the improvement of the legal framework** governing the programme's implementation. Decree No.37 of the Council of Ministers in 2015, followed by an ordinance, defined the target audiences eligible for the programme's services, including as many people as possible and allowing the selection to be based on the person's individual circumstances. This way, the Managing Authority succeeded in including those who were in greatest need and in a very vulnerable position. The partner organisations interviewed held the view that the MA's regional units - responsible for revising the applications for receiving food support and assessing each application based on the person's circumstances – are among the most efficient institutions in the country.

Hindering factors

It is clear that the greatest hindering factor for all stakeholders in FEAD-funded operations was the COVID-19 pandemic. For the MA, the pandemic and the subsequently introduced measures to restrict the spread of the virus in the first months of 2020 posed specific difficulties for managing the programme because they had to introduce non-physical procedures for an extensive circle of partners quickly. However, **this obstacle was overcome by re-signing the contracts**, and the overall effect of the Fund's activities in the observed programming period (2014-2020) remained positive. In May 2020, the sociological agency "Alpha Research" published the results of a study on social measures aimed at helping the most vulnerable people during the period of state of emergency due to the coronavirus spread. It showed that respectively 72% and 69% of the interviewed people identified the assistance with food packages and the provision of warm lunches as some of the most important measures to help those most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.³⁷³ This effect of the measures amplified significantly the importance of the programme and the role of the MA with their partners in delivering the programme's operations.

³⁷³ BNT News (2020). Alpha Research: *1/4 of all Bulgarians are at risk of losing their income* ("Алфа Рисърч": 1/4 от българите са в риск от загуба на доходи"). Available at: <https://bntnews.bg/news/alfa-risarch-1-4-ot-balgarite-sa-v-risk-ot-zaguba-na-dohodi-1052485news.html>

One of the stakeholders approached for an interview challenged the effectiveness of the programme to provide the target groups with a balanced diet in terms of the persons who received food packages (leaving aside the recipients of the warm lunch service).³⁷⁴ According to the stakeholder, among the **factors that hindered the programme's effectiveness** were the irregularity of the deliveries of food packages to eligible people, the delivery of the same type of food in large quantities (e.g., 10 kg of sugar in one go), the lack of variety of the food delivered to the people (predominantly carbohydrates with very little protein-rich food), the lack of differentiation if this was food aimed at feeding an older person or a family with many little children, the vast food waste and the fact that only one partner was responsible for delivering food packages in the country's entire territory, whereas in other EU countries the practice was to have multiple organisations delivering in different regions of the country. In Bulgaria, the split of the service of providing food packages among several organisations was seen as inapplicable due to the concerns that social tension among the targeted audiences may arise in case of delay of delivery in some regions.

Another important hindering factor were the COVID-19-related economic processes, which impacted the type and quantity of food products that went into the food packages. Since 2020, a significant increase in the price of sunflower oil, sugar, and other key products had been observed not only in Bulgaria and the EU but worldwide. This led to some reluctance among the deliverers to stock certain products, including oil and sugar, because the preferred price quoted in the tender by the MA was far too low. This negatively impacted the end recipients because they did not receive essential products for a long time while the MA was trying to negotiate the necessary food products at a reasonable price. Furthermore, delaying the public tendering and procurement procedures generated additional expenses for the partner organisations because had to pay rent for empty storage sites for longer periods of time.

Assessing **socio-economic impact** at the micro- and macro-economic levels is challenging because the intended results consist of supporting more people rather than calculating the changes in their income and the plausible economic effects. Distributing food packages and providing warm meals alone may not directly alleviate poverty or immediately improve financial circumstances. However, meaningful support through food assistance, combined with broader social interventions, plays a crucial role in enhancing the economic stability of vulnerable groups. The accompanying measures are likely to bring some socio-economic impacts, but there is no available statistical information to demonstrate such a trend. Nevertheless, the statistics included in Table A. 44 indicate some positive trends for decreasing the number of people in Bulgaria who live in extreme poverty. Still, the programme itself does not operate with socio-economic indicators that indicate micro- and macro-economic level changes in Bulgaria as a result of the effectiveness of the programme.

The number of people who were eligible and benefitted from the social service of provision of warm lunches has increased, especially after the new group of Ukrainian migrants was included in the programme's target groups. From 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2022, 223 municipalities participated in FEAD's funded operation for warm lunches and catered for 62 483 people. Moreover, in the same period, the accompanying measures to provide warm lunches were focused on environmental protection, green transition, and digital transformation.

Overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations [*criterion: efficiency*]

It is essential to note that FEAD effectively contributed to achieving the national goal of reducing the number of people living in poverty by 260 000 people, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Respectively, in the programming period, FEAD was also aimed at persons living in the highest degree of poverty and social isolation. The successful partnership with the municipalities created the conditions for an increasing number of people to receive a warm lunch, including a soup, a main course and a bread.

Identifying trends in the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations and categorising one type of activity as more cost-effective than another is challenging in the case of Bulgaria due to the unavailability of appropriate indicators collected and publicly shared by the MA. In general, **it has not been recognised as a priority by the Managing Authority to observe the direct and indirect benefits on recipients of social services or to compare the cost-effectiveness of the different operations** delivered in Bulgaria. The standing point of the MA is that the cost per unit of the various measures of social assistance is fixed, and that unit goes to a single individual, which makes subsequent calculations irrelevant.

Support under FEAD complemented and built on national measures to expand the effective reach of the national social assistance programmes by reducing food costs for the end recipients and redirecting the savings to other vital purposes. A large part of the individuals and families from the primary target group for

³⁷⁴ Interview with a representative of food non-governmental organisation, in Bulgaria, Sofia, conducted in August 2023.

support with warm lunches also received monthly support aimed to satisfy their basic life needs, when this was impossible through their work and the property they own. In 2022, for example, 19 620 cases of individuals and families received the above mentioned financial monthly support. The value of the assistance for a person over 65 years, who lives alone and has no income, was EUR 53.85 / BGN 105.

Furthermore, during the implementation of the activities under Operation "3.1 - Warm lunches in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic", usually one person is fed 5 days a week /working days/ or on average for a month - 21 days. The spending per person per day was EUR 1.38 /2.70 BGN or in total for a month of EUR 28.98 / BGN 56.70. From 01.03.2022 the daily spending for a warm lunch for one person increased to EUR 1.48 / BGN 2.90, which equals EUR 31.08 / BGN 60.90 per month. In 2022, 68 107 people in need were supported with the warm lunch service. **Taking into account the type of support - the daily provision of warm lunch, it significantly eased both the everyday life of the users and the funds that would have been allocated for the service's provision. Furthermore, in the context of the soaring upward inflation in 2020-2022, a person would have struggled to afford a warm lunch for BGN 2.9 and definitely would have been far from having a balanced diet.**

On several occasions, the partner organisations of FEAD commented on cost-effectiveness regarding their financial situation. They made reference to the very low cost per unit and the unforeseen increase of the inflation rate in the period 2021-2023, meaning that often the financial resources made available to the municipalities from the FEAD budget to deliver social assistance measures were insufficient. The municipalities shared that they had to allocate funding from the municipality's budget to provide warm lunches or transport the food to the recipients' houses because the allocated budget was insufficient to cover the actual price of all products and petrol expenses. The expenses for accompanying measures were easier to foresee and manage because these did not depend on that many external factors compared to the preparation of warm lunches. **In this sense, one can argue that the cost-effectiveness of measures under Operation OP I for providing warm lunches is less cost-effective for the providers than the provision of accompanying measures due to the unforeseen costs that were regularly incurred in the former.** On the other hand, from the recipient's perspective, getting a warm lunch would be more cost-effective than receiving a voucher because the purchasing power of the voucher would have diminished over time due to the increasing prices of essential products.

The cost-effectiveness of the operation for providing food packages is also viewed as potentially low. Although centralised public tender procedures were used for acquiring food products, claims were made that the price discounts were lower than expected..³⁷⁵ In addition, the practice to deliver large quantities of food that would be impossible to consume until the expiry date by a single individual (for example, 10 kg of sugar) additionally decreased the cost-effectiveness of providing food packages.

The cost-effectiveness of the programme can be discussed in the context of the outcome of the accompanying measures, where the effect is measured by the MA cumulatively for all operations and all target groups. Operations are cost-effective if they generate effective final results through the engagement of the target audiences with accompanying measures such as consulting/referral to programmes and projects financed by the ESF for social services, qualification, employment and other measures; inclusion in various projects of the 2014-2020 Operational Programme Development of Human Resources (OPDHR); complex social services of various types, qualification courses and/or ensuring employment and promotion of the awareness of the opportunities that are provided by the social services units. For example, in 2022, 19 666 items were accounted by the MA as providing accompanying measures to improve qualification and employment of end-recipients of social services, and 442 of them engaged further with the available measures (290 individuals became participants in the programme Patronage Care+ and 146 individuals got employed in other projects).³⁷⁶ However, there is no systemised and publicly accessible data about the number of people who improved their income to the point that they were no longer considered within the target audiences' scope.

The MA and their partners identified **the constraints of the budget, the inflation rate, and the associated costs that come with the delivery of the operations of FEAD as the main deterrents to better cost-effectiveness** of FEAD's operations in Bulgaria. However, all were explicit that the cost-effectiveness and added value of any of the measures is higher for older people who live alone and those who do not have any

³⁷⁵ Interview with a representative of food non-governmental organisation, in Bulgaria, Sofia, conducted in August 2023.

³⁷⁶ Agency for Social Assistance (2023b). *Annual Report for 2022 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2022 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

income due to illness, disability, or other unusual personal circumstances than for any of the other target groups. One of the programme's partners added that informing the target audiences about the provided services financed by the European Social Fund /ESF/ and the newly created ESF + fund (social inclusion, education and skills, employment) was among the factors that contributed to the higher cost-effectiveness of FEAD. Still, qualitative or quantitative information has not proved this statement which remains somehow subjective.

Administrative burden of monitoring and reporting requirements [*criterion: efficiency*]

FEAD's monitoring and reporting requirements posed an administrative burden on the organisations involved in designing, managing and delivering the programme in Bulgaria. The major issue the MA and some partner organisations indicated was monitoring the indicators for products used in preparing the warm lunches because they had to calculate the number of products per group used to prepare each recipe.

The only additional administrative requirement introduced by ASA, in addition to what was initially required by FEAD (so-called, 'gold-plating'), was information regarding the types of accompanying measures provided by the partner organisations and local units of ASA, as well as specific results achieved. Given the significance of the accompanying measures provided, the importance of the results achieved and the aim of supporting the work of the experts providing accompanying measures, the following were developed by the Managing Authority and applied:

- Methodological guidance on reporting and provision of accompanying measures, and
- Reference on the provided accompanying measures and the results achieved.

Some of the partner organisations viewed the tendering procedures and their eligibility criteria introduced by the MA as too stringent to the extent that it prevented several organisations specialising in food distribution from applying for any of the tenders.

The MA did not introduce an individual registry for every recipient of social service. Often the recipients of food needed support to fill in the information themselves or had to have someone else do it for them. This added administrative pressure to the municipalities' staff and based on the feedback from the local authorities, the MA dropped off the practice of signing the individual registries daily. A new procedure that required a signature by the recipient only once a week and that was agreed with the municipalities, was introduced. The final reporting was also assessed as burdensome.³⁷⁷

The **quantification of time that delivery organisations spent on administrative requirements** was challenging because it differed from month to month and among partner organisations depending on the territorial scope they covered for deliveries and provision of warm lunches/food packages. Among the various administrative activities, the following ones were identified as the most administratively burdensome:

- Procedures for awarding public contracts: the procedure is carried out once the project activities start, but it usually lasts 2-3 months. It takes 4-5 hours per month to prepare the documents, plan the amount of food, conduct the procedure, conclude the contracts, and report what was achieved to the MA.
- The obligation to offer accompanying measures: accompanying measures require almost constant work. In the municipalities, they are almost constantly creating new brochures on various relevant topics. The development and printing of brochures take time, as well as the design of the brochure so that the subjects are presented in a suitable form. The municipalities would often conduct individual consultations with the project service recipients to ensure that the brochure is suitable for the intended recipients. The average number of hours per month is no less than 10 hours.
- Monitoring and reporting requirements: on average monthly, 4 to 5 hours for the partner organisations that provide warm lunches and 8 hours per day for at least 15 working days during the designated reporting period for the partner organisation that distributes the food packages (the Bulgarian Red Cross). Summarising information for 300,000 people across the country is very labour-intensive.
- Communication/publicity requirements: the teams implementing communication activities as part of FEAD usually spend no less than 5-10 hours per month.
- Evaluation requirements: processing the feedback from beneficiaries received in the format of questionnaires takes a lot of time, especially because many of the eligible people experience difficulties in reading, writing, and understanding the questions in the survey. This activity's reporting would typically take

³⁷⁷ Interview with a representative of partner organisation, in Bulgaria, Sofia, conducted in August 2023.

more time because sensitive information from recipients was collected, which needed to be processed in a way that protected the dignity of FEAD end recipients and avoided their stigmatisation.

Simplification measures [*criterion: efficiency*]

The Managing Authority (MA) – the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA) as part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – embraced the implementation of flat rates as a simplification approach to reduce the administrative expenses for management and participation in FEAD and ultimately to reduce the occurrence of financial errors. ASA shared that **the use of flat rate indeed partially decreased their financial workload and accelerated to a certain extent the payment procedures** to the municipalities participating in the operation to provide warm lunches. The ultimate effect of introducing more straightforward funding rules was increasing the willingness of more municipalities to join in FEAD-funded actions, which has led to the increased number of end recipients – approx. 30 000 people received access to various social services as part of the FEAD operations that had not been engaged before.

In Bulgaria, **indirect delivery of FEAD was implemented through vouchers that were made available only to persons, including children, from Ukraine**, who were granted temporary protection status. Priority vouchers were provided for the needs of children and the persons who are their parents, guardians, custodians or persons with whom children are placed under the Child Protection Act. Nevertheless, **the practical experience with the voucher operation was minimal, and the partner organisations have yet to assess its effects to simplify administrative requirements**. It facilitated the actual distribution of the service to the eligible recipients. Still, it needs to be clarified how this will be audited and that, potentially, can cause certain inconveniences for the MA and the partners.

According to the MA, **the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations can be improved in terms of decreasing the administrative burden by introducing changes in the monitoring of the programme and not so much in FEAD's financial management**. It was suggested that a significant difference at a national level would be observed if the detailed monitoring of food products used to prepare the warm lunch servings was removed. Another suggestion made by the MA and widely supported by the partnering organisations was to simplify the signing procedures that now require the recipients to sign on their individual protocol daily. This is highly challenging for older people, those who are illiterate, and people with disadvantages.

Coherence of FEAD with other interventions [*criterion: coherence*]

The measures co-financed by FEAD, as well as those co-financed by the ESF, were coherent and complementary, and the differences in their operations' specifics ensured that overlaps and double funding did not happen. FEAD's initiatives primarily target individuals experiencing severe material deprivation, offering essential support through the provision of food products and warm meals. This demographic often comprises people who are too detached from the labour market to benefit from the social inclusion measures provided by the European Social Fund (ESF). Through part of the provided accompanying measures, the end recipients of FEAD measures were informed about the services offered through ESF funding, available qualification training schemes, employment opportunities and the prospects under the newly created ESF+ fund. **The support from both the FEAD and the ESF is aimed primarily at the high-risk groups of society, which is also a prerequisite for maximising the effect of the accompanying measures under the FEAD to achieve the goals of the ESF**.

Complementarity between FEAD and the activities within the "Social Protection Fund" was achieved through the national social management system by expanding the network of canteens. The operational programme provided resources to the municipalities as part of the local measures to tackle poverty by ensuring the service of warm lunches.

In 2022, the "Social Protection Fund" financed 28 public canteens in the country, and for comparison, according to MA, municipality-managed canteens were financed under 223 projects co-funded by FEAD. The "Social Protection Fund" also provided funds for the reconstruction and modernisation of the existing material base of the municipal home social patronages and canteens, where the warm lunches most often were prepared (the lunches funded by FEAD). In 2022, 35 municipal projects included actions for repairs and provision of new equipment for kitchens, and 24 projects provided the service of warm lunches with funding under Operation Type 3 of FEAD.

3.2. Is FEAD still relevant?

Relevance to target groups [*criterion: relevance*]

The design of FEAD in Bulgaria was simplified for much of the programming period. From 2015 to 2019 included, the measures funded by FEAD aimed to support the target groups in three ways – by providing funding for the purchase and distribution of food packages, by providing funding to the municipalities for the

warm lunches service, and by providing resources to the partnering organisations to enable them to deliver a variety of accompanying measures. In 2020, the programme expanded to include more vulnerable people due to the unforeseen spread of the coronavirus, but in principle, the operations funded by the programme remained the same. In 2022, the programme expanded once again to accommodate the needs of the Ukrainians fleeing Russian military aggression. The migrants who were granted the status of temporary protection in Bulgaria were eligible to receive vouchers to buy basic products, mainly aimed at the needs of their children and older people.

The primary and additional target groups of FEAD include such a wide range of people that it would be superficial and subjective if one claims that the design of the operational programme was adequate to address all needs to the same extent. **The programme actually reached, in practice, all vulnerable groups, but the relevance to the groups of people in need varied because their circumstances were different.** The interviewed partner organisations were explicit that the programme's relevance is the greatest for the largest group of recipients of FEAD's, that is, the people aged 65 or above. A significant part of these people live alone and either will not or cannot cook for themselves every day so that they maintain a balanced diet, which is essential for them considering their health at this point in life. Even if the target groups could prepare their own food, they would never be able to have a decent meal for BGN 2.70 a day based on the current prices of food products in supermarkets.

In terms of the relevance of the food distributed, to ensure a balanced and quality meal, the MA required the warm lunches to be prepared according to the Collections of recipes for public catering establishments, approved by the Bulgarian legislation in the field of nutrition, also under the requirements of Regulation 852/2004 and the Food Act. In the cases of using adapted recipes, the MA imposed a condition that they were prepared by a nutrition expert/technologist following the national standards and norms for nutrition and the requirement to contribute to a balanced diet. In some cases, the canteens were able to adapt the menu as per the religious preferences and customs of the residents to avoid food waste and to ensure that people are respected for their religious beliefs, avoiding cases of discrimination and even segregation. It was pointed out, though, that rarely can the canteens cater for people with specific diets (due to medical conditions), allergies, etc. Also, the food was the same for all people catered by a single canteen regardless of their age, which was seen as inappropriate because little children need a different composition of nutrients as compared to the needs of people aged 65 or above.

Similar was the appropriateness of the service of food packages provision – this was highly relevant to all people who did not have the budget to purchase enough food. Still, the variety of the products in the packages and their appropriateness as per their health needs was speculative at times (they certainly did not need 10 kg of sugar in a single delivery). Often, the end recipients commented they would enjoy receiving more dairy products and a greater variety of meat, fresh fruit, and veggies. This fresh produce is naturally very challenging to deliver and store, while dairy and meat must be transported and stored by following specific legal requirements, which the Bulgarian Red Cross could not satisfy (for example, for dairy products, they will need vans with freezers and also storage with freezers).

Lastly, the variety of the accompanying measures was so vast to meet the needs of the target groups year by year that **the relevance of the programme was greatly improved** over time. Namely, because of the accompanying measures that ensured an individualised approach to every single user of the programme's operations, the MA was able to collect and share some great success stories of people who were first users of the programme's services and later became self-sustainable citizens who were successful at meeting their needs and providing for their families.

Relevance of FEAD now and in the future [*criterion: relevance*]

The programme will continue to be important in Bulgaria because the level of poverty is unlikely to change soon based on the ongoing political and economic processes in the country. None of the interviewed partner organisations nor the MA expressed the view that the relevance of FEAD will diminish due to new economic, social, or political trends, and especially for Bulgaria being among the poorest countries in the EU. Instead, the interviewed organisations highlighted **the need for maintaining the service of warm lunches provision** because if discontinued, even for a short period of time, thousands of people are likely to face starvation not just due to the lack of adequate financial resources but because they are physically unable to shop food or cook for themselves.

It is also essential that the transportation of food to the recipients' homes remains as a service for at least those people who live too far away from the canteen/collection points to be able to go every day, where there is a lack of reliable public transport, and for people who are unable to move from their homes/beds (due to different disabilities and illnesses).

In addition, **the demographic crisis in Bulgaria will likely increase the number of people living alone and needing the whole spectrum of social support activities.**

Based on the discussion in the previous sub-section, the following needs have been identified as relevant and some of them will be included in the 2021-2027 programming period:

- the food packages to include a broader variety of food whenever possible and essential hygienic products;
- provision of food that caters for various dietary requirements;
- provision of food that is adequate for the needs of infants and little children up to 3 years old;
- provision of products for newborns.

3.3. Did FEAD make a difference and to whom?

EU added value [*criterion: EU added value*]

Volume effects: The added value of the EU programme to the Bulgarian institutions' efforts to manage poverty and social exclusion is undeniable and evident. In the first place, **the service of provision of food packages would not have existed if the programme was not available for implementation in Bulgaria with the respective financial resources.** With the programme's financial resources, the Bulgarian Red Cross successfully manages between 300-315 collection points in all 265 municipalities in Bulgaria. The organisation was supported by hundreds of volunteers who participated in the food packages' distribution to the target audiences and the provision of part of the accompanying measures based on individual circumstances. Moreover, the Bulgarian Red Cross acted as a mediator, and their volunteers collected valuable feedback from the target audiences that was shared with the MA to introduce changes to the programme and make it as practical and helpful as possible.

FEAD provided additional resources to the existing action to provide warm lunches by expanding the service beyond the winter period and making it an all-year-round service available to many more users than before 2014. Also, new canteens were created with funding available through FEAD to support the municipalities' efforts to expand the service nationwide. In 2015, there were 111 canteens in 86 municipalities in Bulgaria.³⁷⁸ Only one year later, the number of municipalities involved in the programme increased to 204 and 236 canteens, covering more than 70% of the country's territory.³⁷⁹ The number of users also increased, from 8291 in 2015 to 28 670 in 2016.

In addition to the provision of food services, the **target audiences received information about accompanying measures aimed at reducing social exclusion.** Some of the most significant accompanying measures throughout the period with tangible impact and results were:

- counselling/referral for social assistance;
- assistance for the use of health and educational services;
- support provided as per the individual needs and problems of the target audiences (provision of clothing, securing employment, issuing an identity document);
- assistance for accessing for heating allowance in the winter months.

Scope effects: The MA remained resilient throughout the programming period and initiated **multiple changes to the programme to ensure that FEAD would reach new groups and harder-to-reach groups or groups that had previously been outside the scope of national mechanisms.** New target groups were added in 2020 and 2022 in relation to the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Furthermore, the operation

³⁷⁸ Agency for Social Assistance (2016). *Annual Report for 2015 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2015 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

³⁷⁹ Agency for Social Assistance (2017). *Annual Report for 2016 for the Implementation of the Operational Program for Food And/Or Basic Material Support Fund for European Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Persons in Bulgaria /Summary/* ("Годишен доклад за 2016 г. за изпълнението на Оперативна програма за Храни и/или основно материално подпомагане на Фонд за европейско подпомагане на най-нуждаещите се лица в България (Резюме)"). Available at: <https://asp.government.bg/bg/operativna-programa-za-hrani/operativna-programa-za-hrani-2014-2020/>

for providing food packages has two target audiences – primary and secondary, with the sole purpose of avoiding food waste and optimising the distribution of food as per the personal circumstances of people at risk of extreme poverty. The programme also opened up to provide larger food packages for families with children and to offer warm lunches for entire families (leaving behind the practice of serving only to eligible persons, which was an erroneous practice of dividing families).

Role effects: Regarding innovation driven by FEAD-funded operations, there was a case in one of the regions where people with special needs were included in preparing warm lunches. This way, they were socially engaged with the support of the most vulnerable people, and they were allowed to get proper work experience and learn new skills. An example of upscaling actions is the suggestion by several municipalities that the warm lunches service be extended to include kids' food for infants (10 months old) and little children (up to 3 years old).

Process effects: The processes established in the programme transpired as accommodating for all partner organisations. **They expanded the effects of the activities and created an environment where the organisations truly worked in partnership and towards a common goal** instead of operating governed only by the hierarchical differentiation between a managing authority and contractors. The influencing role of the MA was substantial, and that is reflected in the increasing number of municipalities participating in the programme over the programming period. The municipalities improved their working based on FEAD and shared good practices while collaborating in their attempts to reach out to everyone in need. The provision of the operations became personalised in a way that the MA, Bulgarian Red Cross, and the municipalities knew the people they served - who are living alone, who do not have any relatives and have difficulties travelling, who will need the food delivered to their home, who needs additional support provided from the national schemes, etc. In addition, in many municipalities, the mayors volunteered for the Bulgarian Red Cross. One of the interviewees shared: “The collaborative practice between our municipality and the managing authority has been tremendous and exemplary.”³⁸⁰

Overall, the **main results of FEAD** for the period 2014-2020 were the following ones:

- successfully reached out to as many people as possible and expanded the target audiences by at least three new groups (people affected by the coronavirus pandemic, Ukrainian migrants, and a secondary target group of people falling outside of the ASA social services selection criteria);
- included actions as per the individual needs of the end-users (transportation of the warm lunches to the recipient's home), making the services individualised and customised and demonstrating care and attention to everyone's needs and personal circumstances;
- expanding the partner organisations network by attracting many new municipalities to the operation for warm lunches provision;
- providing a broad range of accompanying measures to the primary operations that made the programme's actions cost-effective and increased their socio-economic impact;
- strengthening the working relations in the programme, led and supported by the Agency for Social Assistance.

There is no doubt among the partner organisations and the MA that **the most significant added value of FEAD support was for the people aged 65 or older**, especially those who live alone, who got the chance to receive warm lunches all year round. Furthermore, the service has been going on incessantly since 2015 and expanded to almost all regions (municipalities) in Bulgaria, which would not have been possible without FEAD's financial support.

Visibility [visibility]

The general public and end recipients were fully aware that the support came from FEAD and the EU. There were info boards at all canteens where warm lunch was served, as well as at the venues for collecting the food packages. ASA ensured that the EU's visuals appeared on all documents and materials that were distributed.

The partner organisations were very flexible on the methods for popularising the programme. They used a **variety of communication measures**, such as putting up information tables/boards on public sites (post offices, for example), at collection points, office spaces, creating Viber groups, websites, social media pages, etc. The Bulgarian Red Cross also spread information about the programme through the videos they made and through leaflets.

³⁸⁰ Interview with a representative of implementing organisation, in Bulgaria, Plovdiv, conducted in August 2023.

Furthermore, according to a study by Alpha Research (not funded by ASA), during the coronavirus epidemic in 2020-2021, the activities funded by FEAD and the EU were the most recognisable by the general public.

4. Good practices

The **accompanying measures** provided under FEAD's main operations are many actions delivered either by the local units of ASA, the municipalities or other partnering organisations such as NGOs and small businesses. The indicators show clearly that the impact of the accompanying measures is tangible, often measured by units. The most important effects, though, are intangible and cannot be assessed by quantitative indicators – these are the effects that a single serving of warm lunch brings to each recipient.

ASA launched the short video “Warm Lunch for the Soul”, which describes the experiences of some of the most vulnerable people in Bulgaria and how the warm lunch service has changed their lives beyond the pure factor that this keeps them fed and away from starving.³⁸¹ **The warm lunch service has a significant social element that allows the representatives from partnering organisations to engage with people and observe their health daily.** For older people who live alone, the warm lunch service is a chance to socialise and communicate with someone, even if that is for a few minutes a day if the food is delivered to the recipient's home. For others, the canteen is where they meet with other people. There are several cases of people who were not only recipients of the warm lunch service, but they became part of the staff working at the canteen, which changed their lives for the better.³⁸² The feeling of being engaged in a meaningful service for the people in the community is something that numbers cannot measure. One concrete success story is of V.S., who spent 13 years in solitude without enjoying life. With the municipality's and local volunteers' support, V.S. started going to the local canteen to have her lunch every day. A few months later, V.S. was encouraged to join the team of people cooking the lunches. She said: "I genuinely enjoy being among new people and knowing their fates." Since the municipality is paying her to work as a chef in the canteen (which comes on top of her pension wage), she manages to cover her expenses for electricity and medical needs. V.S. also shared that the warm lunch service is more than food, it gives her security and peace.

Members of the partner organisations responsible for delivering the food to the recipients' homes shared that they managed to help in other ways different from simply socialising. Often, these people do little chores for the older people who struggle to leave their homes, like handing in paperwork for them or buying them medical products. There were extreme cases when the partner organisations saved people from domestic abuse and violence, provided them with a house to live in, or helped them receive educational and special needs services in local centres.

All these examples highlight that bringing someone a warm lunch is much more for almost every recipient living in extreme poverty and exceptional circumstances. The service has an undisputedly positive impact on the end recipients of the programme by helping them make the first steps towards overcoming poverty and social exclusion. Despite this, especially among recipients of individual packages with food products, there is still an insufficient appreciation for more meaningful involvement in social and economic life through their participation in activation measures such as prequalification and educational courses, which could improve their chances of finding a job, with recipients primarily seeking opportunities for other types of social assistance.

5. Conclusions and lessons learned

When the **effectiveness** of FEAD is reviewed, the most significant aspect of the programme is **its flexibility to meet the rising needs of the most vulnerable people in Bulgaria** and the willingness of the Managing Authority to lead and support the partner organisations throughout the changes, COVID-19 and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine being the most substantial determinants for the modifications of FEAD. In March 2020, ASA firmly demonstrated its resilience and flexible approaches and swiftly changed how warm lunches and individual packages of food products were provided to the end recipients to allow transportation to their homes instead of using canteens and going to collection points. Among other success factors driven by the MA that contributed to FEAD's effectiveness in Bulgaria was **developing municipalities staff knowledge and capacity to work with the most vulnerable people in the country, maintaining regular communication with the partner organisations, improving the legal framework, and utilising additionally available**

³⁸¹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2020). *Warm Soup for the Soul* („Топъл обяд за душата “). Available at: [Топъл обяд за душата](#)

financial resources in the most needed action areas, overcoming thus the multiple hindering factors that appeared along the implementation of the programme in 2014-2020.

It is crucial to highlight that **the programme in Bulgaria did not differentiate specific target groups to work with**. Instead, the programme grouped the eligible recipients into four specific national sub-goals: children in the age range 0-18 living in poverty; persons aged 65 and over living in poverty; unemployed in the age range 18-64, living in poverty; and employed persons in the age range 18-64 living in poverty. The interviewed partner organisations identified the most prominent group to be people older than 65 years. Although the income criterion remained the main one when applicants for social services and benefits were considered, **the local units of the Agency for Social Assistance were given the prerogative to consider applications based on unique personal circumstances**.

FEAD's efficiency transpired mainly through its operations' overall cost-effectiveness, which meant operating with very low costs per unit. The unforeseen inflation in the period 2021-2023 made **FEAD budget insufficient to cover the actual price of all products and petrol expenses** and the municipalities had to allocate funding from the municipality's budget to provide warm lunches or transport the food to the recipients' houses. Regardless, **the accompanying measures of the programme generated cost-effective final results** through the engagement of the target audiences in ESF projects for complex social services of multiple types, qualification courses and/or ensuring employment and promotion of the awareness of the opportunities that are provided by the social services units.

According to the MA of FEAD in Bulgaria, the cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations can be improved by decreasing the administrative burden by **simplifying the monitoring of the programme**. It was suggested that a significant difference at a national level would be observed if the detailed monitoring of food products used to prepare the warm lunch servings was removed. ASA shared that the use of flat rate indeed partially decreased their financial workload and accelerated to a certain extent the payment procedures to the municipalities participating in the operation to provide warm lunches. **The ultimate effect of introducing more straightforward funding rules was the attraction of more municipalities to join in FEAD-funded actions**, which led to the increased number of end recipients – approx. 30 000 people received access to various social services as part of the FEAD operations that had not been engaged before.

As FEAD did not exist in isolation, the MA had to ensure that the programme was **coherent** and complimentary to other programmes and operations aimed primarily at the high-risk groups of society, avoiding double funding. Through part of the provided accompanying measures, the end recipients of FEAD measures were informed about the services offered through ESF funding, available qualification training schemes, employment opportunities and the prospects under the newly created ESF+ fund. Complementarity between FEAD and the activities within the “Social Protection Fund” was achieved through the national social management system by expanding the network of canteens. For example, in 2022, the “Social Protection Fund” financed 28 public canteens in the country, and for comparison, according to MA, municipality-managed canteens were financed under 223 projects co-funded by FEAD. The “Social Protection Fund” also provided funds for the reconstruction and modernisation of the existing material base of the municipal home social patronages and canteen, where the warm lunches most often were prepared (the lunches funded by FEAD).

In terms of **relevance**, the primary and additional target groups of FEAD included such a wide range of people that it would be superficial and subjective if one claims that the design of the operational programme was adequate to address all needs to the same extent. **In practice, the programme reached all vulnerable groups, but the relevance to the groups of people in need varied because their circumstances were different**. The interviewed partner organisations were explicit that the programme's applicability was the greatest for the largest group of FEAD recipients, the people aged 65 or above. Many of these people live alone and either will not or cannot cook for themselves daily to maintain a balanced diet, which is essential for them considering their health at this point in life. Even if the target groups could prepare their own food, they would never be able to have a decent meal for BGN 2.70 a day based on the current prices of food products in supermarkets.

Similar was the relevance of the service of food packages provision – this was highly relevant to all people who did not have the budget to purchase enough food. Still, the variety of the products in the packages and their appropriateness as per their health needs was speculative at times (they certainly did not need 10 kg of sugar in a single delivery). Often, the end recipients commented they would enjoy receiving more dairy products and a greater variety of meat, fresh fruit, and veggies.

In addition, the variety of the accompanying measures was so vast to meet the needs of the target groups year by year that the relevance of the programme was greatly improved. Because the **accompanying measures ensured an individualised approach to every single user of the programme's operations**, the MA was able to collect and share some great success stories of people who were first users of the programme's services

and later became self-sustainable citizens who were successful at meeting their needs and providing for their families.

The programme will continue to be important in Bulgaria because the poverty level is unlikely to change based on the ongoing political and economic processes in Bulgaria. None of the interviewed partner organisations nor the Managing Authority expressed the view that the relevance of FEAD will diminish due to new economic, social, or political trends, especially since Bulgaria is among the poorest countries in the EU. Instead, the interviewed organisations highlighted **the need for maintaining the service of warm lunches provision** because if discontinued, even for a short period, thousands of people are likely to face starvation not just due to the lack of adequate financial resources but because they are physically unable to shop food or cook for themselves.

The added value of the EU programme to the Bulgarian institutions' efforts to manage poverty and social exclusion is undeniable and evident. In the first place, the service of provision of food packages would not have existed if the programme was not available for implementation in Bulgaria with the respective financial resources. FEAD provided additional resources needed to expand the service of warm lunches beyond the winter period and made it an all-year-round service available to many more users than before 2014. Also, new canteens were created with funding available through FEAD to support the municipalities' efforts to expand the service nationwide. In 2015, there were 111 canteens in 86 municipalities in Bulgaria. Only one year later, the number of municipalities involved in the programme increased to 204 and 236 canteens, covering more than 70% of the country's territory.

The MA remained resilient throughout the programming period and initiated multiple changes to the programme to ensure that FEAD would reach new groups and harder-to-reach groups or groups before that had been left outside the scope of the national mechanisms. Likewise, the processes established in the programme transpired as accommodating for all partner organisations, expanding thus the effects of the activities and creating an environment where the organisations truly worked in partnership and towards a common goal. The influencing role of the MA was substantial, and that is reflected in the increasing number of municipalities participating in the programme over the programming period. One of the interviewees shared: "The collaborative practice between our municipality and the managing authority has been tremendous and exemplary."

When the **visibility** of the measures is concerned, it was assessed that the general public and end recipients were fully aware that the support came from FEAD and the EU. There were info boards at all canteens where warm lunch was served and at the venues for collecting the food packages. ASA ensured that the EU's visuals appeared on all distributed documents and materials, and the partner organisations created Viber groups, websites, social media pages, videos, etc.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

The methodology applied for building a case study to support the ex-post evaluation of the 2014-2020 Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in Bulgaria was driven by the overall aim to gain deeper insight into FEAD-related activities, target groups, and achievements. Assessing the following aspects of the programme aimed to provide various in-depth insights of FEAD's implementation:

- The effectiveness of FEAD support in actually reaching the most vulnerable groups, including information on specific target groups reached/not reached and why; and the relevance of the support to these groups and their evolving needs;
- Evidence of the impact of FEAD support and activities on the target groups, on the broader socio-economic context in your country including unintended impacts (such as increased capacity/expertise of organisations involved in FEAD);
- The effectiveness of FEAD in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic effects including specific actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at national/regional/local levels, supported by FEAD through the CRII and CRII+ initiatives and the influence of CRII and CRII+ initiatives on policy programming and funding;
- The efficiency of FEAD and factors influencing this. Case studies are particularly important in gathering quantitative evidence (estimates/averages) of the amount of time spent on administrative activities as a result of management and control system requirements. An assessment on whether simplification measures (e.g. the use of flat rates, use of vouchers and other simplification measures) had an impact on efficiency is also key;

- Synergies/overlaps between FEAD and national actions and policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion;
- The relevance of FEAD in light of crises during the programming period including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and in light of emerging and future socio-economic trends.

The data needed for developing the case study was collected via a desk research (using a variety of resources, such as official programme documents, annual reports, report of other experts and academics working on social inclusion in Bulgaria, videos, media posts, financial and statistical data of national and EU character), interviews with the Managing Authority and several of its main partner organisations, and additional follow-up consultations with the Agency for Social Assistance and its partners involved in the on-the-ground delivery of FEAD, including civil society organisations and public bodies operating at a more local level with end recipients.

Table A. 47 – Evaluation framework

Evaluation criteria	Main research questions
Effectiveness	To what extent has FEAD support contributed to achieving the objectives set in Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014? Which factors, whether unintended or not, facilitated or hindered the effectiveness of FEAD operations (in terms of implementation and results)? Were there unintended results that have occurred, and which hindered progress or facilitated it? What socio-economic impacts can be identified from FEAD support, both at micro-economic and, if possible, at macro-economic level?
Efficiency	What types of activities and for which target group were the most/least cost-effective? Why? Are there any examples of good practices implemented to improve the efficiency of FEAD operations? Which are the factors that influenced the efficiency of FEAD? Rank these factors by order of importance and justify your ranking. To what extent were the elements of Management and Control System (MCS) requirements in FEAD set appropriately to minimise the administrative burden? Did they allow effective and efficient implementation? Did those elements protect the dignity of FEAD end recipients while avoiding stigmatisation? To what extent can FEAD processes be simplified at the national level? And at EU level?
Coherence	To what extent were FEAD operations coherent with other interventions? How have complementarity and synergies been ensured?
Relevance	How relevant was the support to the needs of the most deprived?
EU added value	Overall, what and how significant has been the added value of FEAD support in producing beneficial effects that would otherwise not have taken place? This question is addressed by assessing volume, scope, role and process effects. Were there attempts in MS to quantify and assess the impact of FEAD support? What are the key results of FEAD support that made a difference? To which group(s) of stakeholders did FEAD make a tangible difference?
Visibility	To what extent are the general public and end recipients aware that support comes from FEAD and the EU?

Although the methodology's data collection includes a wide representativeness of sampling to inform the case study, the limitations of the work done come from the lack of interviews or surveys with the end recipients of FEAD. To manage this limitation, the case study used at least two videos where views of the end recipients were presented.

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Table A. 48 – Input indicators for the implementation of FEAD in Bulgaria in 2014-2022

Indicator	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission (EUR)	Implementation rate (expenditure declared as share of allocated budget)
2014-2022	161 884 756,00	159 622 013,00	51 897 126,00	94%

Source: SFC Database 2014

*Please note that there was no expenditure in 2014.

Table A. 49 – Common output indicators for Bulgaria, 2015-2022

Output indicators on food support distributed	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Quantity of fruits and vegetables (tonnes)	97	983	4 839	6 715	4 775	4 367	4 455	2 881
Quantity of meat, eggs, fish, seafood (tonnes)	85	253	2 394	2 750	2 459	1 803	2 116	1 897
Quantity of flour, bread, potatoes, rice and other starchy products (tonnes)	189	3 411	12 727	8 954	6 971	4 685	5 530	4 218
Quantity of sugar (tonnes)	1	15	2 850	1 179	29	865	897	37
Quantity of milk products (tonnes)	35	116	530	779	881	428	754	846
Quantity of fats, oil (tonnes)	12	33	217	1 233	1 307	1 136	280	341
Quantity of convenience food, other foodstuff (not falling in abovementioned)	23	95	217	227	229	124	204	236

Output indicators on food support distributed	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
categories) (tonnes)								
Total quantity of food support distributed (tonnes)	442	4 907	23 774	21 837	16 651	13 408	14 236	10 457
Proportion of FEAD co-financed food products in the total volume of food distributed by the partner organisations *%(	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Agency for Social Assistance, Republic of Bulgaria.

*Please note that there was no expenditure in 2014.

Table A. 50 – Number of FEAD participants, in Bulgaria in 2015-2022, per year

Result indicators on food support distributed	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of persons receiving food support	6 536	512 929	677 708	539 983	465 965	494 127	553 444	14 828
Number of children aged 15 years or below	562	138 643	179 725	138 078	128 038	109 744	124 152	562
Number of persons aged 65 years or above	2 094	109 680	146 973	128 497	115 296	165 871	194 757	8 204
Number of women	3 559	281 686	369 832	300 670	267 659	286 936	326 692	8 342
Number of migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)	2 268	65 868	109 334	48 403	36 232	30 684	43 645	2 911
Number of persons with disabilities	1 537	94 510	84 006	133 469	126 868	153 271	160 857	2 803
Number of homeless	101	569	1 191	191	55	36	134	28

Source: Agency for Social Assistance, Republic of Bulgaria.

*Please note that there was no expenditure in 201

X.3 Denmark

1. Context and background

Denmark, known for its high standard of living, strong welfare system, and a well-functioning economy, has **exhibited economic resilience in the face of the global uncertainties** over the reference period. Despite challenges such as Brexit, COVID-19 and international trade tensions, Denmark maintained a stable economic trajectory and a high employment rate.

During the reference period 2013-2022, **Denmark managed to keep poverty levels relatively low** when compared to other EU Member States. Poverty indicators, such as the AROPE rate, have been below the EU average of 21.6 % (2022), showcasing Denmark's commitment to social equality. In 2015, the AROPE rate was at 18.6 % and fell to 17.1 % in 2022. AROPE children also fell from 15.9 % to 13.4 % over the same period. The severe material deprivation rate fell from 3.2 % to 2.4 % between 2014 and 2020. Food insecurity saw a slight increase in the percentage of residents who are unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, or fish every second day rising from 1.7 % in 2014 to 2.2 % in 2022. The self-reported unmet need for medical care has fluctuated between 1 % and 2.1 % in the period.

The economic disruptions and health crisis have exacerbated vulnerabilities, leading to concerns about potential increases in poverty and homelessness. However, the **Danish government quickly implemented relief measures**, including income support, rent subsidies, and eviction moratoriums, to mitigate the pandemic's impact for vulnerable residents (Ministry of the Interior and Health of Denmark, 2020).

As illustrated in the above sections and in the data in Table A. 51, Denmark provides a high degree of security for its citizens. However, it is worth noting that **vulnerable migrants may find it harder to access this security**. Partner organisations report that these individuals face obstacles when entering the labour market and applying for social transfers and services. As such, there is a demand for guidance regarding their rights, legislation, and clarification regarding available options.

Table A. 51 – Socio-economic context in Denmark

Denmark	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
1. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) Total		18,6	17,5	17,8	17,5	17,3	16,8	17,3	17,1	
2. AROPE Children		15,9	13,8	15,1	15,0	14,2	13,8	14,4	13,4	
3. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)		3,2	2,6	3,6	3,5	3,8	3,5	3,1	3,2	
4. Severe material deprivation rate (SMD)		3,2	2,6	3,1	3,4	2,6	2,4			
5. Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day		1,7	1,7	1,6	2,1	1,5	2,2	2,3	2,0	
6. Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROPE		55,0	52,7	52,2	51,0	47,3	47,3	52,4	53,9	
7. Housing cost overburden		15,6	15,1	15,1	15,7	14,7	15,6	14,1	15,5	
8. Self-reported unmet need for medical care % of population 16+		1,4	1,3	1,3	1,0	1,3	1,8	1,7	1,3	
9. Households with very low work intensity			11,9	11,1	10,5	10,0	9,5	9,1	9,7	
11. Population in the EU could not afford unexpected financial expenses		28,5	26,5	24,5	25,1	25,2	22,9	22,7	19,5	
13. Share of total population having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling		2,2	2,2	2,4	2,0	1,9	1,8	2,1		
14. No indoor flushing		2,2	2,2	2,4	2,0	1,9	1,8	2,1		
17. Persons who cannot afford a telephone		0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0			
18. Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out clothes		6,2	7,4	6,3	6,9	6,8	7,0	7,0	6,9	
20. Persons who cannot afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month		3,2	4,0	4,5	3,7	3,3	3,9	3,6	3,5	
21. Persons who cannot afford internet connection for personal use at home		1,0	1,5	1,1	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,7	
22. In-work risk of poverty		3,5	4,0	3,2	3,7	4,3	4,2	4,3	3,6	
23. Long-term unemployment		1,7	1,6	1,2	1,2	1,0	0,8	0,9	1,0	
25. Employment rate		71,1	72,0	72,7	73,2	74,1	75,0	74,4	75,5	
26. Children (aged less than 18) living in households with very low work intensity			7,3	6,5	6,6	7,2	5,0	5,8	5,7	
27. At-risk-of-poverty rate for children			10,4	9,4	10,0	11,0	10,3	10,0	9,6	
28. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMD) for children			3,4	2,4	5,2	4,9	5,1	4,7	3,3	

Source: Eurostat.

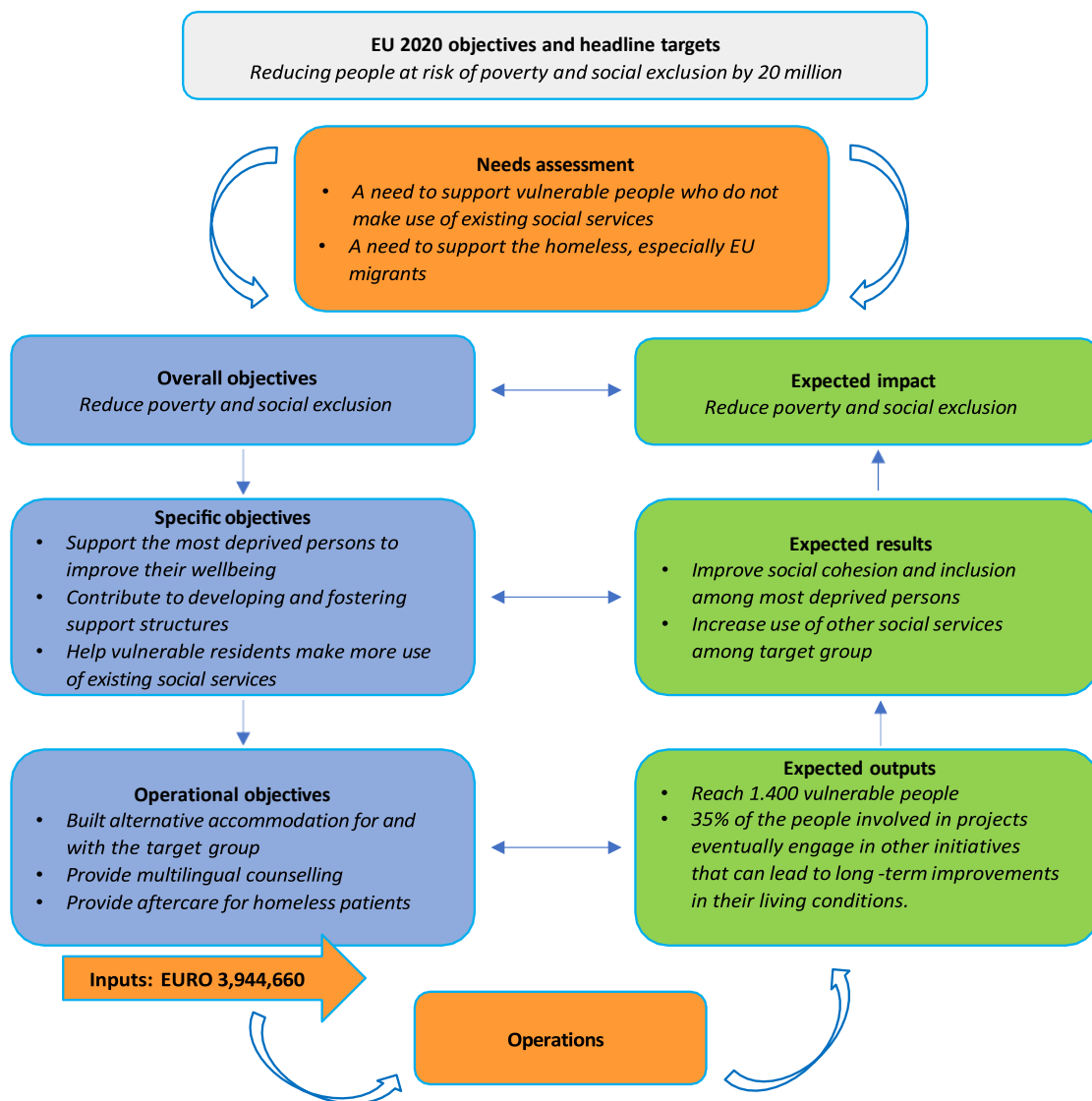
2. Reconstructing the intervention logic

In Denmark, the funds have been disbursed through two application pools in 2016 and 2019 respectively. NGOs received support for outreach activities that help the most vulnerable to achieve a more stable and secure life. **A total of four operations were funded, namely, Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in**

Copenhagen, Project UDENFOR, Care Centre Svalegangen and Project Step-for-step back to work. The activities of the FEAD supported operations were selected based on identified gaps in national efforts at the time concerning the socially vulnerable.

Figure A. 68, illustrating the intervention logic of FEAD in Denmark, encapsulates the essential elements of the FEAD- supported operations in Denmark. **There is a need to support vulnerable people in Denmark, especially those who are homeless, EU migrants, and who do not make use of existing social services.** To fulfil the need to support this group, a range of objectives have been selected such as improving their wellbeing, developing support structures, and helping make social services more accessible to them. A total of EUR 3,944,660 has been allocated towards the overall objective of reducing poverty and social exclusion. The output measurements are expected to be the **reaching of 1,400 vulnerable people within the identified target group** and that **35% of them engage in other national initiatives that can lead to long-term improvements in their life situation.**

Figure A. 68 – Intervention logic of FEAD in Denmark



Source: adapted from FEAD mid-term evaluation.

2.1. National policy framework

The purpose of FEAD is in line with the national policy strategy in Denmark. In 2017, the government published an **action plan against homelessness** that involved a range of legislative changes making it easier

to allocate or establish housing as well as making the building of affordable housing easier. Further to this, the government's area of focus is to expand efficient efforts through strengthening homelessness prevention and a range of rehabilitation efforts (Ministry of Children and Social Affairs, 2017).

Denmark has a **strong social welfare safety net**, meaning that citizens receive social benefits if they lose their job or suffer from long-term illness. There is also municipal support in place if citizens are unable to find housing, however, criteria for this service varies from municipality to municipality. Social benefits are also subject to certain criteria, e.g. an EU citizen must have worked a certain number of hours and a certain length of time in Denmark to be able to receive social benefits. This means certain groups fall through this safety net, especially EU migrants who may not meet these criteria. Thus, the purpose of FEAD aligns well with supporting the most deprived persons in Denmark.

The national evaluation and interviewees for this case study all expressed that the **FEAD-funded operations reached the vulnerable people national efforts were unable to and, as such, have complemented each other well**. This is supported by the fact that all the **operations** received national funding to continue the activities after FEAD support ended.

2.2. Objectives and target groups

2.2.1. Overall and specific objectives

The overall objective of the FEAD-supported operations was to reduce poverty and social exclusion among the most vulnerable homeless residents in Denmark, as illustrated in Figure A. 68. This was to be achieved by supplementing current initiatives for poverty alleviation and social integration and by reaching target groups that were difficult to reach through existing activities.

One of the **specific objectives of the FEAD-supported operations in Denmark was to promote the participation of the target group in other social services, and consequently, establish a connection between the various existing services that can provide meaningful, lasting improvements to their life**. The activities under the FEAD- supported **operations** can thus be considered successful if they contributed to more vulnerable people engaging with existing social services such as treatment, housing, employment, support, etc.

Other **specific objectives for the FEAD-supported operations included supporting the most deprived persons to improve their wellbeing and contributing to developing and fostering support structures**. This was achieved through the expected outputs as illustrated in Figure A. 68. The expected outputs of reaching 1,400 vulnerable people and that 35% of them engage with other national initiatives were the outputs that supported the expected results of improving social cohesion including among the most deprived, as well as an increased use of social services, which would lead to the eventual expected impact reducing poverty and social exclusion.

There were no changes to the overall or specific objectives over the course of the reference period.

2.2.1.1. Target groups

The outreach activities of the FEAD-supported **operations** aimed to attract **the most socially vulnerable residents in Denmark**. This group primarily consisted of **homeless people with complex challenges** such as homelessness combined with substance abuse, unemployment, mental illness, somatic illness, and a lack of contact with friends and family. 95.5% of the reached target group were **migrants, minorities or had a foreign background**. In this way, the target group was **severely socially vulnerable people with a legal right to reside but often without the right to social benefits**, as described previously, in Denmark.

For one of the four **operations**, Care Centre Svalegangen, the specific target group was **vulnerable people who were recovering from or preparing for hospitalisation**. This specific target group was chosen because of the high rate of readmission to hospitals and the fact that the existing public services were not able to address this challenge.

The rationale for selecting this specific target group is that the group did not make sufficient use of existing social services and therefore did not receive the support that the group needed. This was largely due to a lack

of awareness among the target group and a language barrier in that the majority of the target group does not speak Danish, and in some cases, does not speak English either. This target group includes EU migrants for whom social services are less accessible.

There was no change in the target group over the course of the project period.

2.3. Implemented operations

Activities differed depending on the project as summarised below:

Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in Copenhagen

The project was aimed at the group of homeless migrants who were unregistered in Denmark and therefore did not have a CPR-number (social security number), and thus, had a limited access to social services. **The project offered homeless migrants with legal residence in Denmark sheltered accommodation with professional staff, multilingual counselling, and an effort to create better access to health services for the target group.** The counselling primarily consisted of legal support and counselling on individuals' possibilities in Denmark. Through the mentioned project activity, the goal was to provide support and that participants would be better equipped to make decisions for their own situation.

The project had its own goal of reaching 600 participants yearly but managed to reach 480 yearly on average – a total of 2,641 vulnerable people from 2016 to 2021. This project was not solely funded by FEAD, hence, why the goal of 600 participants yearly exceeds the goal specific to FEAD. Determining how many residents were reached directly because of FEAD funding vs. other funding has not been possible.

Project UDENFOR (Outside)

This project was split between the cities of Copenhagen and Aarhus. In Copenhagen, homeless people were contacted and offered lockers for personal belongings, support, and community-building activities. **The activities were centred around bringing the homeless closer to the job market and to become more integrated in society.** The goal of these activities was to provide vulnerable homeless people with special support to become more connected to general society as well as to improve living conditions for the group.

In Aarhus, **vulnerable people were offered to become part of a working community.** This was either in **Café UDENFOR** or in a **workshop** where some of the participants could design and build their own mobile home. The aim was to create sustainable communities, strong social relationships, and alternative forms of housing.

The project aimed to reach 90 vulnerable people over the project period, but the project managed to reach 82 in Copenhagen and 80 in Aarhus, thus exceeding the overall target.

Omsorgscenteret Svalegangen (Care Centre Svalegangen)

The project was aimed at vulnerable homeless people with a need for care, rehabilitation, or support after emergency hospitalisation for somatic or mental illness. Homeless vulnerable people often suffer from multiple illnesses and often ignore symptoms or avoid seeking care before it becomes urgent. **This project established a care centre for this specific target group. The care centre offered stays of up to two weeks and activities followed three phases: 1) somatic care and restitution, 2) counselling, compassionate support and community, and 3) psychosocial aftercare.** The care centre consists of five beds and offers stays of up to two weeks followed by psychosocial aftercare. The purpose of the project was to cover participants' basic needs, to secure participants in a safe environment and for participants to receive social support and the time to rehabilitate as well as to reflect on their life situation.

Over the project period 2019 to 2021, 65 unique residents were enrolled at the care centre. The goal was to enrol 70 residents annually, however, due to start up difficulties caused by COVID-19 and a lack of willingness from the municipality to find a physical location for the care centre, this goal was not reached. These start up difficulties are described in more detail in section 3.1.

Project Step-for-step back to work

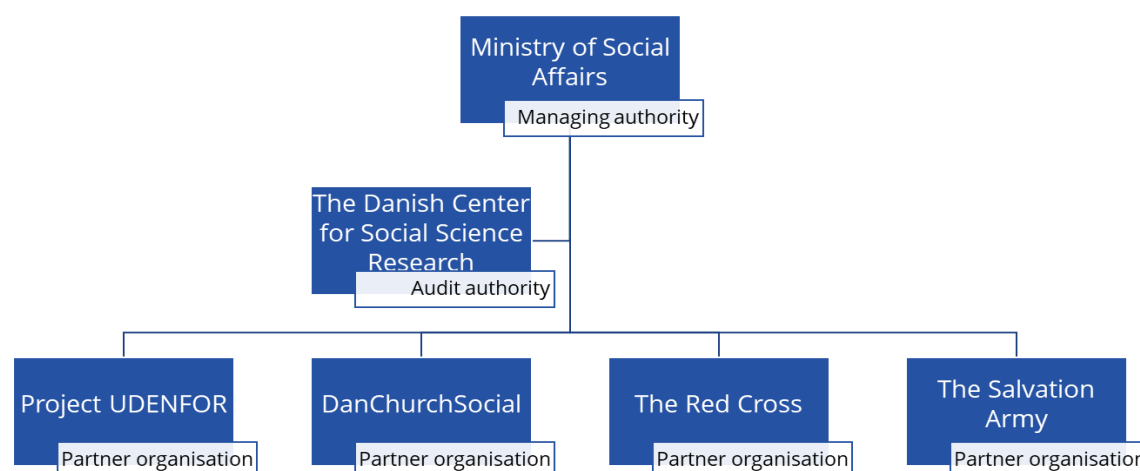
The aim of this project was to help the most vulnerable people who do not use existing social services to lead more stable, healthy, and secure lives as well as to make better use of existing services and to improve their chances of entering the labour market. The target group typically had substance abuse problems, mental illness, poor health status, severe loneliness, and/or a lack of connection to the job market. The vulnerable were helped via three steps: **1) establish good contact with the most vulnerable homeless people with a starting point in a shelter, 2) motivate them to receive counselling, information on hygiene, attendance at the weekly health clinic, and be given the opportunity to change clothes and break isolation through**

mutual support, and 3) select a specific group of participants for a rehabilitation programme consisting of, for example, courses and counselling to help them enter the labour market.

The original goal was to enrol 80 participants annually in their 10-week rehabilitation programme. The project managed to enrol a total of 158 participants, which is the equivalent of about 63 participants annually. As such, the project did not reach the initial goal, which was primarily due to COVID-19 making it difficult to recruit participants as many in the target group returned to their home country.

2.4. FEAD governance and delivery system

Figure A. 69 – Stakeholders involved in FEAD delivery in Denmark



The Managing Authority, in this case the Danish authority of social services, the Ministry of Social Affairs, was responsible for submitting the call for tender, selecting the successful applicants, and releasing the funds to the successful applicants. Furthermore, they were responsible for the national evaluation of the selected **operations**. This was subcontracted to the audit authority, namely, the Danish Centre for Social Science Research.

Project UDENFOR was responsible for the delivery of the project of the same name. DanChurchSocial was responsible for the delivery of Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in Copenhagen, The Red Cross was responsible for delivery of Care Centre Svalegangen, and the Salvation Army was responsible for Project Step-for-step back to work.

The four partner organisations collaborated with public authorities, foundations, and other relevant partners to make the **operations** a success.

As a part of this study, we interviewed staff from the Managing Authority, the National Evaluation Project Manager from the Audit Authority, and managers from two partner organisations (Annex 1).

3. Key findings on the implementation of FEAD

3.1. To what extent was FEAD support successful – or not – and why?

Overall achievement of FEAD objectives [criterion: effectiveness]

According to all interviewees and the national evaluation, FEAD-supported activities in Denmark have been **overall very successful in reaching, supporting, and integrating the most vulnerable people into society, and hereby reducing the number of people at risk of poverty**. This is evidenced by the fact that all participants in the operations were part of the target group with a total of 3,031 participants, which exceeds the initial goal by an additional 1,431 participants. However, it is important to note that this number of participants was not reached strictly as a result of FEAD funding, but the operations also received funding elsewhere. The overall success of FEAD-supported operations is also evidenced by the high percentage of success rate for establishing contact to other existing social services ranging from 62% to 96% as illustrated in Table A. 52. Examples of this are bridging the gap between the Region and the municipality in the case of

Care Centre Svalegangen or helping participants obtain a social security number in the case of Project Homeless vulnerable migrants in Copenhagen. Furthermore, all operations complement national efforts and policies on social inclusion and poverty eradication as it addresses groups left behind by national efforts. Thus, the overall objective of reducing poverty and social exclusion was met.

Table A. 52 – Number of unique participants and estimated success rate for building bridges to existing social services

Project	Number of unique participants	Est. success rate % for building bridges to existing social services
Project Homeless vulnerable migrants in Copenhagen	2,641	96
Project UDENFOR (Outside)	61	75
Care Centre Svalegangen	65	78
Project Step-for-Step back to work	158	62

Source: adapted from national evaluation.

Based on both the national evaluation and interviews, **the hallmark of these operations was their ability to help vulnerable residents fulfil their basic human needs, thereby providing a solid foundation for positive life changes and long-term, sustainable solutions** (examples provided below). All operations succeeded in giving vulnerable people an experience of dignity, which makes them receptive to advice and support and creates empowerment.

All partner organisations have extensive experience of working with the socially vulnerable and have identified the most vulnerable based on their experience with and observation of the groups that are unreachable by existing social services. **The partner organisations managed to meet the target group at eye level, help them where they have needs and where society has failed to meet those needs.** This is clear from both the evaluation and interviews conducted.

All four operations demonstrated the ability to create meaningful and lasting change in the lives of those at the very edges of society in different ways. There are examples where vulnerable people improved their health; left abuse; left homelessness; made good social connections; reconnected with family and friends, and reduced loneliness; and entered the labour market. For example, Care Centre Svalegangen helped more vulnerable people to receive treatment and avoid re-admission to hospital. Project Outside helped vulnerable people out of homelessness, while supporting social relationships and reducing loneliness. Project Step-for-Step back to work helped vulnerable people into work, and Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in Copenhagen helped residents take up other opportunities that can help the target group make lasting improvements to their lives.

Reach of target groups [criterion: effectiveness]

The national evaluation demonstrates that **the operations have excelled in reaching their defined target groups as all participants were part of the defined target groups.** The operations collectively reached over 3,000 unique individuals, however, some of the operations also received funding elsewhere which contributed to this number. Determining how many were reached as a direct result of FEAD funds has not been possible. As such, the operations have surpassed the initial target of reaching 1,400 individuals but with the support of separate funding.

According to the national evaluation **Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in Copenhagen** has been in contact with 480 residents yearly, which is lower than the intended goal of 600 per year. However, the COVID-19 epidemic presented a challenge in reaching the target group due to many returning home and reduced staff capacity due to national restrictions. All participants were legal migrants and consisted of mainly adults in the age group 15-65 years. Women were a small percentage of the group ranging between 11-14 %

over the project period. Around 8 % of participants stated that they suffered from mental illness and 1% stated they suffered from a disability. There is also a clear distinction between two different types of participants with one being resourceful and with a high chance of getting into the job market if they can overcome administrative barriers, while the other group has serious challenges such as mental illness and is unlikely to enter the job market. All in all, the project **succeeded in attracting the relevant target group**.

For **Project UDENFOR**, with the target group of homeless in Copenhagen and Aarhus, it had a total of 162 residents participate in the programme. The goal was 90 programme participants, meaning the project has far exceeded expectations. The project has also had contact with many other residents in the target group, but not closely enough to warrant documentation. All participants have been homeless with at least half suffering from a mental illness. For Copenhagen, all participants were migrants, while in Aarhus, migrants only made up about 9 % of participants. Overall, the characteristics of the originally intended target group are consistent with the target group that has participated in Project UDENFOR. Consequently, the project has **succeeded in attracting the relevant target group**.

The target group for **Care Centre Svalegangen** was vulnerable homeless persons in the South Denmark Region, requiring care, restitution, and support after hospitalisation with somatic or mental illness. Over the project period 2019-2021, the centre had 65 unique residents enrolled, which is lower than the original goal of 70 residents per year. The project faced severe challenges in recruiting participants during the COVID-19 pandemic as there were fewer patients in the target group, and the target group generally stayed away from hospitals. All participants were homeless and legally residing in Denmark. Around 74 % of participants stated they had a disability and 49 % stated they suffered from mental illness. 3 % were migrants and 25 % were women. According to interviewees and the national evaluation, the project was **successful in reaching the relevant target group**.

Project Step-for-step back to work was aimed at poor, homeless migrants from other EU countries, who could be helped into the job market. The target group speaks some English or Danish and is less burdened by illness or addiction. The original goal was to enrol 80 residents per year in the 10-week programme. The project averaged around 63 residents per year, meaning it did not reach the initial goal due to challenges in recruiting participants because of COVID-19. All participants were homeless migrants. Of the 97 participants from the period 1st July – 31st December 2021, 56 % had a mental illness and 11 % had a disability. As per the feedback from interviewees and the findings of the national evaluation, the project is deemed to have **effectively reached its target group**.

It is noted that the **FEAD requirements hindered the inclusion of illegal migrants, but interviewees express that there are no groups they believe have not been addressed**. However, **more funding** would enable them to reach even more vulnerable people. It is also noted that there is an **overrepresentation of men** among the target group, which explains why the number of female participants is low. **Most participants resided in urban areas** as 3 out of 4 **operations** were in Copenhagen or Aarhus, the two largest cities in Denmark. The fourth project, Care Centre Svalegangen, was in Middelfart Municipality, which is a more rural area.

Adjustments to FEAD to address new challenges [criterion: effectiveness]

In response to new challenges, especially those stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, several operations made ongoing adjustments and adaptations to ensure the recruitment of their target groups. For instance, Project Step-by-step back to work shifted from a fixed intake structure to continuous intake to accommodate fluctuations in the target group caused by border closures during the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 meant that less migrants were arriving in Denmark and that the most resourceful homeless EU migrants already in Denmark returned to their home country. Similarly, Care Centre Svalegangen experienced postponement due to COVID-19, resulting in a shorter project period and an adjusted target for enrolments.

Despite these challenges, Care Centre Svalegangen persevered, successfully establishing the centre, and securing new funding. The impact of COVID-19 was significant, prompting substantial adaptations in project operations, including limitations on group gatherings and adjustments to cater to the evolving composition of the target group. While some homeless individuals returned to their home countries, the most

vulnerable remained, necessitating tailored adaptations.

Project UDENFOR was not impacted by COVID-19 because the project period 2016 to 2019 was prior to the pandemic.

CRII+, REACT EU and CARE were not relevant for the **operations** in Denmark as they had already been implemented, completed or were in final stages at the time.

The adjustments, driven by external factors such as the pandemic, have been acknowledged as effective and proactive by both the national evaluation and the interviewees, ensuring the continued success of the **operations**.

Horizontal principles of FEAD *[criterion: effectiveness]*

The operations demonstrate a commitment to the horizontal principles of FEAD, contributing to their overall effectiveness.

Partnership principle

The **operations** actively engage in forming partnerships with each other and with existing social services as evidenced by data in the national evaluation. This collaborative and holistic approach has been acknowledged as a key strength, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. The importance of this partnership principle has also been underscored in the national evaluation of FEAD **operations**.

Gender equality

While there is no direct focus on gender within these **operations**, they have made a conscious effort to reflect the gender distribution of particularly vulnerable individuals. As the target group primarily consists of men, the **operations** have naturally reached more men.

Preventing discrimination

Though discrimination is not a primary focus, the **operations** have placed an emphasis on treating vulnerable people with respect and challenging discriminatory practices wherever they occur between vulnerable people. By reaching a group that might otherwise be overlooked, such as Roma or Romanian homeless people, these initiatives have indirectly combated discrimination against particularly vulnerable residents by reaching them where existing social services have not been able to.

Respecting the dignity of the most deprived persons

The organisations responsible for the **operations** have a wealth of experience in working with vulnerable people. The national evaluation highlights the success of these **operations** in establishing relationships, providing a sense of security, and building trust among vulnerable individuals. This approach is rooted in treating them with respect, ensuring that nothing is imposed without consent, maintaining anonymity, and refraining from setting demands or using a condescending tone. The **operations** effectively meet vulnerable individuals at eye level, acknowledging their unique needs and preserving their dignity.

Facilitating and hindering factors *[criterion: effectiveness]*

In evaluating the effectiveness of FEAD supported **operations** in Denmark, several key factors emerged, influencing both their implementation and their resulting outcomes. These factors encompass elements that facilitated progress, as well as those that presented challenges or unintended consequences.

Success factors

A **holistic approach** that extends across sectors and involves various stakeholders has proven to be essential. Many of the most vulnerable individuals contend with multiple challenges, including social, economic, and health-related issues. A comprehensive approach, coupled with **cross-sectoral collaboration**, has proven effective in addressing these multifaceted challenges. This also meant that the **operations** fostered **good relationships with municipalities, regions, and other organisations**. This also gave cause to **unintentional knowledge transfer**, which had a broader, positive impact.

Time is a critical element in successfully reaching the target group. Time is especially critical for building relationships, creating a safe space for change, and consistently following through on initiatives. Time is indispensable when working with particularly vulnerable individuals, as it allows for the establishment of trust and paves the way for meaningful progress. For Care Centre Svalegangen, the relatively short enrolment period of two weeks has been a strength because it allowed social care workers to work intensively on quickly finding sustainable solutions for participants and building bridges to other social services. However, in Project Step-for-step back to work, the allocated time of 10 weeks is deemed insufficient because the wait from national services can sometimes be up to 6 weeks and because it takes time to build relationships with the target group that often feels distrustful of social services.

Failure factors and challenges

Despite the successes, challenges have arisen that hindered the effectiveness of FEAD-supported **operations**. **Finding suitable physical locations** proved to be a significant hurdle. Municipal concerns about the potential influx of homeless individuals from other areas due to new initiatives made securing locations more complex. This challenge was overcome through extensive dialogue by partner organisations. Interviewees expressed that the concerns of municipalities that eventually agreed to housing operations were unwarranted as the target group tended to return to their 'home' municipality.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** posed an additional barrier, particularly in reaching and influencing the target group as desired. Some vulnerable people are believed to have returned to their home countries due to the pandemic, making it challenging for some activities to reach and assist this group. This challenge resulted in a failure to reach the goal of participants in three out of four **operations**, however, the **operations** combined and with the addition of external funding exceeded the overall goal of reaching 1,400 people by an additional 1,600.

Interviewees point out that **tracking and registering the target group** was difficult, and thus, **obtaining data on them** was challenging. The assessment of the proportion of citizens who participate in other operations after they have participated in a FEAD-supported **operations** is thus an estimate.

The target group can be a complex group to help as they face a range of different challenges that can have a negative impact on a project outcome. For example, at the beginning of Project UDENFOR, there were incidents where one vulnerable participant attracted drug dealers to the area, where they were building houses, which posed a significant challenge. This issue was resolved through cooperation with the police, highlighting the need for proactive problem-solving to mitigate negative consequences.

Socio-economic impacts

While socio-economic impacts have not been quantitatively measured, qualitative assessments highlight **several positive socio-economic effects at both micro and macro levels**. In Care Centre Svalegangen, efforts to prevent residents from re-entering the healthcare system after being discharged resulted in cost savings and improved well-being.

On a microeconomic scale, **Project UDENFOR** led to 6 out of 162 **people no longer being homeless and taking steps toward greater self-sufficiency**. Individuals gained increased self-confidence and self-esteem, often with the aspiration of re-establishing relationships with family members and securing employment. At a macroeconomic level, the project had a broader societal impact. It reduced the economic burden associated with residents who were in frequent contact with healthcare services and the police.

The success of various activities led to the decision to continue all four initiatives. For example, Care Centre Svalegangen secured funding for the next four years, with potential plans to expand to two additional locations. Several vulnerable participants in the project showed improvements during their stay. **Some overcame addiction, others re-established contact with family members, and a few even secured jobs with help from staff.**

Overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations [*criterion: efficiency*]

According to the national evaluation, there was a **reasonable balance between costs and results** as indicated by positive participant responses. Overall, there were more participants in the **operations** than expected and led to between 62 % and 96 % of participants utilising other national social services.

The interviewees also acknowledge the **overall cost-effectiveness of the operations**. However, no specific financial calculations exist to compare different types of activities. The interviewees find it challenging to quantitatively assess the cost-effectiveness of this type of project and struggle with qualitative assessment. Nevertheless, they believe that the FEAD-supported **operations** effectively assisted the target group, and that overall, the costs are considered reasonable compared to similar **operations**, particularly in comparison with the perceived value of the **operations** to the vulnerable and society in general.

The **complexity of the issue contributes to the difficulty in assessment**, according to one interviewee. It is challenging, and thus expensive to reach the target group, but the target group also represents a large societal cost if not helped. While direct calculation of cost-effectiveness is not feasible, it is possible to highlight factors that positively and negatively impacted it.

A common experience among the **operations** was that **FEAD funds alone were insufficient, but crucial, in launching the operations**. Importantly, **FEAD support made it easier to secure additional funding**,

leading to indirect returns on investment. For instance, Care Centre Svalegangen received furniture donations from a company, which would not have been possible without FEAD assistance.

The **engagement of volunteers significantly enhanced efficiency.** FEAD funds not only provided a location but created opportunities for volunteers to contribute to **operations**. This implies that every hour a volunteer spends on a project can be directly attributed to FEAD, increasing cost-effectiveness, to the extent that volunteers can feasibly be involved in specific **operations**. Care Centre Svalegangen also highlights the positive impact of cooperation with local authorities. Furthermore, being independent of the public system has, according to interviewees, improved cost-effectiveness, as the vulnerable homeless population tends to trust non-profit organisations more than the public sector due to fewer demanding requirements.

Administrative requirements such as monitoring are identified as the **main factor reducing cost-effectiveness**, as further elaborated below.

Administrative burden of monitoring and reporting requirements [*criterion: efficiency*]

In terms of the administrative burden, it is **not possible to report a quantitative number of hours spent on administration** as partner organisations have not tracked this monthly.

The National Board, responsible for the administration of the fund, reported hours spent only up to the financed amount, but they do estimate, that they **spent at least twice the allocated hours (on administration)**. Overall, there is a consensus that the **FEAD funds have been administratively burdensome** among partner organisations. They generally cannot point to specific issues that lead to it being burdensome. Instead, they highlight the sheer scope and magnitude of administration as the problem. Given the above, an attempt to retrieve quantitative estimates of the time usage would result in imprecise estimates, as the partner organisations would have to guess how much time they spent on a project they finished years ago. At the same time, the interviews indicated, that partner organisations felt the administrative burdens were high. Asking them to estimate this would therefore likely be seen as yet another administrative burden. The estimate would therefore not be very informative, and cause partners further burdens.

An interviewee from a partner organisation describes the administrative burdens as so severe that they would probably not apply for this type of funding again under similar conditions. The interviewee highlights the cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs as the major issue. The **co-operation with the Ministry of Social Affairs posed significant administrative challenges in the project**. The main reasons for this were a perceived lack of political support and prioritisation, resulting in delays in fund distribution. Moreover, the frequent turnover of personnel in the Ministry, including short-term contracts, exacerbated the situation. Another factor was the absence of a well-defined reporting plan initially, which led to multiple changes and duplication of reporting efforts. The project organisation has several years of experience with similar operations, including those funded by the EU, and has never experienced a project as administratively burdensome as this one.

A manager from a partner organisation describes in an interview, that they felt they were met with **distrust from the EU institutions and highlighted the audit-requirements as excessive**. They report being subject to several audits despite having an external continuous audit in place. Partner organisations also express that the requirements were too standardised for reporting. Thus, for some **operations**, it was impossible or infeasible to meet the data requirements. An example of this, where the managerial authority requested and the EU Commission did end up giving some flexibility, was the registration of vulnerable people with disabilities and mental illness as this proved difficult.

In conclusion, partner organisation interviewees expressed a considerable perception of **unnecessary administrative burdens in the operations**. One interviewee highlighted expansive reporting requirements from the EU level, resource-intensive tasks, and a lack of adequate funding. Another interviewee highlighted challenges in the management of **operations** by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Simplification measures [*criterion: efficiency*]

The interviewees suggested several changes to simplify administrative requirements and reduce the administrative burden. One interviewee proposed **considering the relevance and feasibility of obtaining specific data for each project rather than imposing uniform registration practices for all operations**. For instance, it may be unrealistic and impractical to register residents at a shelter where they only stay for one night. In these cases, it might be more relevant to gather information on the number of contact points, thus, easing the burden. Conversely, in **operations** involving long-term support and trust-building with individual participants, it would be more realistic and relevant to register the individuals themselves. Tailoring documentation requirements to the type of project could therefore reduce unnecessary administrative burdens

and make the data more relevant.

Another interviewee noted that the high level of financial control implemented is based on the assessment of corruption in other EU countries. As the level of corruption is low in Denmark, **financial control could be relaxed when an external audit is in place.**

Lastly, one interviewee suggests that **having direct contact with one European MA instead of a national MA would reduce complexity in administration.** They suggest that FEAD funds and management of the **operations** should be managed directly by FEAD with partner organisations leading the **operations**, rather than involving a national ministry in the process. This would allow for a uniform monitoring practice and reduce the number of stakeholders that partner organisations need to report to, thus, easing the administrative burden.

Coherence of FEAD with other interventions [*criterion: coherence*]

Assessing the extent to which FEAD operations in Denmark align with and complement national policies for poverty alleviation and social inclusion reveals a picture of cohesiveness and partnership. These observations are underscored by the focus on internal and external harmonisation.

One of the striking aspects of FEAD-supported operations in Denmark is their commitment to creating coherence for the target group. This alignment is achieved through a holistic and multifaceted effort that addresses the diverse needs of the most deprived individuals. Moreover, it extends across initiatives by bridging connections to existing social services, thereby ensuring that the initiatives are well-integrated.

The operations have proven instrumental in reaching target groups that were previously unreachable by existing social services. The FEAD-supported operations have effectively filled intervention gaps in the national landscape. The ability to identify and address marginalised populations demonstrates the success of FEAD in complementing and augmenting ongoing efforts for poverty alleviation and social inclusion in Denmark.

One significant indicator of the complementarity and success of FEAD-supported operations is the continued national funding that these operations have received after FEAD support has concluded. Authorities in Denmark recognise the value and impact of these initiatives and have chosen to provide sustained financial support. This demonstrates a high level of complementarity with national strategies and a desire to build upon the successes achieved through FEAD funding.

Collaboration has played a pivotal role in enhancing the complementarity of FEAD-supported operations with national and regional policies. The synergy between the operations and national efforts has been bolstered by good collaboration. This partnership extends beyond project boundaries, contributing to the creation of a more unified approach to address poverty and social inclusion challenges. Such collaboration has garnered support from authorities for the continuation of successful initiatives.

One prominent illustration of the coherence between FEAD support and national policies is the role of Care Centre Svalegangen. It significantly complements existing initiatives by acting as an intermediary between regional and municipal efforts. The presence of the Red Cross in this transition supplements the work of public organisations, ensuring a more seamless and coordinated support system for vulnerable individuals. For Project Udenfor, the focus on helping vulnerable people access housing and secure a home aligns with the "Housing First" strategy, which has been implemented in Denmark since 2009 (Egede-Jensen, 2021). By reaching a target group that other initiatives may not reach, FEAD demonstrates its coherence with broader homelessness alleviation policies, filling a critical void in social inclusion efforts.

Denmark does not participate in the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The European Social Fund (2014-2020) did fund initiatives in Denmark; however, activities were not focused on the most vulnerable people in society like those who are homeless. Instead, ESF 2014-2020 supported initiatives related to employment, education, and social inclusion. It aimed to improve the employability of the workforce, enhance education and training opportunities, and reduce social disparities. As such, there was no overlap with other EU-funded activities within this specific social area.

3.2. Is FEAD still relevant?

Relevance to target groups [*criterion: relevance*]

In Denmark, FEAD support has been effective in targeting the most deprived residents. The operations have **consistently reached relevant groups** as evidenced by data from the national evaluation, ensuring that people in dire need receive the assistance they require. Interviewees indicate that the operations' design aligns with the needs of the most deprived, with no specific group left unaddressed. This demonstrates the relevance of the selected target groups for FEAD support in Denmark.

The operations have been **especially relevant for EU migrants** due to several reasons. Firstly, there is little

national incentive to help this group as there is a concern that it will attract more vulnerable EU migrants.

Secondly, this group does not have national security numbers (CPR-numbers), which prevents them from receiving assistance from existing social services. Applying for a CPR number may be challenging for this target group as they may not be resourceful enough and are unable to overcome a language barrier. In Project Step-for-step back to work, counselling activities supported them in their integration into Denmark, which is the support they may not otherwise have received.

The support provided through FEAD in Denmark has proven to be highly appropriate in addressing the needs of the most deprived. The operations have demonstrated an understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by this group. The initiatives are tailored to meet these needs effectively. This underscores the suitability and adequacy of the support measures offered by FEAD in Denmark.

Relevance of FEAD now and in the future [*criterion: relevance*]

There is some **concern among interviewees about what will happen to some of the groups supported by FEAD**, especially for Project Homeless Vulnerable Migrants in Copenhagen, whose target group was **homeless EU migrants**. This indicates that this is a group of vulnerable residents for whom there remains a relevant need for support in Denmark now and in the future.

While FEAD has consistently addressed the needs of the most deprived, new challenges have emerged due to external factors. For instance, the increasing **inflow of refugees is a trend that could impact the relevance of FEAD support in the future**. These emerging needs pose challenges in terms of securing the necessary funds to implement initiatives that can effectively respond to them. **The FEAD design in Denmark may need to adapt to these evolving circumstances to maintain its relevance.**

It is important to acknowledge the collective action problem among EU countries when addressing the most deprived residents. Since these individuals often place a significant financial burden on society, there may be limited financial incentives for EU Member States to provide assistance. This is where EU funding plays a crucial role and bridges the gap. The EU's contribution ensures that aid organisations that are familiar with the target group's needs can continue to address these challenges.

3.3. Did FEAD make a difference and to whom?

EU added value [*criterion: EU added value*]

Volume, scope, role, and process effects

The FEAD program has played a pivotal role in providing additional resources to boost existing efforts in Denmark. It has acted as a vital source of funding, contributing to a collective effort to assist the most deprived residents. As a result, the number of participants and organisations benefiting from actions and policies targeting poverty and social inclusion has significantly increased.

In comparison to existing actions, **FEAD has extended its reach to new and harder-to-reach groups in Denmark.** By facilitating opportunities for support and implementing specific actions, it has **broadened the scope of initiatives tackling poverty and social inclusion**. These expanded policy areas have been instrumental in ensuring that FEAD's impact extends to a more comprehensive spectrum of individuals and communities.

FEAD operations in Denmark have **supported innovative actions and played a role in mainstreaming local and regional innovations at the national level.** By financing activities that were previously unknown or underutilised, FEAD has driven innovation in the field. Initiatives such as empowering vulnerable residents to build their own homes have demonstrated new and effective ways to address their needs. These innovations have proven to be sustainable and have continued even after FEAD support ended.

The FEAD-supported operations have initiated sustainable changes in cooperation with administrations and various entities in Denmark. It has fostered integration between different policy systems, such as social assistance and training, and has empowered the actors involved in the operations. This transformative process has enhanced the overall effectiveness of actions and policies designed to alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion. **Process effects have not only improved cooperation and integration between policy systems but have also empowered the actors involved.** FEAD has fostered an environment in which vulnerable citizens are treated as the experts in their own lives, allowing them to design, build, and furnish their homes, promoting self-esteem and a more meaningful life.

Based on this case study, it is evaluated that the **most substantial impact of FEAD support in Denmark has been its role in providing additional resources, and significantly increasing the number of residents engaging with existing social services.** It is not the source of funding that is important for the target group. However, the EU is seen as crucial to the establishment of this type of project and therefore also to the value

created by the operations. These operations succeeded in extending support to new and more challenging groups, such as EU migrants, which underscores the tangible difference FEAD has made in the lives of the most deprived in Denmark. This is further validated by the fact that all four operations have received national funding since FEAD support ended.

Visibility [visibility]

In Denmark, the general public and end recipients are generally not highly aware of the funding sources of support programs like FEAD. The target group, particularly the most deprived, are primarily concerned with receiving assistance for their basic needs rather than the origin of the funding.

Interviewees highlight that both the **public and the recipient group have limited awareness of FEAD as an EU fund**. Some efforts have been made to increase awareness, such as putting up posters with information about the funding source, specifically mentioning that the project is funded by FEAD. This indicates that there are attempts to inform both the public and end recipients about the source of funding. For instance, in talks provided by partner organisation, FEAD is explicitly mentioned as the funding source. Interviewees also say that if the topic of funding comes up with participants, FEAD is explicitly mentioned.

The visibility of FEAD is primarily influenced by the mode of communication and information dissemination within support programs, such as the placement of posters and explicit mentions during discussions related to funding sources. However, the overall evaluation is that there is limited visibility of FEAD in Denmark.

4. Good practices

This section presents two good practices implemented in Denmark under the FEAD programme. These practices have been selected based on their relevance to the general and specific objectives of the FEAD programme. Furthermore, they are deemed good practices in accordance with EU principles. The narratives are built on evidence from various actors involved, including Managing Authorities (MAs), partner organisations (POs), and individual beneficiaries.

Empowering the target group to improved self-sufficiency

Project Step-by-step back to work aligns with the general objective of FEAD, which aims to reduce poverty and social exclusion among the most vulnerable populations. This project's focus is on poor, homeless migrants from other EU countries, and to help them integrate into the job market, thereby enhancing their overall well-being. The success of this project is reflected in its ability to help vulnerable individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency. By providing a holistic approach that combines counselling, accommodation, access to health care, job market integration, and a resocialisation programme, it has empowered participants to rebuild their lives and obtain employment. This is considered good practice in relation to the effectiveness criteria because it illustrates the achievement of the overall and specific objectives as well as the ability to reach the target group at eye level in a way that existing social services have been unable to.

Building bridges between existing social structures and national authorities

Care Centre Svalegangen, with its unique focus on homeless persons recovering after hospitalisation, significantly contributes to the specific objectives of the FEAD programme. One of these objectives is to promote the integration of the most deprived into existing social services, and thus, effectively build bridges between support structures that enhance their well-being.

This project has been highly successful in bridging the gap between the target group, hospitals, municipalities, and other social services. In accordance with the coherence principle, Care Centre Svalegangen ensures a smooth transition between the regional health authorities and the local authorities by serving as an intermediary. The project comprises three essential phases: somatic care and restitution, counselling and compassionate support, and psychosocial aftercare. This seamless transition from medical care to comprehensive support allows residents to access social services, fostering their reintegration into society and ensures a high level of coherence between different stakeholders. The significance of Care Centre Svalegangen is further emphasised by its ability to secure continued national funding, signifying its lasting impact on Denmark's social services landscape.

5. Conclusions and lessons learned

Effectiveness and coherence

The FEAD-supported operations in Denmark have demonstrated success in **fulfilling the programme's objectives**, specifically pertaining to supporting the social inclusion of the most vulnerable individuals. These operations have exceeded expectations, **reaching a significant number of individuals**, and have shown a profound commitment to **improving the lives of those on the fringes of society**.

The ability of all operations to **bridge gaps and build partnerships** with existing social services, as evident in their national evaluations and interviews, is a testament to their effectiveness and cohesiveness. They have successfully reached the target groups and **facilitated a transition for many residents into other national initiatives**, thereby promoting social inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, and overall well-being.

The operations have shown **commitment to the horizontal principles of FEAD**, including partnerships, gender equality, prevention of discrimination, and respecting the dignity of the most deprived persons. By reaching out to those who might otherwise be overlooked, they have **indirectly combated discrimination** against vulnerable citizens.

Key success factors include the element of time and a holistic approach that involves cross-sectoral collaboration. These factors have contributed to building trust and creating meaningful change and are elements to be considered in similar operations. **Challenges, such as securing physical locations and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been addressed with effective adjustments, ensuring the continued success of the operations.** Moreover, while socio-economic impacts have not been quantitatively measured, qualitative assessments reveal positive outcomes at both micro and macro levels. These initiatives have improved well-being, while also reducing the economic burden on healthcare and law enforcement services. As such, their **impact extends beyond service provision, creating meaningful and lasting change in the lives of some of the most vulnerable individuals, aligning with the core values and principles of the FEAD programme.**

Efficiency and simplification

The evaluation of FEAD operations in Denmark reveals a **mixed landscape of cost-effectiveness and administrative efficiency**. While the operations have proven their effectiveness in assisting the target groups and facilitating access to national social services, the assessment of their cost-effectiveness presents some challenges due to the complexity of the issues at hand. In terms of cost-effectiveness, the lack of specific financial calculations makes it difficult to quantitatively compare different project types. Interviewees find it challenging to assess cost-effectiveness, primarily due to the unique and multifaceted needs of the target groups. However, it is widely acknowledged that FEAD-supported operations have effectively assisted the target groups, and the costs are generally considered reasonable in comparison to similar initiatives. One interviewee highlights the complexity of the issue, stating that reaching the target group can be challenging and expensive, but the societal cost of not aiding this vulnerable population is far greater. The impact of FEAD funding extends beyond the financial support, as it often acts as a catalyst for securing additional funding and resources, resulting in indirect returns on investment.

Volunteer engagement is another factor that enhanced the efficiency of the operations. By involving volunteers, FEAD operations could attribute their time directly to the programme, thereby increasing cost-effectiveness. The cooperation with local authorities and independence from the public system has also improved cost-effectiveness, as some vulnerable homeless populations tend to trust non-profit organisations more than the public sector.

Despite the overall efficiency, the **monitoring and reporting requirements have posed an administrative burden to the operations**. While quantitative data on the hours spent on administration is not available, the interviewee from the partner organisations underlines that the FEAD funds have been administratively burdensome. The magnitude of administrative requirements, standardisation issues, and excessive audit demands have posed challenges to these operations. Simplification measures are suggested by interviewees to reduce this administrative burden. Tailoring documentation requirements to the type of project, considering the low level of corruption in Denmark, and allowing direct contact with FEAD are all proposed as ways to ease the complexity of administration.

Relevance

The initiatives supported by FEAD have shown a keen understanding of the unique challenges and requirements of the target groups, ensuring that those in dire need receive the assistance they require. One of the most remarkable achievements is the programme's efficacy in assisting EU migrants, a group that faces distinct challenges as these individuals often lack the means to access assistance from existing social services.

If funding for the operations did not continue, some groups, such as homeless EU migrants in Copenhagen, may according to partner organisations struggle to receive help from other organisations or utilise social services. It highlights the ongoing necessity to support this vulnerable demographic in Denmark, both now and in the future. External factors, like the increasing flow of refugees, introduce new challenges that could impact the relevance of FEAD support in the future.

Recognising the collective action problem among EU countries when addressing the most deprived residents is crucial. The financial burden placed on society by these individuals may limit the financial incentives for EU Member States to provide assistance. EU funding, such as FEAD, plays a pivotal role in bridging this gap, ensuring that non-profit organisations familiar with the target group's needs can continue to address these challenges effectively.

EU added value and visibility

The FEAD programme has brought significant EU added value to Denmark's efforts to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion. Across multiple dimensions, including volume, scope, role, and process effects, FEAD has played a pivotal role in providing additional resources and support to both existing and emerging initiatives. As a funding source, FEAD has increased the number of participants and organisations involved in actions and policies targeting poverty and social inclusion. Furthermore, FEAD has extended its reach to new and harder-to-reach groups, effectively broadening the scope of initiatives aimed at tackling poverty and social inclusion and ensuring a comprehensive spectrum of individuals and communities.

FEAD-supported operations in Denmark have also **spurred innovation** in the field. Initiatives like empowering vulnerable residents to build their own homes have demonstrated new and effective ways to tackle the challenges of poverty and social exclusion. Importantly, these innovations have proven to be sustainable, continuing even after FEAD support ended.

One of the most transformative effects of FEAD support has been the **enhancement of cooperation and integration between existing social services.** This transformative process has empowered the actors involved in the operations, fostering an environment in which vulnerable people are treated as experts of their own lives. This approach promotes self-esteem and a more meaningful life for those affected.

Despite **challenges related to the visibility of FEAD in Denmark**, such as limited awareness among the public and end recipients, steps were taken to enhance visibility, such as the placement of posters and explicit mentions of FEAD during discussions about funding sources.

Summary

The FEAD-supported operations in Denmark have proven **highly effective** in achieving their objectives, reaching a significant number of individuals on the fringes of society, and leaving no specific target group unaddressed. However, it is important to note that there are still many within the target group that have not been reached, for example, in other geographical areas of Denmark.

The operations have **successfully bridged gaps and built partnerships with existing social services, promoting social inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, and overall well-being.** The operations have demonstrated a keen understanding of the unique challenges of target groups with a particular focus on assisting EU migrants, who face distinct challenges, and succeeded in promoting self-esteem among the vulnerable.

The **future relevance of FEAD support is believed to remain high** among interviewees, especially for groups like homeless EU migrants. Recognising the collective action problem among EU countries, FEAD played a crucial role in bridging the gap and ensuring aid organisations could effectively address the challenges of the most deprived residents. The **EU-added value of FEAD support in Denmark has been substantial**, extending resources, broadening the scope of initiatives, fostering innovation, and enhancing cooperation between existing social services.

It is estimated that the **operations have created high value compared to the costs.** However, there is

consensus among both the Managing Authority and partner organisations that the operations have been **administratively burdensome**.

Overall, FEAD has made a meaningful and lasting impact in Denmark, aligning with the core values, objectives, and principles of the FEAD programme.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

This case study is based on the national assessment of the FEAD programme in Denmark, along with desk research and four interviews: one interview with two employees from the Danish Authority of Social Services, one interview with the project manager for the evaluation of the FEAD programme in Denmark who is also an expert in the field of vulnerable citizens, and two interviews with managers from two distinct partner organisations.

It is a great advantage that we could rely on the comprehensive Danish evaluation of the FEAD programme for this assessment, and then add insights from desk research and four new interviews to our understanding.

The FEAD-funded project ended over a year ago in 2021. It was difficult for those being interviewed to recall specifics, such as the amount of time spent on administrative tasks during the project. As a result, it is not feasible to produce meaningful estimations on the administrative tasks.

Appendix 2: References

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Appendix 3: FEAD indicators

Table A. 53 – Input indicators for the implementation of FEAD in Denmark in 2014-2022

Indicator	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission (EUR)
2014-2022	3 834 938.15	3 632 110.48	3 259 697.43

Source: SFC 2014 database.

Table A. 54 – FEAD participants in Denmark in 2016-2021

Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total number of persons receiving social inclusion assistance	474	484	454	757	277	570
Number of children aged 15 years or below	23	10	31	19	3	7
Number of persons aged 65 years or above	68	60	82	121	40	105
Number of women	68	60	82	121	40	105
Number of migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as Roma)	474	484	382	757	265	523
Number of persons with disabilities	2	49	72	29	106	142
Number of homeless	474	484	454	757	277	570

Source: SFC 2014 database.

*Please note that there was no expenditure in 2014, 2015 and 2022.

X.4 Germany

6. Context and background

Germany's long-term unemployment rate is notably low compared to the EU average (1% in 2022, versus the 2.4% EU average). Similarly, the country's at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) was 20.9% in 2022, slightly below the EU-27 average of 21.6%. The rate declined steadily between 2015 and 2019. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to an increase of the AROPE in 2020 and it has since not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. The rate of children at risk is on the rise since 2020.

Other indicators, however, do not paint as bleak a picture. Social transfers (e.g. unemployment benefits, housing allowances) have a strong impact on mitigating poverty in Germany, reducing the AROPE by 35.7% on average³⁸³. The importance of these transfers was especially pronounced in 2021 and 2022, when the social transfers reduced the AROPE by more than 40%, alleviating the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, not all people residing in Germany have knowledge of or access to social benefits. These groups are specifically vulnerable to being at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Among these are EU citizens, who relocated to Germany, but have not found employment, to which many social benefits, such as social insurance, are tied. Another group, partially overlapping with the former, are homeless persons or those at risk of becoming homeless.

Table A. 55 – Socio-economic context in Germany

Germany	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
1. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) Total		20.0	19.8	18.8	18.5	17.3	20.4	21.0	20.9	
2. AROPE Children		19.8	20.6	18.6	17.6	15.5	22.1	23.9	24.1	
3. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD)		5.7	4.7	3.7	3.4	3.0	4.4	4.3	6.1	
4. Severe material deprivation rate (SMD)	5.0	5.8	3.7	3.4	3.1	2.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	
5. Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	7.5	7.1	6.5	7.0	6.4	5.3	12.7	10.5	11.4	
6. Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction % reduction of AROPE	33.2	33.5	34.8	33.2	33.3	36.2	34.6	40.3	42.1	
7. Housing cost overburden	15.9	15.6	15.8	14.5	14.2	13.9	9.0	11.0	11.8	
8. Self-reported unmet need for medical care % of population 16+	1.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3	
9. Households with very low work intensity		9.5	9.4	8.7	8.0	7.6	8.3	9.5	9.7	
11. Population in the EU could not afford unexpected financial expenses	32.6	30.4	30.0	29.3	28.1	26.0	37.6	32.3	33.5	
13. Share of total population having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			
14. No indoor flushing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			
17. Persons who cannot afford a telephone	0.3	0.2		0.2	0.1		0.0			
18. Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out clothes	5.6	5.1	4.7	4.5	3.8	3.6	4.9	5.4	6.8	
20. Persons who cannot afford to get-together with friends or family (relatives) for a drink or meal at least once a month	14.3	12.7	7.3	6.8	6.3	6.2	6.4	5.9	7.6	
21. Persons who cannot afford internet connection for personal use at home	4.5	3.9	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	1.8	2.2	2.6	
22. In-work risk of poverty	7.5	7.1	6.5	6.6	6.3	5.7	6.5	6.7	5.3	
23. Long-term unemployment	2.2	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.0	
25. Employment rate	72.8	73.0	73.7	74.3	74.9	75.7	74.4	75.6	76.9	
26. Children (aged less than 18) living in households with very low work intensity		6.9	8.2	6.8	6.0	5.1	9.4	10.8	10.8	
27. At-risk-of-poverty rate for children		14.6	15.4	15.2	14.5	12.1	15.4	16.4	14.8	
28. Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD) for children		6.7	6.2	4.3	3.8	3.3	5.9	5.5	8.4	

Source: Eurostat.

7. Reconstructing the intervention logic

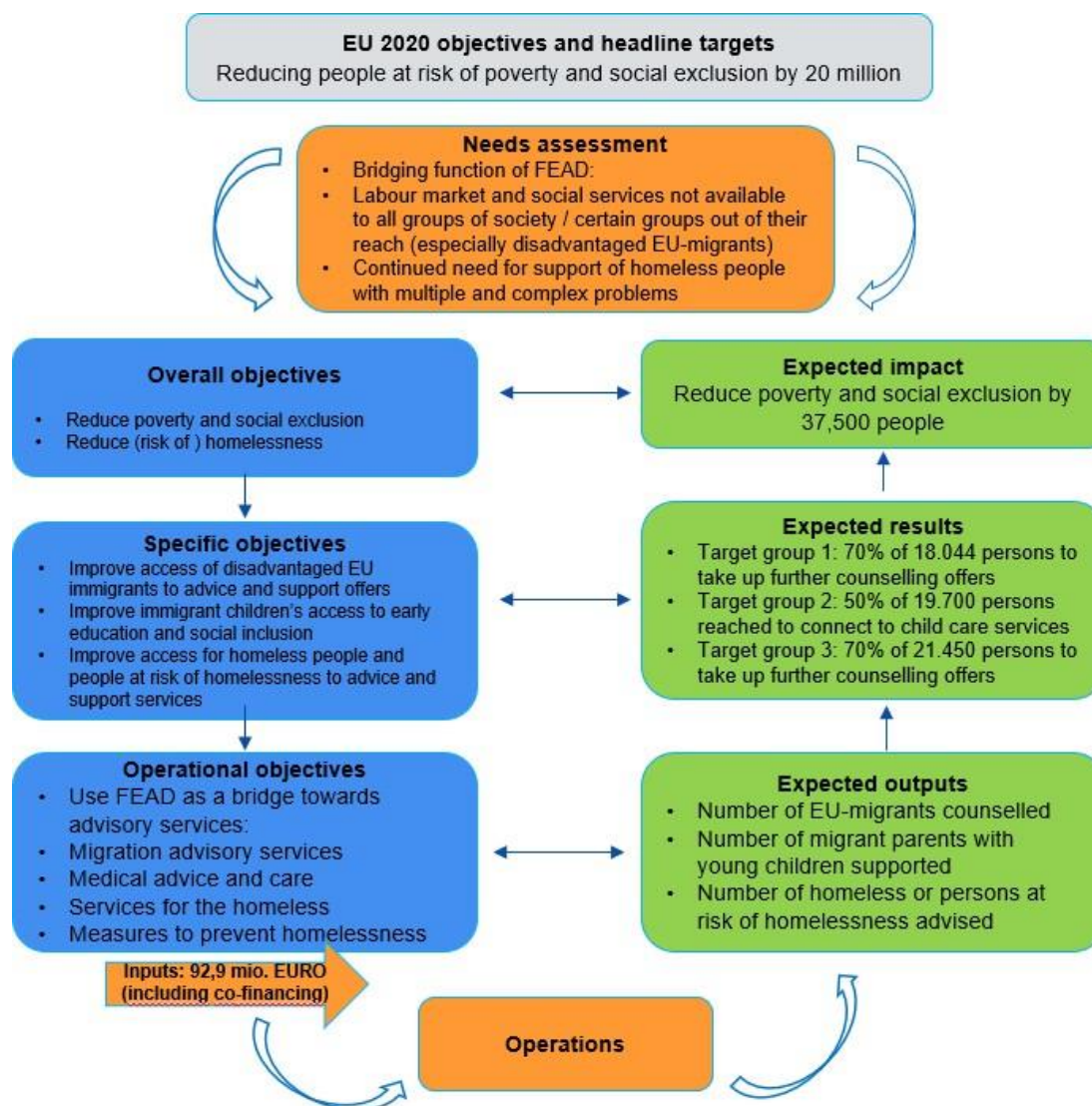
This section provides an overview of FEAD in Germany. It describes the intervention logic of the programme, the national policy framework, FEAD objectives and target groups, and the governance and delivery systems.

Figure A. 70 illustrates Germany's strategy for utilizing FEAD funds to address poverty and social exclusion. The distinctive possibilities for actions under OP II enabled stakeholders

³⁸³ Reduction in percentage of the risk of poverty rate, due to social transfers (calculated comparing at-risk-of poverty rates before social transfers with those after transfers; pensions are not considered as social transfers in these calculations). The indicator is based on the EU-SILC (statistics on income, social inclusion and living conditions).

to approach target groups which could not previously be targeted through national programmes. Germany's programme focuses on newly arrived EU citizens and their children, supporting them to access early childhood education, as well as homeless people to improve their access to counselling and support measures. These groups face significant barriers to integrate into the regular labour market. The primary objective of FEAD was to act as a bridge between these target groups and already existing services, which they were either unaware of or unable to access without additional support.

Figure A. 70 – Intervention logic of FEAD in Germany



Source: adapted from FEAD mid-term evaluation

7.1. National policy framework

FEAD was embedded into the national social policy framework with the aim to bridge the gap between hard-to-reach target groups and existing services. It also offered services to people otherwise outside of the social security net. The coherence of FEAD with other interventions was guaranteed through strictly formulated eligibility criteria, especially regarding potential overlaps with the European Social Fund (ESF). The target groups chosen were those left out of many other types of social services, e.g. those linked to employment and social insurance. Synergies were ensured through close cooperation of all stakeholders in the FEAD monitoring committee [EHAP Begleitausschuss].

In addressing homelessness, German law mandates municipalities to provide emergency housing. As a result, FEAD funded operations therefore only focused on bridging the gap toward housing services by supplementing them.

The FEAD budget was relatively small compared to Germany's broader social policy expenditures. Nevertheless, there was an unmet need for additional support to the specific target groups selected.

7.2. Objectives and target groups

FEAD in Germany had the objective to function as a bridge between the most disadvantaged groups and existing public services at the communal, regional, or federal level through low threshold³⁸⁴ counselling services. FEAD operations focused on target groups that are among the most disadvantaged people in Germany with little to no realistic prospects of integration into the regular labour market. Previously, social inclusion measures supported by EU funds focussed on facilitating employment access for disadvantaged groups within the framework of the ESF. The general objective of the FEAD OP was therefore to provide these previously overlooked groups access to local or regional support services in order to improve their acute living situation and the conditions for their social inclusion. Focusing on these specific groups was supported by prior research and statistical data.³⁸⁵

The specific objectives of FEAD concentrated on the following disadvantaged groups:

- Newly arrived disadvantaged EU citizens (objective 1, later objective A)
- Newly immigrated parents with children in kindergarten up to seven years old (objective 2, later objective A)
- Homeless people and those at risk of homelessness (objective 3, later objective B)

Under objective A, the target group's motives for relocating to Germany include poverty and a lack of social security, combined with social and economic exclusion in their countries of origin. This is accompanied by the hope of improving their living conditions in Germany and achieving a self-determined life in the medium to long term.

Due to the multiple and complex challenges faced by FEAD target groups, these individuals live under particularly stressful conditions. They often do not have a living space or live in extremely cramped conditions in overcrowded apartments and houses with serious defects. Insufficient or missing language skills, combined with a lack of educational and professional qualifications, further limit their access to the regular labour market and increase their dependence on irregular, often exploitative, employment. For women, especially Roma women, there are additional gender-related disadvantages, including a high degree of dependence on other family members.

In addition to housing issues, the situation of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness is often characterised by other individual limitations such as addiction, disabilities, psychological problems and acute illnesses. This can lead to existing support services not reaching them, as they find themselves unable to seek help. Many homeless individuals feel disconnected from society and lack the motivation to actively engage with social integration programs.

Statistical data suggests that men are more frequently affected by homelessness than women. However, the proportion of women among the homeless has increased in recent years. Women tend to be underrepresented in the homeless assistance system because they are more likely to experience "hidden homelessness" - i.e. (temporary) accommodation with relatives or acquaintances without tenancy protection. Homeless women are also at higher risk of exposure to violence.

The increase in homelessness is structural, caused primarily by rising rents and a shrinking supply of small apartments within a low-price segment. Multiple personal impairments of the homeless also reduce their chances of finding suitable and adequate accommodation (in addition to the problems mentioned above, financial problems such as debt, coupled with a low level of education and qualifications).

EU migrants and homeless individuals, or those at risk of homelessness, often experience discrimination, which not only limits their chances of social participation, but also blocks or severely restricts access to regular support offerings. Rejection and prejudice increase their social exclusion and lead them to turn away from help and by doing so slide further into poverty. To provide meaningful support that enables pathways to social integration, both these individuals and the municipalities require additional assistance, which is facilitated through FEAD. FEAD represents a bridge between the most disadvantaged groups and the

³⁸⁴ Low-threshold services aim at making help easily accessible, especially to people who are not able to request help from services associated with certain barriers such as language proficiency, relocation etc.

³⁸⁵ Evaluation and Monitoring report for FEAD in Germany 2020

municipalities' regular assistance systems and supports communication between advisory services and those seeking advice, through low-barrier outreach and interculturally sensitive advice and mediation.

According to FEAD monitoring data, the largest proportion of particularly disadvantaged newly immigrated EU citizens who made use of FEAD advisory services came from Romania (38%) and Bulgaria (33%). This was followed by 'advice seekers' (as they were called) from Poland (8%), Greece, Italy and Spain (2-3% each). An additional 7% of those seeking advice through FEAD came from 22 other European countries, each contributing less than 2% of the total.³⁸⁶

7.3. Implemented operations

Germany opted to fund operations under OP II, by organising two calls, or 'funding rounds'. The first one was open from 2015-2018 and the second one from 2019 to 2020. The total financial volume was approximately EUR 93 million, of which 85% were EU funds, 10% federal and 5% participating organisations' own funds. REACT-EU funds were not used.

FEAD supported 84 projects in the first funding round from December 2015 to December 2018 and 67 projects in the second funding round, from January 2019 to December 2020, with a project implementation allowed until the end of 2023.³⁸⁷

In order to be eligible for funding, beneficiary organisations had to form cooperation alliances.

Operations were carried out by numerous regional stakeholders from civil society, religious organisations, youth work, social work, public service providers, municipalities and districts. Individual projects received a total funding (including EU, national funding and own contribution) in between EUR 211 000 and EUR 1 000 000. The average costs by output-unit (i.e. the total cost for each person receiving counselling) reported for the first round of funding (2016-2018) ranged between EUR 182 and EUR 489, with an average of EUR 267.³⁸⁸ Accompanying measures were not foreseen for OP II.

Germany exceeded its target of reaching 18 044 counselled immigrants in the first year of the programme, which has further increased in subsequent years to a cumulative total of over 112 thousand immigrants. Other output targets were also met, for instance on immigrants with children in kindergarten, which were reached in 2020. The target for counselled homeless persons was reached in 2018 and further increased since to a cumulative total of over 35 thousand.

The focus of projects was often broad (providing general counselling services) and, in some cases, very specific (e.g. promoting health care for homeless persons). Examples of projects that operated in both project periods include:

- Outreach contact work and specialist agency work to secure housing in the Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald district
- Contact point for disadvantaged European Roma and non-Roma
- Comprehensive advice for newly immigrated families from Eastern Europe and their Children in Cologne (ZuBeFa)
- Promoting social coexistence in Bremerhaven
- Arriving in Wedding
- European Family Integraton in Neukölln
- AHA! FEAD-advice in Reinickendorf
- Advice centre Theodora: counselling for prostitutes, fighting poverty, fostering participation
- 'Frost protection guardian angel 2.0' – Health promotion and Counselling for Homeless persons
- FAWOS – Special Office for Securing Housing
- GIVE – Health – Integration – Diversity - Empowerment

³⁸⁶ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report 2020

³⁸⁷ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report 2020, p. 166

³⁸⁸ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report 2020, pp. 166-171

- Help before loss of housing
- ‘Human dignity – living and housing’
- Stabilize Köln >> outreach street work and help in navigating

7.4. FEAD governance and delivery system

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs acted as FEAD’s Managing Authority (Unit VI^{Gru} EF2 ESF-Programme Implementation, FEAD Managing Authority), and another administrative unit also acted as the certifying body (Unit VI^{b4}). There was also a separate auditing authority (Auditing Authority ESF, EGF and FEAD). Payments by the EU Commission were made to the Federal Treasury Halle.

Representatives of the central municipal associations (German Association of Cities, German Association of Districts, German Association of Cities and Municipalities), the institutions of independent welfare (The Federal Association of Independent Welfare Services (BAGFW), Federal Working Group on Homelessness Aid, National Poverty Conference) as well as the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and the Federal States were continuously involved in the preparation of the FEAD OP. The stakeholders were involved in identifying the two support priorities and in deriving the three individual objectives and specifying the content of FEAD funding. For example, following the intervention of several actors, the circle of possible recipient institutions was expanded to include migrant organisations.³⁸⁹

Several Federal Ministries which were affected in terms of content, and the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration were also closely involved in the planning and implementation of the FEAD funding.

The Federal Office of Administration, a federal service agency, was tasked with administering FEAD. During the programming period, they were replaced by the German pension insurance ‘Knappschaft-Bahn- See’ (KBS). This agency was responsible for tasks such as handling payments to partner organisations and checking their invoices in return.

In order to be eligible for funding, interested parties needed to form a ‘cooperation alliance’ [Kooperationsverbund]. Partners could be municipalities and independent welfare organisations, or other non-profit organisations. Municipalities had to be part of a cooperation, though not necessarily as an applicant or beneficiary. As soon as there were financial transactions between the partners, they formed a ‘project alliance’.³⁹⁰ Initially, it was anticipated that the financial interconnection of partners would lead to a more intensive cooperation in project alliances, leading to positive financial outcomes for all parties involved. However, evidence does not support this hypothesis. According to the evaluation and monitoring report, there was even slightly more cooperation among members of cooperation alliances, thus without financial interconnection.³⁹¹

8. Key findings on the implementation of FEAD

8.1. To what extent was FEAD support successful – or not – and why?

Overall achievement of FEAD objectives [criterion: effectiveness]

FEAD, though limited in size relative to the total German population and social policies, has **made a difference to the most deprived groups**, by supporting their social integration through bridging the gap between the target group and existing advisory services. The programme targeted groups previously not properly reached by social policies. The specific objective of *contributing to the development and fostering of support structures for alleviating poverty and social exclusion in Member States*, has thus been achieved. The target values set for outputs and results were over-achieved, although, as there was no experience in working with the specific target group of EU-migrants, they had been under-estimated in the beginning.³⁹²

By bridging the gap between the target group and existing services, it was assumed that this would lead to the target group receiving additional financial or material support to alleviate poverty and material deprivation in

³⁸⁹ FEAD OP Germany

³⁹⁰ BMAS, 2015

³⁹¹ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report 2020, p. 67

³⁹² SFC 2014 Database

the long run. It is also expected that, by becoming more familiar with public institutions, the target group would be better equipped to participate in society, through increased interaction with social services, participation in early childhood education, and through the offer of additional opportunities for social interaction. Table A. 56 shows the target values in relation to the cumulated output and result indicators over the course of the programming period. **All targets have been over-achieved by a large margin**, particularly in the case of adult EU migrants who received advice, with a success rate of over 600%. The objectives set regarding the proportion of people successfully redirected or accompanied to at least one other advice or support offer were also achieved.

However, according to interviewees, **the targets and objectives show limitations, as they were set at a relatively low level** concerning the successful redirecting to at least one advice or support offer. Furthermore, if a person came back to the same project with a different request, this could not be counted as an additional result. Stakeholders interviewed reported that they had no means to establish a monitoring system to follow-up on the effectiveness of the offers to which they directed their clients. One interviewee described this problem as follows: *‘I could refer a pregnant woman to a pregnancy counselling service. She would attend the appointment there, and in the documentation system it would sound like ‘successful social integration’, and it could be, but it could also be that she went there but many questions remained unanswered, so the indicators for success are deceptive. Still – they are a very useful instrument.’*

From interviews with stakeholders interacting with newly arrived migrants and their children, there is evidence that **especially the long-term accompanying of children and their parents to early childhood education has proven to be very successful**. In many cases, the offer through FEAD projects was highly appreciated by the service providers the target group was redirected to, with reports that it very positively affects their work with the target group. Moreover, several interviewed stakeholders state that in many individual cases the counselling was indeed successful.

Table A. 56 – Achievement of programme-specific targets (output and result indicators) in Germany in 2014-2022

Specific output indicator	Target	Number of people reached	% of target	Number of people successfully redirected or accompanied to other services	Share of people successfully redirected or accompanied to other services	Initial Target share
Number of adult EU migrants advised	18,044	112,408	623%	98,874	88%	70
Number of supported parents of migrant children of kindergarten age	19,700	31,414	159%	28,266	90%	50
Number of supported migrant children of kindergarten age	19,700	25,177	128%	22,152	88%	50
Number of homeless people and at risk of	21,450	36,236	169%	29,843	82%	70

homelessness advised						

Source: own calculations based on SFC 2014 data

Reach of target groups [criterion: effectiveness]

FEAD in Germany has effectively reached the most vulnerable groups it set out to reach newly arrived EU-migrants This includes a significant number of individuals from minority communities, such as Roma and Sinti, who migrated to the country in search of work and support services. In total, the programme reached 112,408 adult EU migrants, 31,414 parents of migrant children, 25,177 migrant children and 36,236 homeless persons or persons at risk of homelessness. Notably, the proportion of women among those supported within the homeless population was higher than their overall representation in homelessness statistics.³⁹³

FEAD operations were specifically developed to serve groups otherwise left out or not reached by existing support structures. The **projects combined various ways of contacting the target group**. They set up fixed contact points and consultation hours in their own rooms or at local social institutions and initiatives. They raised awareness of their services through events, media outreach, and direct engagement activities, locating the target groups in their communities—on the streets, at common meeting places, or at their accommodations (e.g., among homeless individuals or newly arrived EU citizens, many of whom belong to the Roma minority). For homeless people, outreach work was the primary means of providing advice and support. **The FEAD advice centres quickly became known among newly immigrated EU citizens through word of mouth, resulting in a decreased relevance of outreach work over the course of the programme**. Even institutions of the regular assistance system referred the target groups to FEAD funded advice centres, so that their counselling could be better prepared, structured and conversations supported through translation and mediation, which underlines the importance of FEAD as a bridge to regular help services.³⁹⁴

Adjustments to FEAD to address new challenges [criterion: effectiveness]

REACT-EU funds were not used for FEAD in Germany, as many projects had already been budgeted and started before 2020, the second call for proposals had already been closed and thus could not make use of the additional funds. Projects that required additional support could be supported within the framework of FEAD and there appeared to be no significant demand for additional funding beyond this³⁹⁵.

The Managing Authority planned a mid-term evaluation for the first round of projects (2015-2018), in order to be able to adapt and facilitate the second round (2019-2023). The main changes implemented from 2019 onward, based on the evaluation findings, included:

- **Restructuring Specific Objectives:** The counselling for newly immigrated adults and advice for newly immigrated parents and their children (SO 1 and 2) were merged, simplifying the consulting process significantly.
- **Lump-Sum Definition for Workshops:** A lump sum was established for partner organisations wishing to plan anti-discrimination workshops, a service that approximately 25 out of the 67 projects in the second round utilized.
- **Accompaniment for Advice Seekers:** The definition of funded activities was expanded to include accompanying individuals seeking advice to appointments. This allowed for children and their parents to receive support for up to six months, enabling projects to document their actual efforts in providing assistance while also supporting integration into early childhood education or daycare facilities.
- **Advice on Returning to Home Countries:** Projects were given the option to provide advice for those wishing to return to their home countries, clarifying this as a possible alternative after consultation with the European Commission.
- **Inclusion of Women in Poverty-Induced Prostitution:** It was clarified that women in poverty-induced prostitution could be included in the target group, allowing for continued support and advice for these individuals.

³⁹³ Annual Implementation Report 2022

³⁹⁴ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report 2020

³⁹⁵ Stakeholder interviews

Both in the FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report³⁹⁶ and interviews indicated that in the **early years of the programming period, there were severe difficulties in working with the federal agency in charge of administering FEAD** (Federal Office of Administration). In the framework of an initiative to support deindustrialisation in affected areas in East-Germany, a change in responsibilities to a new agency (Knappschaft Bahn-See) took place within the programming period, whose work was highly appreciated by interviewees.

Horizontal principles of FEAD [*criterion: effectiveness*]

FEAD in Germany focused in particular on the horizontal principles of gender equality and preventing discrimination.

Men and women were evaluated based on their support needs. In particular, the funding priority “Addressing, advising and informing particularly disadvantaged newly immigrated EU citizens and their children about early education and social care offers” was intended to reach and address mothers through the target group of children. In practical implementation, the **projects attempted to offer women and men advice and support depending on their needs**. Among the homeless, supported women made up a share of between 25% and 40%, which is above the registered share of women in homelessness assistance statistics.³⁹⁷

Prejudices and stereotypes towards the target groups, especially newly immigrated EU citizens, were discussed intensively in the monitoring committee. The Hildegard Lagrenne Foundation for the education and inclusion of Roma and Sinti in Germany offered to develop on-site workshops to raise awareness among public administration staff and other organisations in dealing with these target groups. 15 anti-discrimination workshops were implemented in 2017 and 2018. These workshops were evaluated in order to develop a viable concept for the second round of funding, which could then be implemented by all interested FEAD project providers.³⁹⁸ As a result, in the second round, all participating partner organisations had the option to schedule workshops either with the previous trainer or with similar providers through a designated lump-sum budget..

The workshops revealed that **most projects were confronted with antigypsyism as a special form of racism**. In the workshop, the history and functions of racism in general and antigypsyism specifically, were explained in detail, as a way to recognize the social tendency to stereotype people with a Roma background as outsiders. The workshops tried to make people reflect on their own stereotypes and prejudices towards certain groups and to show strategies how to counteract these. Many participants exhibited a noticeable change in perspective during the workshops. In 2019, A brief report was prepared that led to the development of a guide for partner organisations to prepare and organise anti-discrimination workshops and intercultural training. The guide was intended to support partner organisations in the preparation of these workshops, and focused on defining target groups, developing goals, reflecting on a balance of informative and interactive modules and selecting suitable trainers.

While public administration staff were identified as a specific target group for these workshops, their representation was notably low, with most participants being from civil society organisations, schools, youth work, or social services. Other horizontal principles were addressed at a basic level, i.e. taken into consideration during the planning of initiatives, but lacking specific measures. Overall, the evaluation report mentions the need to further develop concepts and minimum standards to be applied for the implementation of horizontal principles.

Success and failure factors [*criterion: effectiveness*]

One of the **key success factors mentioned by most interviewees was the forming of cooperation alliances or project alliances**, which fostered communication and increased the positive impact of projects through synergies and combined efforts. Also networking events were perceived as helping to successfully implement FEAD operations.

Regarding the implementation of operations, **FEAD funding was perceived by many partner organisations as a ‘luxury’**, giving the opportunity for very low-threshold³⁹⁹, direct and long-lasting contact with the target group - a type of support that had not previously been funded by any other source.

³⁹⁶ FEAD Evaluation and Monitoring Report2020

³⁹⁷ Annual Implementation Report 2022

³⁹⁸ Interview and Annual Implementation Report 2022

³⁹⁹ Low-threshold services aim at making help easily accessible, especially to people who are not able to request help from services associated with certain barriers such as language proficiency, relocation etc.

For the target group of children, the **long-term accompaniment to early childhood education programmes was seen as highly successful**. This success was reflected in the high rate of 88% of individuals who were successfully redirected or accompanied to other services, compared to the initial target of 50%.

In one project, **the combination of FEAD advice with labour market-focused measures** was identified as a key success factor. However, other projects reported difficulties in implementing this combination, as job search counselling had not been foreseen as part of the sessions. Federal authorities had discussed this issue extensively. With the inclusion of FEAD into the ESF+ for the following programming period, combining these measures does not pose a problem anymore.

For many initiatives the **restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the progress of their projects**, at a time when some of the groups became even more vulnerable (e.g. homeless), as many participants either left the country, or could not be reached due to the closure of facilities. This issue was successfully addressed by changing outreach activities, e.g. phone-calls instead of personal visits, or 'window counselling' activities in other cases.⁴⁰⁰ These measures ensured high take-up rates throughout 2020 for all target groups except children, where a small decline in participation occurred.⁴⁰¹

Overall cost-effectiveness of FEAD operations [*criterion: efficiency*]

In the national evaluation carried out in 2020, figures for the first round of operations were taken into consideration for comparing costs occurred with potential savings. The cost-benefit analysis describes the targeted and actual direct costs of the programme, its possible indirect costs as well as relieving effects on the support system. FEAD had a funding volume of around EUR 92 million. The majority of the resources were used in the first round of funding.

In the **first round of funding, 84 projects worth EUR 255,000 to EUR 1 million were approved for funding**, with projects that dealt exclusively with the target group of objective 3 (homeless or people at risk of homelessness) incurring significantly lower costs compared to projects targeting objectives 1 and 2 (EU migrants and their children). In the **second round of funding, 67 projects received funding ranging from EUR 211,000 to almost EUR 1 million**. In both rounds, the average funding for projects that pursued more than one objective was not necessarily higher than that of projects only addressing a single objective. The project volume mainly depended on the number of direct staff positions created.

Determining the indirect costs or relieving effects of complex social policy interventions, such as FEAD, is associated with numerous challenges. For this reason, the evaluation report used information gathered from project examples to give approximate effects. **Almost all the institutions interviewed indicated that they were able to reduce expenses thanks to the support provided by FEAD projects at the local level.** Institutions with a focus on advisory services, in particular, reported relief through the FEAD intervention. It was not possible, however, to specify where these savings were reflected in monetary terms, in part due to the funding structure of most services being characterised by plurality. One interviewee stated: *'[The question] revolves around determining whether advising and accompanying individuals living in poverty and exclusion, and ensuring they have reasonable accommodation, is cost-effective for municipalities.'*⁴⁰² *While there are no clear figures available, there is a prevailing assumption that this approach is more cost-effective. For instance, cities like Dortmund express this sentiment, even though it may not be empirically proven.'*

When asked about their take on cost-effectiveness, another interviewee stated that *'the fundamental question here is whether providing municipal shelters and relief services results in tangible cost savings. There is a desire for this to be the case, not only from a humanitarian perspective but also because every municipality aims to enhance the quality of life for its residents, ensure their material well-being, and facilitate access to employment opportunities. While there is consensus at a moral and societal level, the cost-efficiency aspect remains an open question that warrants further investigation.'*

All interviewed partner organisations reported that the **funds were primarily used to cover the costs of project staff working directly with advice seekers, which was considered efficient**. In many cases, administrative staff were funded through federal or the organisations' own resources, while the EU contribution could be used for those directly working with the target group. For example, a project in Saxony (in the East of Germany): *'was able to pay 25% of a position for administration, [...] there was the regular budget for supporting tasks, plus 5% of own funds as 'overhead' as a regional association, which was very good for organisations, [also] the cost distribution [of] 10% Federal budget, [85% EU budget] worked well.'*

⁴⁰⁰ Stakeholder interviews

⁴⁰¹ SFC Database 2014

⁴⁰² The argument being that homelessness as such is a burden on any municipality, mainly from an ethical point of view that cannot be expressed in a specific amount of money, but even including actual costs like additional cleaning expenses.

[...] And it reached the people concerned 1:1 via the staff who were purely available for this kind of social work, they had nothing to do with administration.'

Administrative burden of monitoring and reporting requirements *[criterion: efficiency]*

The **perceived administrative burden of monitoring and reporting requirements differed among stakeholders**. While some found it very burdensome, others didn't report any problems, and even praised elements such as a lump sum for administrative tasks, which *'brought calmness to the project, to know that this was just a fixed amount'*. One interviewee underlined that a certain level of administrative effort is unavoidable. The Managing Authority tried their best to offer support, including workshops for expressions of interest and submitting applications. Additionally, the administrative agency responsible for FEAD (KBS) was highlighted in a positive light for its willingness to support partner organisations.

Originally, a **highly detailed itemised billing approach was used, which will be replaced (under ESF+) by a more streamlined and consolidated method in order to simplify the work for partner organisations**, allowing for easier cost structuring and billing processes.

One interviewee representing a small provider receiving with FEAD their first ever EU funding suggested that **administration would have been easier if they had previously collected experience in working with ESF funds or would be a larger organisation**. According to them *'the administrative part was already very high, it was very time-consuming to create expense receipts, and alternative offers had to be obtained even for small amounts. Documentation of the cases, which is defined as success, was an annoying additional effort, because the wording used internally was different. It was challenging from our point of view, but given that we had no practice with it, larger organisations certainly have more routine.'*

Some interviewees expressed criticism of FEAD's documentation system, particularly the need for an electronic version of paper questionnaires. However, there was general agreement among all beneficiaries that providing some form of proof was necessary. The evaluation report mentions the need to simplify and standardise the monitoring questionnaire to assist easier data evaluation. These specific monitoring requirements were set at a national level and can thus be interpreted as a form of gold-plating. At EU-level, it is required to provide a 'system to record data on individual participants', without further specifying the methods.

Regarding time necessary for administrative tasks, **many projects reported that they had one staff member who dedicated 25% of their working time (approximately 10 hours a week) to administrative tasks related to FEAD**.

Simplification measures *[criterion: efficiency]*

After a mid-term evaluation, the **FEAD objectives 1 and 2 were merged in order to facilitate advisory support in practice**.

The **system of invoicing is being simplified for the next programming period under ESF+**. Suggestions for simplification were also made in the evaluation report. They include simplifying and standardising the monitoring questionnaire to make it easier to evaluate data.

Coherence of FEAD with other interventions *[criterion: coherence]*

Coherence of FEAD with other interventions was guaranteed through strictly formulated eligibility criteria, especially regarding potential overlaps with the European Social Fund (ESF). The target groups chosen were those left out of many other types of social services, e.g. those linked to employment and social insurance. Synergies were ensured through close cooperation of all stakeholders in the FEAD monitoring committee [EHAP Begleitausschuss].

Regarding the work with the target group of homelessness, **one interviewee working with homeless people, reported problems regarding coherence**. According to German Law, municipalities are obliged to assist people in need of housing. However, municipalities are often overwhelmed with this task, so that the right to be assisted in many cases has to be fought for in court. Therefore, many municipalities were glad about the services offered through FEAD covering this gap.

8.2. Is FEAD still relevant?

Relevance to target groups [criterion: relevance]

By managing the overall FEAD budget through two consecutive calls for proposals (each for projects with a maximum length of 3 years) and by funding numerous different operations carried out by local stakeholders who were close to the target groups, in cooperation alliances with municipalities, **the chosen operations were very relevant to the needs of the most deprived.**

The target groups were carefully chosen through extensive research and data analysis. However, in practice, **it was considered a limitation that support was only offered to those not seeking employment and regarding children, only to those of kindergarten age.** In the evaluation report published in 2020 it was suggested to extend the target group of children to those older than seven years of age, especially school children, in order to accompany their start in compulsory schools, and to include job seekers, so that they would also be able to receive advice and support.⁴⁰³ As the recommendations were only formulated at the end of the FEAD programming period, changes were not implemented then. However, in the funding guidelines for Ehap+ (the continuation of FEAD as a strand of the current ESF+), the target groups are now broader, including children under 18 years of age⁴⁰⁴.

In order to guarantee a holistic approach, **evaluation outcomes show that German language courses would be necessary for the target groups**, in order to enable transition from poverty alleviation towards employment promotion, which would also include the possibility to be counselled about job opportunities (e.g. provided through other strands of ESF/ESF+).

For certain target groups, **the evaluation report also recommended offering material supplies**, such as the distribution of small quantities of food, clothing, public transport tickets or condoms for people working in prostitution. In the second proposal period, this was already partially taken aboard through including a flat rate for remaining costs.

Relevance of FEAD now and in the future [criterion: relevance]

FEAD made a difference to a large number of people belonging to the target groups. Nevertheless, since the target group of newly arrived EU-migrants is a very mobile one, with new people arriving in Germany each year, there is definitely a constant and ongoing demand for the services offered under FEAD.

Even though the housing cost burden has slightly decreased between 2019 and 2022, **there is still much pressure on the housing market in Germany**, especially in densely populated areas in the south and west of Germany. Therefore, even though FEAD operations were often successful in preventing homelessness or redirecting to other competent services, the group of people at risk of homelessness or homeless has not significantly diminished in recent years.

EU added value [criterion: EU added value]

There is **substantial evidence that FEAD had long-lasting effects, which would not have been produced were it not for EU level intervention.** Many interviewees underlined the importance of FEAD funding to launch their projects, allowing them to showcase the added value for society, especially for target groups for which it is more difficult to receive national or regional funding.

In many instances, projects were able to secure full or partial financing from alternative sources after FEAD funding ended, e.g., securing funding from their municipalities or regions instead. According to the national evaluation carried out in 2020, of the 79 projects examined, 21 had been successful in continuing the work initiated through FEAD funding. In 10 of these cases, former FEAD financed staff members were completely financed by municipalities. In 10 other cases, the FEAD projects were able to ensure that some aspects of their work continued to receive financial support from municipalities. In one case, it was also possible to persuade four municipalities in a district to take over personnel for the continuation of FEAD's advisory approach. For example, in Saxony: *'the city really saw this [support for homeless persons] as an urgent need and created 2-3 staff positions for this work after only 3 years.'*

In many places, **cooperation between municipalities and welfare institutions or other independent or non-profit social work organisations has led to working relationships being established or existing**

⁴⁰³ FEAD Evaluation and monitoring report 2020, p.11

⁴⁰⁴ Funding guidelines for Ehap+ under ESF+: <https://www.bundesanzeiger.de/pub/de/amtlicher-teil?3>

forms of cooperation being intensified. All stakeholders interviewed for this case study agreed that the requirement to cooperate strengthened cooperation. Various municipalities integrated the low- barrier, outreach and multi-lingual advisory approaches into their strategies to combat poverty. As a result, their offer was significantly improved - a more intensive support structure was created, which in some cases also had a more comprehensive and sustainable effect than the sole provision of emergency care. Many interviewees also reported how they profited by exchanging with representatives of other projects at national network meetings.

- **Volume effects:** FEAD provided additional resources in terms of staff available for outreach activities, multilingual advice, accompaniment of members of the target group to services, and prevention instead of only ‘emergency’ work. By redirecting a large number of persons to existing services, it contributed to an overall increase of take-up within the target group.
- **Scope effects:** Through specific outreach activities, FEAD in Germany reached groups that are otherwise hard to reach, such as homeless persons and newly arrived EU-citizens who are not eligible for other types of support. FEAD also provided more opportunities of support, and developed policy areas, for example regarding the cooperation of stakeholders in the field of prevention of homelessness.
- **Role effects:** In many cases, FEAD operations have supported innovative actions which had previously not found adequate funding. Some of the initiatives have also been mainstreamed to the local/regional level (e.g. the prevention of homelessness).
- **Process effects:** Process effects, specifically regarding the cooperation among all relevant stakeholders, were reported by all interviewees and mentioned in the evaluation and monitoring report. The importance of networking with stakeholders through cooperation alliances as well as regionally and nationally through the FEAD network meetings was perceived as added value.

FEAD also made a substantial difference to the target group. One interviewee praised that through FEAD the ‘advice seekers’ profited from an overall increase in their wellbeing, getting the chance to create a better life for themselves.

Visibility

According to interviewees, **FEAD was well known among the partner organisations and municipal/regional stakeholders.** FEAD logos were used for printed materials, and posters were displayed in various centres. However, this level of visibility did not extend to the target groups with the same intensity. The consensus seems to be that the **end recipients of support measures are probably less aware and also less interested in the origin of the funding for their counselling.** In some cases, e.g. outreach work with homeless people, using the FEAD logo was perceived as counterproductive to the cause, as the target group was approached through street workers from organisations well-known to them, where the use of the FEAD logo seemed to potentially create mistrust among potential participants. Consequently, it was primarily used in communications with other stakeholders.

9. Good practices

A good practice example in the field of homelessness is the prevention project ‘**Special Office Housing Security**’ (Fachstelle Wohnungssicherung). In this project, help was offered to a very specific target group: people at risk of homelessness in the participating municipalities in the southern State of Baden-Württemberg. The municipalities themselves were limited regarding funding. There had not been any help for the target group of persons at risk of homelessness, and this project marked the first concerted effort to address this issue in the region.

The project focused (and still focuses) on people who are at risk of losing their homes, often in exceptional circumstances, and provides the immediate and concrete support they need. The service provided had several components:

- Informing individuals about the procedures following the termination of a tenancy and identifying potential points for intervention.
- Assisting individuals in improving their financial situation, such as redirecting advice seekers to debt counsellors. A significant proportion of those seeking help did not receive social benefits even though they would have been eligible and needed assistance with the application process.

- Helping individuals to find new accommodation. In cases where eviction could not be prevented (e.g. in cases when rental contracts were terminated because the owners needed the property for their personal use⁴⁰⁵), the programme aimed to give individuals additional time to find a new place to live.
- Linking clients with further support services to achieve its goals.

Hindering factors were:

- the overall situation on the housing market and difficulties in approaching the target group: the general housing shortage in the Stuttgart metropolitan area, which made it very difficult to find new housing for participants.
- There was also a high proportion of rental contract terminations for personal use.
- Furthermore, in the beginning of the project period, there was little or no awareness of the project's existence among the target group. As a result, it has been a constant task to promote the service and make it as accessible as possible. Regular advertising was done through municipal websites, a lot of networking and rather unconventional methods, such as approaching day-care centres (where single mothers are overrepresented among the target group), and cooperating with local social workers.
- Decentralised consultation hours in local town halls were established to increase the accessibility of the services. This approach became difficult to uphold during times of COVID-19 restrictions.

Despite these difficulties, the programme consistently achieved a (self-reported) 80% success rate, meaning 8 of 10 persons supported by the office can either keep their accommodation or are successfully supported in finding a new permanent accommodation. This confirms the project's effectiveness for those at risk of homelessness. For the target group, the project has played, and continues to play, an important role: some of the municipalities involved in the initial project continue to provide support after the funding period, still with a high success rate of around 80% in achieving positive outcomes. People were either supported to find new housing, or (at an equal rate) supported in keeping their current accommodation. The approach to focus on helping people keep their current housing, instead of offering emergency relief was novel and proved to be very efficient. According to the stakeholder interviewed, evidence suggests that it is easier to find new accommodation while still residing in a permanent location than in a temporary one.

Another success factor was the social component of the project: the interviewee described that people often remain in a 'state of shock' after receiving the devastating news that they are at risk of becoming homeless, rendering them unable to take action. Personal support provided through the project helps individuals to mitigate this shock, enabling them to take proactive steps and thereby increasing their self-efficacy.

Conclusions and lessons learned

FEAD in Germany proved successful in reaching its overall goals through the implementation of more than 100 projects and overachieving all set targets. Though its budget was comparatively small, it made funding for innovative social inclusion projects possible, which in many cases continued to be impactful, even after FEAD funding ran out.

Effectiveness: FEAD in Germany was effective in reaching the target group. Through a mid-term evaluation, the lessons learned early in the programming period could already feed into the second round of projects. The initial set targets were reached and in the case of objective 1, over-achieved already before the end of the second round of financing.

Efficiency: Overall, interviewees reported efficient use of resources, which were thoroughly audited.

Coherence: FEAD was very coherent with other national and EU-funded initiatives, bridging the gap between the target group and existing services.

Relevance: FEAD operations were highly relevant to the target group, as evidenced by the strong demand for advisory services and the substantial overachievement of all result indicators. The results of the evaluation also confirm the relevance of the programme in fighting poverty.

⁴⁰⁵ In Germany, legislation is very protective of renters, thus termination of contracts can only occur under certain circumstances such as failure to pay rent, one of the rare exceptions being 'need for personal use by the owner', in which case the owner needs the apartment in order to secure housing for themselves or close relatives.

EU-added value and visibility: FEAD was able to add value especially through its scope, role and process effects. It played an important role in piloting projects involving target groups otherwise left out, and subsequently paved the way for steady regional/national level support.

Challenges reported were problems in managing the financing of projects by the previous agency in charge, which led to delayed payments and hindered the work of privately financed partner organisations. Both the evaluation and monitoring report⁴⁰⁶ and conducted interviews indicated that in the early years of the programming period, there were severe difficulties in working with the intermediary agency in charge of FEAD administration, which posed a risk to the efficient usage of funds, especially for smaller organisations, as they had trouble pre-financing their staff expenditures. However, the work of the new agency has been highly appreciated by interviewees.

Additionally, the relatively short duration of projects and the gaps in financing between the first and the second period, posed challenges. In cases where projects were extended, this – combined with overall staff shortage in many social services – made it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Lessons learned through the evaluation of FEAD concern the structuring of the programme goals, the co-financing of FEAD, eligible funding items, and monitoring. Recommendations include the expansion of the target groups, especially to include school children and job seekers, and the extension of services offered, which could additionally include material support. Regarding financing, the current share of 5% co-funding was deemed adequate in order to enable as many partner organisations as possible, especially smaller civil society organisations, to participate in the programme. Furthermore, the target groups should be empowered to achieve greater independence, with a guiding principle focused on strengthening self-help and the empowerment of migrants, homeless individuals, and those at risk of homelessness. While working with the target group of EU migrants, it became essential for the partner organisations, to define counselling standards and achieve a certain level of knowledge in dealing with the target group adequately.

⁴⁰⁶ FEAD Evaluation and monitoring report 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

The case study is based on desk research and seven in depth-interviews conducted between October and December 2023, with representatives of the Managing Authority, members of the monitoring committee and partner organisations in different regional States. The interview sample is balanced regarding the objectives targeted: some of the partner organisations focused more on objectives 1 and 2 (later A), some specifically on objective 3 (later B), and some addressed all of them. The sample is also geographically balanced: one partner organisation was in the south of Germany, one in the east, one in the north, and one in the most-densely populated area in the west. Thus, the sample can be considered representative, although it is limited in that not all states and a relatively small percentage of the overall number of projects could be covered. All interviews were held online via Microsoft Teams which allowed for flexibility and increased accessibility. Findings from the interviews were then triangulated with the results of the desk research.

Appendix 2: References

- BMAS [Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs] (2020). *Europäischer Hilfsfonds für die am stärksten benachteiligten Personen* (EHAP)⁴⁰⁷
- BMAS, (2015): *FAQ zur Richtlinie zur Umsetzung des Europäischen Hilfsfonds für die am stärksten benachteiligten Personen* (EHAP)
- SFC 2014, data extracted in December 2023, own calculation
- *Interview with a representative of the national Managing Authority (Ministry of Labour) in Germany, conducted in October 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of an implementing organisation in Sachsen, conducted in October 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of an implementing organisation in North-Rhine Westphalia, conducted in October 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of an implementing organisation in Baden-Wurttemberg, conducted in October 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of a training organisation, conducted in November 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of a member of the FEAD monitoring committee in Berlin, conducted in December 2023*
- *Interview with a representative of Hildegard-Lagrenne-Foundation, conducted in December 2023*
- Walter, Gerd et. al (2020). *Abschlussbericht Monitoring und Evaluation des Europäischen Hilfsfonds für die am stärksten benachteiligten Personen (EHAP)*. SÖSTRA/IAW/defacto, Berlin/Tübingen/Schlierbach [Evaluation and Monitoring report for FEAD in Germany]

Appendix 3: FEAD indicators

Table A. 57 – Input indicators for the implementation of FEAD in Germany in 2014-2022

Indicator	Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations (EUR)	Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission (EUR)

⁴⁰⁷ Link: <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Europa-und-die-Welt/Europaeische-Fonds/Europaeischer-Hilfsfonds/europaeischer-hilfsfonds.html>

2015-2022	107 769 727.00	94 116 105.00	81 584 631.95

Source: SFC 2014 database as of Oct. 2024, Annual implementation report version 2022. Please note that there was no expenditure in 2014.

Table A. 58 – Number of FEAD participants Germany in 2014-2022, per year

Indicator	Total	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of persons receiving social inclusion assistance	199 308	31	35 286	45 105	37 062	27 742	28 168	16 787	9 127
Number of children aged 15 years or below	25 403	4	3 275	5 100	4 084	4 437	4 275	2 626	1 602
Number of persons aged 65 years or above	2 559	0	429	580	480	435	420	157	58
Number of women	98 047	14	16 877	21 762	18 232	13 691	14 223	8 446	4 802
Number of migrants, ... ⁴⁰⁸	162 566	30	29 390	37 540	31 575	21 336	21 605	13 811	7 279
Number of persons with disabilities	4 685	3	904	1 104	858	695	641	316	164
Number of homeless	44 335	2	7 501	8 462	6 508	5 919	8 170	6 392	1 381

Source: SFC 2014 database. Please note that there were no participations in 2014.

⁴⁰⁸ Including participants with a foreign background minority (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)

Table A. 59 – Number of FEAD participants advised and supported in Germany in 2014-2022 (overall target and actual numbers per year)

Indicator	Target	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of adult EU migrants advised	18 044	20	21 988	25 912	21 811	12 657	18 536	7 341	4 143
Number of supported parents of migrant children of kindergarten age	19 700	7	3648	5538	4541	5379	6140	3871	2290
Number of supported migrant children of kindergarten age	19 700	4	3117	5040	4076	4437	4275	2626	1602
Number of homeless people and at risk of homelessness advised	21 450	0	6377	8550	6634	5269	5365	2949	1092

Source: SFC 2014 database. Please note that there were no participations in 2014