



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Diverse approaches to supporting Europe's most deprived

FEAD case studies

2018

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Foreword

The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is an instrument which shows Europe at its best: a Europe which protects. Covering basic needs is essential to ensure human dignity in an inclusive and caring society. The fund is used to alleviate the worst forms of poverty in the EU and to promote social inclusion for those at the margins of the society.

The Europe 2020 strategy aims to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020. Today, one in five Europeans still experience at least one form of poverty. But the numbers are going down due to steady economic growth. The number of people experiencing material deprivation has dropped by five million since the peak of the 2008 economic crisis.

Contributing towards achieving this goal, FEAD supports two types of actions: The first consists of food and/or basic material assistance programmes, such as the distribution of food, clothes. The second finances supporting activities outside active labour market measures, such as non-financial and non-material assistance.

At its best, the fund combines the distribution of food with accompanying measures, such as advice and information on available social services, basic counselling activities such as psychological support and therapeutic measures or workshops, for example on how to manage a household budget or on healthy nutrition.

The case studies in this report show how FEAD is protecting and caring for Europe's citizens and helping to lift them out of poverty, using a combination of material support and access to services.

Looking ahead, we have renewed our commitment to alleviate the worst forms of poverty post-2020. We propose that Member States allocate at least 2% of their future ESF+ resources for measures targeting the most deprived. Integrating FEAD into the ESF+ will allow the continuation of the good practices outlined in this report and will better link material support with stronger social services and other forms of assistance.

Marianne Thyssen

*European Commissioner for Employment,
social affairs, skills and labour mobility*



The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) was created with the objective of contributing to alleviating the worst forms of poverty in the EU, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation. FEAD can be used to support the most disadvantaged groups in society by providing food and basic material items such as clothing, footwear and toiletries, or by organising social inclusion activities.

During the 2014-2020 programming period, FEAD is being implemented in all EU Member States via Operational Programmes (OP) I and II, approved by the European Commission. OP I includes food and/or basic material assistance and OP II is focused on the social inclusion of the most deprived individuals. However, social inclusion is also implemented through OP I, responding to the basic material needs of the most disadvantaged and helping them make a step towards reintegration into society. Member States have the freedom to choose whether to engage with OP I and/or OP II, and determine the target groups, the specific types of support provided and the geographic coverage of their programmes.

Member States cooperate with partner organisations, which can be public bodies or non-profit organisations, to implement FEAD-funded activities. This cooperation means that the Fund is also supporting capacity building within the partner organisations in the area of social policy.

FEAD involves hundreds of actors and stakeholders who are working towards the same objective – to reduce the worst forms of poverty in European countries. In that respect, the Commission recognised the need to establish the FEAD platform for exchange of experience and dissemination of outcomes, giving FEAD a new meaning – being more than just a source of funding, but also a network. Therefore, it supported the development of the FEAD Network in 2016.

The Network is an open membership community for people providing assistance to the most deprived in Europe. This includes national FEAD Managing Authorities, organisations delivering or interested in FEAD-funded activities, EU-level NGOs and EU institutions. It is a space for members to share good practice, encourage new ideas and to discuss how to provide non-financial assistance to the most deprived in Europe.

The FEAD Network offers opportunities for online engagement through the official webpage and Facebook group, information sharing through publications and news, and network meetings. The official webpage and Facebook group are online spaces that connect members, encourage discussion and share the latest policy news and information from the Network. The aim of the FEAD Network meetings is to contribute to mutual learning and exchange of experience on particular implementation topics, operational issues and programming topics of the FEAD funding.

FEAD serves as an instrument which is able to address social emergencies targeting the groups of people who are the most difficult to reach and to provide them with immediate relief, particularly through food distribution. The social inclusion aspect of FEAD, on the other hand, helps to integrate disadvantaged people into society with a view to lift them out of poverty. These features of the FEAD programmes also highlight the specific value of the Fund – it provides dedicated support to people who may not be in a position to directly access and benefit from other EU funding instruments, while putting the emphasis on the implementation of supported activities through full involvement of the implementing actors.



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Austria – Distributing school starter parcels effectively across the country

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection

WHY?

The beginning of the school year is a difficult time for families with a low income. From binders and backpacks to USB drives and other gadgets, purchasing everything a child needs is an additional financial burden that not all families can assume and it's increasing inequality between students. To tackle this issue and **alleviate the financial burden for families**, the FEAD programme in Austria has been providing school starter parcels for children. In order to distribute these parcels to all eligible young children across the country, it is imperative that an effective management and logistics structure is put in place through which the Managing Authority and its partner organisations can collaborate effectively.

WHAT?

The school starter parcels consist of school bags with various items on typical 'back-to-school' lists. There are **11 different types of parcels** that families can choose from. The Managing Authority decides on the content of the parcels based on research from the school authorities about students' material needs. They also determine what is a 'must have' each year, so that the children are able to follow the same trends as their classmates. School bags are chosen based on current fashions and they are all made from eco-friendly, economic and high quality materials. Each parcel has a similar value and is distributed by the Red Cross on a yearly basis.

In 2017 alone, around 45 000 starter parcels have been distributed across the country. The programme is the only such country-wide programme that provides students of all ages with school materials. Other similar programmes are only implemented at the state level and are only for specific age groups.

“ The school starter package helps to improve the living standards of students because they get all materials they need for school that their families couldn't normally afford. Me and my family thank the Red Cross and the Ministry of Social Affairs for their support!”

— School starter pack end recipient

WHO?

The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (the FEAD Managing Authority in Austria), is responsible for the overall management of the project and the coordination with the suppliers and experts from local school authorities. The Red Cross is the main partner organisation involved in the programme, and oversees the application process, and the distribution of the parcels.

HOW?

Ensuring parcels are packed with adequate content and promptly delivered to the partner organisation's distribution centres requires **good coordination**. To that end, the Managing Authority cooperates closely with the nine federal states and the organisations responsible for implementing the Austrian minimum income scheme. The Managing Authority liaises with suppliers and experts from local school authorities to decide on the content of the parcels and set up a delivery plan. The suppliers are selected by the Managing Authority under a multi-annual framework contract, while the distribution and delivery plan is agreed with the Red Cross.

Eligible end recipients are identified by their local authorities and are low-income families or single parent households that benefit from the means-tested minimum income scheme and who have one or more school-aged children. Families are subsequently able to **select a parcel and submit the application form** with an ID card at their local Red Cross office. The Red Cross relies on volunteers to make sure the applications are being processed correctly in the database and electronically order the parcels for delivery.

Once recipients' applications have been approved, they are delivered to the local distribution centre of the Red Cross for collection by the recipients. Distribution of the school starter parcels starts in July each year and ends in September. To ensure the content of the parcels meets the needs of the target groups, **focus groups** are organised to gauge the opinions of recipients. End recipients are furthermore given an evaluation questionnaire every year to assess what items were useful and what items might be lacking.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Andrea Otter**, Head of the Department for Work, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection at the Ministry of Social Affairs:

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Belgium – Distributing freshly made soup using unsold products

Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-Poverty and Social Economy

WHY?

In Belgium, people living under the poverty line lack access to healthy and nutritious food, which puts **their own health and that of their families at risk**. At the same time, large amounts of food are thrown away daily by the food industry, retailers and households alike. Wasted food includes leftovers, fresh food, takeaways, packaged and long-life products that could satisfy the needs of deprived people, but remain unsold or unused. Acknowledging the severity of these issues and their interrelation, the Belgian Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-Poverty and Social Economy aims at tackling both challenges simultaneously.

WHAT?

The project provides **access to fresh and nutritious food** to the most deprived, while **combating food waste**. Social enterprises, procured by the FEAD Managing Authority, oversee the production and distribution of soup made out of unsold but still fresh vegetables and vegetable-based products. This is a unique offer in the Belgian food aid landscape, as providing fresh vegetable-based products is notoriously difficult.

By involving **social enterprises**, the project also contributes to developing the social pillar of the Belgian economy. This can promote job creation for the target group, which can get engaged in the work of these enterprises. In the long-term, the project can thus spur the social integration of vulnerable groups. The successful combination of these multiple aims is what makes this project a unique and interesting case, and an important contribution to the fight against poverty.

WHO?

The project could not achieve its multiple goals without the **successful collaboration between different actors**. The leading organisation is the Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-Poverty and Social Economy, the FEAD Managing Authority, which coordinates the project from the beginning to the end, guaranteeing a fruitful collaboration between the actors engaged in the food production and distribution sector.

HOW?

The project relies on the fruitful collaboration between the Managing Authority and its partners. The Managing Authority selects social enterprises, based on a number of criteria including their financial offer and proposed work approach. Special emphasis is put on this last criterion to ensure that the collection and treatment of the unsold vegetables is carried out in a realistic way. Social enterprises also provide food samples that are sent to a laboratory to verify their compliance with the technical specifications laid out in the tender documents.

Based on the unsold products of the day the social enterprises produce different kinds of soup and distribute it to partner organisations and Public Social Welfare Centres that are equipped with fridges. This allows them to **keep the food fresh** until it is distributed to all beneficiaries. The soup is delivered to the food banks and other storage partners multiple times a year, and a six-week deadline is established for consumption.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Barbara Cerrato** or **Nele Bossuyt**, Federal Public Service for Social Integration, Anti-Poverty and Social Economy:

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Croatia – Tackling economic vulnerability through volunteering opportunities

Zadar Archdiocese Caritas

WHY?

In the Zadar County, poverty is a severe and highly visible issue. A number of people suffer from economic vulnerability because of unemployment, high levels of debt, and poor social protection. The elderly and households with babies are particularly affected. To address these issues, the project offers material support to the target group, together with the **opportunity to get engaged as volunteers** in the activities. This is a way to increase their skills and self-esteem and make them feel visible and valued by the local community.

WHAT?

Based on an understanding of the multiple vulnerabilities that the target group faces, the project **contributes to their daily expenses** for items such as nappies, school bags, schoolbooks, school kits, sport equipment, medicines, hygiene products, kitchen equipment, as well as textile products for the home. In order to reduce poverty in the long term, the project moves beyond material goods, and offers additional measures such as **individual and group counselling sessions**. These are regular moments of reflection that have allowed participants to think about the causes of their poverty, and motivate them to address these causes and move forward in their lives.

As a fundamental complement to these measures, the project engages beneficiaries in the delivery of the aforementioned activities. This represents a further step on their path to **autonomy and self-worth**, as it helps them to develop their skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. The beneficiaries who engage as volunteers often think this is the best way to give back to society and demonstrate their gratefulness for the help they have received.

WHO?

The project is managed by Zadar Archdiocese Caritas, with the support of associates and volunteers. The members of the target group play a crucial role in the project implementation, as they constitute the bulk of the volunteers who make the activities possible. Social workers are responsible for the delivery of individual and group counselling sessions.

HOW?

The project works with the recipients of the food distribution measures funded by FEAD. More than 2 000 clients have been supported so far. While the project had not originally planned to include the target group as volunteers, **15 end recipients expressed the wish to contribute to the project**, as a way of giving back for the help they have received.

These volunteers helped prepare the food parcels and distribute them to families in need together with Caritas employees. They further supported elderly families with mobility problems by delivering their food parcels directly to their homes, and by purchasing their medication from pharmacies. Finally, volunteers who had gained agricultural skills as end recipients were able to continue growing vegetables for the aid kitchen. Together these volunteers contributed **4 000 hours of work to the project**.

Their contribution has improved their employability and has been highly praised by the national and local media, to the extent that the Mayor of Zadar **awarded them with a prize** offered to citizens who deserve special recognition. This has significantly increased their visibility in the local community and sense of self-worth.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Danijela Stipanić Graf**, Project Manager, Zadar Archbishop Caritas:
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Cyprus – Preventing malnutrition and early school leaving with free breakfasts

Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture

WHY?

Following the financial crisis in Cyprus, a growing number of families were unable to afford breakfast for their children. The Ministry of Education and Culture recognised the risk in this situation, as a lack of nutritious breakfasts can lead to lower educational achievement. Low educational achievements spurred by health problems in turn increase the **risk of early school leaving and social exclusion**.

WHAT?

The programme provides the beneficiaries with free breakfast at school. It is offered on weekdays to **the 2 000 eligible children in 118 participating schools** from all education levels (pre-primary, primary and secondary). Particular care is taken to include organic products, as well as to accommodate special dietary needs such as diabetes. Products are carefully selected from a list of approved items. Special emphasis is also placed on offering the free breakfasts with discretion and respect to the pupils' dignity, by providing them with a free breakfast at the same time as all other students.

WHO?

The project is led by the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture with the support of the Central Committee for the Quality Assurance of School Canteens, the School Boards and the Association of School Canteen Managers. The ministry coordinates and runs all the procedures and aspects of the implementation of the programme, beginning with the selection of the type of breakfast to be offered and its nutritional quality, up to its delivery to schools and to the eligible children. The ministry is also responsible for the implementation of all the aspects of the programme while adhering to the relevant legislation.

The successful implementation of the programme is the result of the cooperation between the stakeholders (schools, school boards, parents' associations and canteen staff). School staff have been the backbone of the delivery of this programme as they have selected students in need and ensured fair and effective delivery to all beneficiaries. The Advisory Board can also sometimes cooperate with the local church, the local authorities or others who may be in a position to know the real needs of the pupils.

HOW?

The programme targets **children from disadvantaged families who are at risk of malnutrition**. Each school has an Advisory Committee that selects the eligible pupils, which is composed of school staff, the School Board and members of parents' associations. A Local Committee for the Quality Assurance of School Canteens runs regular checks to ensure the good quality and sufficient quantity of the breakfasts served. To ensure discretion and respect the dignity of the eligible pupils and their families, the school management of each school discreetly contacts the parents/guardians of the pupils, preferably in person and individually, so that they can complete and sign a statement.

Breakfast (a sandwich or a different type of breakfast/snack) is prepared daily by the school canteens. In cases where a canteen does not operate at a school, breakfast is provided at a nearby school or by another supplier. All students get their breakfast in the same place to avoid drawing distinctions between students, but the recipients are exempt from paying. They are known to the canteen which has a list with the names of beneficiaries. A structured survey to evaluate the programme found that 95% of the parents faced no difficulties in the procedures involved in the free breakfast programme and **80% mentioned the programme has been a great help to their families**.

For more information regarding the project, contact **George Pittalis**, teacher, or **Dr Sophia Ioannou Georgiou**, Inspector General of Primary Education at the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture:

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Cyprus – ‘Baby dowry’: Supporting disadvantaged parents in welcoming a newborn

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance of the Republic of Cyprus

WHY?

Having a baby represents a significant economic cost that can be a burden on low-income families, who are not always able to purchase basic items for newborns. When families are not adequately equipped materially, it can **threaten the healthy development of their newborn child**. Against this background, the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance in Cyprus identified the need to support households benefiting from the minimum income scheme in welcoming a newborn.

WHAT?

The Cypriot Managing Authority provides parcels with **essential items for newborns** to families facing serious material deprivation. Such parcels include basic items such as a baby bed and mattress, a baby bathtub, a baby changing unit, a high chair, pushchair, linen, baby blankets, towels, or a special package with baby bottles, shampoos, creams and nappies for 24 months. Families also receive a monthly allowance for the purchase of baby food and get guidance to navigate the support services that are available to them.

WHO?

The Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is responsible for the overall programme and thus oversees administrative issues such as tender procedures. The **Welfare Benefits Unit within this ministerial department** is responsible for providing the minimum income scheme that provides welfare benefits across Cyprus. The local and district offices of the Social Welfare Services are responsible for identifying eligible families.

HOW?

The Social Welfare Services carry out tender procedures to select companies able to supply suitable **baby items that fulfil European Union quality standards**. Local Social Welfare Services identify the eligible families for the baby dowry and submit applications to the appropriate Social Welfare Services district office. End recipients are generally families receiving minimum income support who have a child born after January 2017.

Once a family's application has been approved, the Social Welfare Services places the order with the selected supplier(s). Parcels are delivered directly to the house of beneficiaries, after which two members of staff of the Social Welfare Services **visit recipient families** to help them assemble the items provided and provide advice about the other services that families can benefit from. More than 150 beneficiaries have received a baby dowry since the start of the project in January 2018¹.

¹ Families with babies born in 2017 can retroactively benefit from the programme.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Maria Kyratzi**, Programme Coordinator at the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance:

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Czech Republic – ‘Chefs without borders’: reintegrating homeless women through cooking

Silesian Diakonia

WHY?

In 2017, there were approximately 68 500 homeless people in the Czech Republic. These individuals live on the periphery of social life, are excluded from mainstream social services and are generally isolated from the wider community. As a result, many homeless individuals experience **loneliness** and depression. The Silesian Diakonia seeks to support them by not only meeting their basic food and material needs but also by bringing them together to socialise and **engage with the community**. By doing so, they aim to boost the confidence of homeless individuals and build a bridge with the community.

WHAT?

In the town of Třinec, the homeless shelter ‘Sara’ houses women aged 18 and over who have lost their homes due to debt, disagreements with a partner or family, or domestic violence. Together with the Silesian Diakonia, they developed ‘Chefs without borders’ where women staying at the shelter are invited to **cook a three-course meal using FEAD food products**.

The aim is to bring the end recipients together by encouraging them to participate in a communal activity where they not only learn new cooking skills, but also have the opportunity to socialise and learn from each other, while producing hot nourishing meals. The food is subsequently shared with people in the local community who are also sleeping rough.

WHO?

The ‘Chefs without borders’ project is implemented by the homeless shelter ‘Sara’ and coordinated by the Silesian Diakonia with the help of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Třinec city council.

HOW?

The project is entirely **voluntary** and depends on the willingness of end recipients to participate. They use FEAD food products to cook typical dishes on the shelter’s premises, such as bean soup, risotto, burgers with potato purée and simple desserts. The women prepare meals on cold and rainy days, and also seek to cater for special occasions such as Christmas; on which occasion they cook a traditional dinner for homeless men hosted in a different night shelter.

The cooks then **distribute the meals** to around 20-30 other homeless individuals across Třinec. Social workers choose the locations as they know the neighbourhoods and can identify the most suitable areas. They inform potential beneficiaries ahead of time by word of mouth as well as by distributing leaflets. The employees of the shelter provide transportation and arrange a delivery tent, as well as materials such as tables, chairs and cutlery.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Stanislav Mrózek**, Head of the Silesian Diakonia centre:

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Czech Republic – Tailored food and material assistance for the most deprived

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA)

WHY?

In 2017, over 12% of people in Czech Republic were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Although this rate has been decreasing over the past few years, a significant proportion of the population remains particularly affected. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) has therefore decided to invest in the provision of quality food and hygiene products, as well as increased access to social services and counselling, in the attempt to improve the situation and wellbeing of the most vulnerable groups.

WHAT?

MoLSA first conducted a pilot of the project, distributing one type of food package to 4 000 people that were considered to be at 'the highest risk of poverty' in selected regions across the country. Building on this experience, MoLSA implemented a second phase of the project. It **consulted with partner organisations** to understand what materials were most in demand, identifying two types of food packages and three types of hygiene packages as those with the **highest impact**.

MoLSA conducted a procurement procedure to ensure that suppliers respected minimum requirements in terms of product quality and quantity. These requirements guaranteed that the products delivered had high nutritional value, and **took into account the needs of the target population**. For instance, canned foods need to have an easy-open device, as most end recipients such as homeless people are unlikely to have a tin-opener at hand.

WHO?

The project was implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) with the help of a number of partner organisations: Charity Czech Republic, Naděje non-profit organisation, Silesian Diakonia, the Centre of Christian Aid of the Czech Brethren Protestant Church, and local foodbanks. Employees and volunteers from partner organisations have direct contact with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, homeless people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable and migrant families. As such, they are well-suited to help with the distribution of food and material assistance at the local level.

HOW?

To ensure both quality and value for money, MoLSA selected suppliers whose products were the cheapest, but still adhered to the minimum requirements. The composition and distribution of food packages was organised according to the needs of different target groups. In particular, **families with children** who own a kitchen to cook their meals, received a package with 17 different food products and 10 hygiene products. **Homeless and isolated people** received packages with eight different food products and nine hygiene products. Finally, a hygiene package of six products was distributed to **families with small children**. Five different combinations of products were available, including different sizes of nappies, depending on the age of the children.

Thanks to immense community support, more than 100 organisations got involved in the distribution process. This made it possible to distribute more than 140 000 food packages and 70 000 hygiene packages during the second phase of the project. Almost 75 000 people benefited from food assistance and around 50 000 people received material assistance. The project has received positive feedback from partner organisations. It **improved communication channels with target groups**, who are now more willing to reach out for help. The project was particularly beneficial for those who do not receive social benefits and are not included in other social support schemes, such as homeless or sick people, and for vulnerable groups such as young single mothers.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Jiří Bradáč**, Project Manager:

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Estonia – Monitoring FEAD target group participation in ESF and other accompanying measures

Ministry of Social Affairs

WHY?

In Estonia, FEAD end recipients face several **social, psychological and economic challenges** beyond the immediate need for food. These include unemployment, school dropout, alcohol addiction, and involvement in crime activities, among other things. Partner organisations, local government, the unemployment insurance fund and the Ministry of Social Affairs set up a number of accompanying measures to address these issues, but a system to monitor if FEAD beneficiaries were accessing these measures was missing. This convinced the Estonian FEAD Managing Authority, namely the Ministry of Finance, of the need to improve the information available and beneficiaries' quality of life as a result.

WHAT?

The project aims at collecting and managing information concerning the participation of FEAD end recipients in the non FEAD-funded accompanying measures offered by various governmental and non-governmental bodies. The FEAD Managing Authority did not want to burden its partners with additional reporting and monitoring requirements. To this aim, in collaboration with the Estonian Statistics Office (ESO), the Managing Authority has developed its own **IT system to collect and cross-check data** from different registers and monitor FEAD recipients' participation rates.

In addition, the project seeks to **improve the information available to the FEAD target group** about the activities they can benefit from. The Managing Authority regularly publishes a magazine entitled 'Abiline' that is distributed jointly with FEAD-funded food and entails information about the available accompanying measures such as support to go back to school or to enter vocational training.

WHO?

The IT system is co-managed by the ESO and the Estonian ESF/FEAD Managing Authority. As the ESF and FEAD funds are managed by the same Authority, there is constant communication between the two fund leaders, promoters and beneficiaries. The accompanying measures are managed by local governments, partner organisations, the Estonian unemployment insurance fund and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

HOW?

All relevant data is securely collected and stored by the ESO from different and already existing databases, such as employment registers, unemployment insurance fund registers, education information systems and registers for social services and benefits. The ESO analyses the available data and communicates it to the Managing Authority, which in turn monitors participation rates to identify issues and intervene if necessary. The Managing Authority only receives aggregate statistical data rather than individual information about the target group to **ensure data privacy** is respected. The Managing Authority in turn shares this information with the organisations implementing accompanying measures.

This system has significantly increased the amount and quality of information available to the Ministry of Social Affairs and the recipients. Participation is the highest in **work-related accompanying measures** that offer services for long-term unemployed, citizens with special needs and other at-risk groups. Programmes that treat alcohol addiction or help ex-prisoners to successfully reintegrate into society are equally popular.

Better knowledge of the profile of FEAD recipients as well as participation rates in the accompanying measures have enabled the Ministry of Social Affairs to **improve their offer and adapt it to the needs of the participants**. For those activities that record low participation rates, the 'Abiline' magazine is used to raise awareness of the importance of the issue at stake. As an example, the 2019 issue of the magazine will focus on the 'back to school' (Jätka õpinguid koos teiste täiskasvanutega!) measure that the Ministry of Education and Research implements to support individuals in returning to education or entering vocational training, a measure that has not proven very popular among FEAD target groups thus far.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Kertu Põial**, Chief Specialist at the Ministry of Social Affairs:

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Images © The Finnish National Organization of the Unemployed/Cheers for Health, 2018

Finland – ‘Cheers for Health’: Easing access to health services for the most in need

The Finnish National Organisation of the Unemployed

WHY?

Overall, the health status of the Finnish population has improved over the last few decades. However, **socioeconomic inequalities have persisted**, and in some areas, they have grown. Lower life expectancy, deaths caused by alcohol and smoking, mental health disorders and lower functional ability are all issues that tend to be worsened by inequalities and by prolonged unemployment. Yet, despite being the most affected by such health issues, lower income groups are not always aware about the availability of health services and do not know how to use them effectively.

WHAT?

The Cheers for Health project hence aims **to increase the use of social and healthcare services** by unemployed and economically marginalised people aged over 30, who benefit from FEAD-funded food distribution. This in turn aims at improving their general well-being, social inclusion and capacity to participate effectively in the labour market or as active citizens.

Beneficiaries are encouraged to undertake the **precautionary elementary health check-up subsidised by the municipality**, as a way to learn how and where to access healthcare and social services on a regular basis. They are also provided with personal guidance to increase awareness about their health and social needs and improve their understanding of how to meet them.

“ All unemployed people have the legal right for a free health care checkup in Finland. Let's give cheers for health!”

— Finnish National Organisation of the Unemployed

WHO?

The Finnish National Organisation of the Unemployed leads the project (Työttömien Keskusjärjestö ry) with the support of the Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention (Ehkäisevä päihdetyö EHYT ry). They map the social and health needs of FEAD recipients, as well as the services available on a local level. A significant amount of support also comes from staff and volunteers from local NGOs and other social organisations. Involving local staff helps ensure the model is **sustainable beyond the end of the project**.

HOW?

The project runs alongside FEAD-funded food distribution and has been able to appoint a nurse thanks to ESF funds. With the help of a social worker, the nurse contacts local employment support associations in the locations where FEAD food aid is distributed. They establish a first contact with end recipients and inform them **about their legal rights to benefit from health examinations and other health and social services** offered by municipal authorities and NGOs at the local level.

Project staff then administer the ‘Abilitator’ to the target group, a **voluntary self-assessment questionnaire** developed by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. By filling in the questionnaire, FEAD recipients get a better sense of their own work ability, functional capacity and overall needs. Based on this self-assessment, social workers are able to direct individuals towards the most appropriate services.

As of April 2018, the project had completed over 100 visits in 73 different localities around Finland and almost 400 people have been referred to appropriate services, based on the ‘Abilitator’ assessment. Within eight months of the first contact, approximately 50% of the target group who received support had booked an appointment for a health examination. In the long term, the project strives to set up a **model for partner organisations** to continue referring people for health examinations and other social and health services. Such a model includes customisable training course material and a handbook to be created in collaboration with the organisations themselves, to make them suitable for their needs.

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France – ‘Red Cross on Wheels’: providing mobile social assistance

Red Cross France

WHY?

Food and material deprivation affects almost five million people in France, primarily in rural and isolated areas. The issue is particularly prevalent for those people that are ‘invisible’ to society: the most vulnerable, isolated, or immobile due to illness, disability or financial difficulty. In addition to food and economic vulnerability, this population experiences severe social isolation. Against this background, the French Red Cross decided to **provide direct support on the doorsteps** of those living in the most excluded areas.

WHAT?

The Red Cross deploys **44 ‘Red Cross on Wheels’ mobile units**, which are specially converted vehicles, to visit end recipients in need in rural areas, semi-urban communities, and ‘priority neighbourhoods’ in urban areas. This mobile support provides food and material assistance including clothes, hygiene products, baby products, furniture and more.

In addition to food and material support, the Red Cross volunteers lend **a listening ear** for end recipients. They can provide instant counselling in the vehicles, where a dedicated area is set up. They can counsel on a wide range of issues, including access to basic social services, parental services, preventative healthcare, digital technologies, budget management or culture and entertainment. Based on one-to-one conversations with end recipients, volunteers can provide tailored advice, or refer them to relevant partners in local communities. In this way, food aid strengthens communities by bringing people together and combating social isolation in the most deprived areas.



“Reaching out to people in vulnerable situations.”

— project motto

WHO?

The ‘Mobility Team’ within the Directorate for Voluntary Activities and Participation at the French Red Cross leads the project, in partnership with the PSA Foundation, which has been the initiative’s main financial partner since 2012. FEAD supports Red Cross on Wheels with food products and helps to improve the diversity of material assistance offered to people in need. The French Red Cross also participates in the **‘Inclusive Mobility Lab’**. Founded in 2013, the lab brings together 19 partners from both private and public sectors who act as key players in the provision of resources and expertise in order to increase mobility for everyone.

HOW?

The Red Cross works closely with local partners, who help deliver financial and organisational support when the mobile units are in their area, for example by offering donations, a room, or social workers. Mobile units usually visit local communities on a scheduled date in a dedicated place. Local benefactors such as social workers and volunteers help to spread the word about upcoming Red Cross visits. However, if needed, they deliver assistance directly to people who live in isolated areas or have reduced mobility.

To contribute to **rebuilding community life**, partnerships have been set up with local authorities, community centres and other civil society organisations. Due to the limited capacity of local volunteers, **needs assessments** are carried out to distribute the existing support as efficiently as possible based on the individual needs of the recipients. Services are provided in priority to four targeted populations: people in vulnerable situations (social, economic or interpersonal); people living in isolation; people with reduced mobility; and single-parent families.

Volunteers play a crucial role in the project, as they are fully responsible for managing the Red Cross on Wheels service. They are required to complete training to be able to provide people with the support they need. In 2017 alone, around 400 trained volunteers travelled around the country to support over 37 000 vulnerable people.

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France – Guaranteeing the equal treatment of vulnerable EU citizens overseas

French Federation of Food Banks

WHY?

While the unemployment rate in metropolitan France stands below 10%, the number of people in precarious situations in French overseas territories is generally higher, with the average unemployment rate reaching 22% in Guadeloupe, Martinique and La Réunion. At the same time, it is more challenging to collect food and receive food donations in overseas territories. Therefore, the Food Banks have diversified their food aid strategy to be able to **reach those most deprived people living in French overseas territories**. This is particularly important to guarantee the **equal treatment** of EU citizens regardless of however far they live from the continent.

WHAT?

FEAD funding covers the transportation costs incurred by channelling food aid from food producers in continental France all the way to the Food Banks overseas. To reach beneficiaries living in the most deprived areas, the different branches of the French Federation of Food Banks collaborate with a total of 127 charity partners across the territories. FEAD products represent around **a third of the supplies of regional Food Banks overseas**.

HOW?

While on the continent Food Banks can rely on long-established partnerships with retailers, such agreements are more difficult to establish overseas. Moreover, there are less agro-businesses overseas and in turn less donations. This makes food collection more difficult and less predictable, in terms of both quality and quantity. FEAD hence plays an essential role in providing some **stability and predictability when it comes to the amount, variety and delivery date of food supplies**. Through partnership agreements with the Food Banks, charities know exactly what type of products they can expect, in what quantity and when; making it possible for them to ensure the overall **nutritional balance** and **diversity** of the food aid they provide.

WHO?

The French Federation of Food Banks coordinates the distribution and delivery of food supplies overseas with the help of three regional Food Banks in Guadeloupe, Martinique and La Réunion. The Food Banks operate overseas through the support of 97 volunteers and 22 employees who collaborate with 127 charity partners across the territories. Due to their geographical situation and local knowledge of end recipients, the charities directly distribute the food packages to the beneficiaries locally.

Compared to the other food collection mechanisms used overseas, the quantity and diversity of FEAD support brings additional benefits to the local population. Whereas collections from supermarkets bring fresh products, FEAD provides dry products, cans, and **long conservation products**. Their long-life properties are particularly valuable during emergency situations, for instance in the case of hurricanes, when supply is scarce and access to food is limited. Even in such emergency contexts, the FEAD rules of ensuring traceability and free delivery are observed.

Due to the high number of deprived people in the overseas territories, the project focus on ensuring **access to diverse food and a balanced diet for all**, without targeting specific groups. In addition to food delivery, the project also carries out other assistance measures for **social reintegration** such as budget advice, support for job seekers, and access to culture, sports and leisure activities, a diversity of actions made possible by the structure of the French Federation of Food Banks. Various activities have hence been set up around food aid such as cooking classes. This additional support helps to identify and remove obstacles confronting the target group, and facilitate exchange between those who provide aid and those who need it. It is crucial to **safeguard the equal treatment** and dignity of all. In 2017, around 2,6 million meal packages were distributed and about 70 000 people receive help, the largest proportion of which resided in La Réunion.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Marie Castagné**, External Relations and Advocacy Officer, or **Jean-Luc Fromentin**, Project Manager, French Federation of Food Banks:

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Germany – Preventing homelessness

Counselling centre for housing security (FAWOS)

WHY?

Early intervention generally maximises the opportunities for a full and participatory life for people at risk of homelessness. Nevertheless, assistance is often offered solely once homelessness has already occurred. This is what prompted FAWOS to step in and identify and target **those at risk of losing housing**, due to rent arrears or other factors, in the German municipalities of Ludwigsburg, Kornwestheim, Korntal-Münchingen and Besigheim.

WHAT?

The FAWOS housing security centre fills a gap in the pre-existing support system, in cooperation with the municipalities, through the provision of **timely advice and support to tenants in at-risk tenancies**. The centre also advocates for the preservation of affordable and adequate housing at municipal level.

Employees first assume a mediation role to try to salvage the housing relationship between tenants and property owners who are in conflict, and help to negotiate feasible terms. This includes setting up mediation sessions between landlords and tenants, as well as creating specific budget plans for repayments of overdue rent. If the existing housing relationship is no longer sustainable, FAWOS staff help tenants to find new apartment arrangements.

HOW?

The centre offers an open two-hour consultation in the town hall of each municipality every week. Making the consultation available in each community is important to ensure easy access, so that **low-income tenants** do not have to make the journey to the main office in Ludwigsburg. Occupants can drop in without an appointment. Many tenants come by way of referrals, through close cooperation with local police offices and other public municipal offices. Furthermore, if a property owner submits an eviction action for rent at the district court, the court is obliged to inform the locally responsible social service providers (job centre

“ The aim is to reduce the amount of people forced to enter homeless shelters in the four municipalities. People that have to resort to homeless shelters are at high risk of developing a range of other problems as a result. FAWOS helps people before these problems develop.”

— Heinrich Knodel, Project Manager, FAWOS

WHO?

The project is co-funded by FEAD Germany (85%), the Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (10%) and the municipalities Ludwigsburg, Kornwestheim, Korntal-Münchingen and Besigheim (5%). In addition to the project manager, two designated social workers are employed by FAWOS and travel between the municipalities, while a part-time employee handles administrative tasks. FAWOS does not work with volunteers as such, but recruits trainees for a 4-month period, who primarily support the search for new apartments. FAWOS does not have a structural relationship with any partner organisations, but cooperates with an array of social assistance organisations in the four municipalities.

and social services). The job centre and the social welfare office forward these notifications to FAWOS who proceed to **establish contact and offer advice**.

The FAWOS centre takes the engagement a step further by actively conducting **home visits** if the affected tenant is unresponsive. FAWOS is also available as a point of contact for landlords that have trouble with their current tenants in order to try to salvage the relationship before it is too late. When the housing relationship is no longer sustainable, FAWOS provides apartment seekers with a checklist and information about where to search. They also provide hands-on advice, such as the preparation of a portfolio of monthly income or guarantors ahead of flat viewings.

Since the initiation of FAWOS' prevention-related activities, the demand for accommodation in homeless shelters in the participating municipalities has dropped. In 2016, 111 households obtained assistance. In 2017 this number doubled, with 214 households receiving support. The average age of end recipients is around 40, and roughly two-thirds of the end recipients were from migrant backgrounds. Due to lower levels of familiarity with German and little experience of the German legal system, this group has particularly benefited from FAWOS support

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Germany – ‘ACASA in Dortmund’: Counselling vulnerable EU mobile citizens

Diakonie Dortmund and Lünen

WHY?

There are **significant economic and social costs involved for vulnerable EU citizens** moving to other EU countries: they are at higher risk of poverty and can face difficulties in getting access to housing, healthcare, and other social services. Many of these EU mobile citizens are not familiar with local help structures and counselling centres. **Language barriers, unfamiliarity and misinformation** pose major obstacles to their integration. Yet, citizens from other EU countries are typically excluded from migration-related assistance as they potentially benefit from the EU free movement rules. Acknowledging this discrepancy, the partner organisation Diakonisches Werk Dortmund und Lünen gGmbH helps to fill the void through the project ‘ACASA in Dortmund’.

WHAT?

The ACASA team delivers **targeted outreach work**, counselling and referral services to disadvantaged newly arrived citizens from EU countries living in precarious situations in Dortmund. The multilingual staff provide orientation support in an array of areas, such as access to German language courses, health insurance, migration, and the right to housing. In addition to referring the target group to the relevant municipal support structures and institutions, the service also extends to **accompanying the end recipients** to their appointments.

HOW?

The project's principal method involves staff members, who are native speakers of the relevant languages, reaching out to newly arrived mobile citizens **within their daily environments**. As such, in addition to street-based outreach, the staff speak to newly arrived citizens in their mother tongues in cafés, libraries and other public places. The institutions in which project employees offer assistance include the Citizens' Services Building and the Public Health Office of the City of Dortmund. With the institutions' permission, ACASA workers offer their support in the waiting areas of the two institutions during consultation hours. They wear nametags, and both clients and employees of the institutions can approach them at any time. The Public Health Office has also made a small consultation room available for the project.



Our aim is to ensure successful integration more quickly.”

— Johanna Smith, Project Worker, ACASA.

WHO?

The partner organisation Diakonisches Werk Dortmund und Lünen gGmbH, a social services provider and charity of the German Protestant Church, is in charge of managing the project. In addition, each of the participating non-profit organisations, namely AWO Unterbezirk Dortmund, Caritasverband Dortmund e.V., GrünBau gGmbH and Planerladen e.V., funds one full-time outreach employee who primarily undertakes the outreach work in the mother tongue of the end recipients. To coordinate strategies and discuss issues, all employees gather for team meetings at regular intervals. In 2017, five full-time employees were dedicated to the project, although the project occasionally recruits volunteers or additional staff on a short-term basis.

This consultation work compliments the consultation services ACASA offers on their own premises. The ACASA project provides counselling on a number of **integration and daily life issues**, such as the process of registering at the Citizens' Bureau or how to access to the German health care system, before subsequently accompanying end recipients to the relevant services. By physically accompanying mobile citizens to their respective appointments, ACASA's approach allows the project professionals to experience the processes and procedures alongside the mobile citizen and to reflect on the experience together. This helps to highlight the obstacles, administrative and otherwise, faced by the end recipients.

Through the **‘Welcome Europe’ drop-in centre**, the ACASA project connects with a multitude of other projects and partners. The connection to projects and partners aimed at labour market integration is particularly robust, as project staff frequently accompany EU citizens seeking work to see advisors specialising in labour market integration. The project reached out to about 1 150 mobile citizens in 2016 and to around 1 000 in 2017. Within this two-year timeframe, more than 2 000 of the individuals approached about advisory services accepted at least one offer of help.

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Italy – Accompanying the hard to reach in designing their own path out of poverty

Caritas Diocese of Verona

WHY?

There is a high number of people at risk of social marginalisation in Verona. These groups are hard to reach and do not benefit from traditional private or public measures to fight poverty, because they lack information about the services available or fear the social stigma that comes with being labelled as poor. However, if not quickly and adequately addressed, poverty and marginalisation risk becoming chronic. This is what the project tries to prevent, by combining material support with measures having a longer-term focus and engaging beneficiaries in the **design of their own pathway out of poverty**.

WHAT?

In partnership with food companies, the municipality and other charities, the project redistributes surplus food to disadvantaged households by setting up social stores. At the same time, families that have access to the social store system are engaged in capacity building sessions aimed at **addressing the deep causes of their vulnerability**, and supporting them in their **transition out of poverty**. In that sense, the project innovatively combines material support to families in need and preventative measures against poverty, while simultaneously reducing food waste.

HOW?

There are six social stores so far, and three more are due to open soon. Based on the ISEE (Equivalent Economic Situation Indicator), an indicator of the economic conditions of the family issued by the INPS (National Social Security Service), households can become eligible to receive a card that is recharged monthly, and gives them access to both fresh and packaged food.



“Let's give each other a hand!”

— Slogan of the project

WHO?

The partner organisations Caritas Diocese of Verona ('Associazione di Carità San Zeno Onlus - Diocesi di Verona') and the Christian Association of Italian Workers Verona (ACLI Verona) manage the project. These organisations plan and coordinate project activities in collaboration with the Municipality of Verona and the Italian Red Cross. The cooperation among these organisations makes it possible to **identify the most hard to reach individuals and tailor measures accordingly**. A number of local volunteering associations further help to refer beneficiaries.

One of the innovative elements of this model is that **families are able to shop according to their needs and tastes**, which is not possible with traditional systems of food parcel distribution that deliver pre-established types and quantities of products. In stores, each food item receives a score based on their market price and their nutritional properties. Fresh food (for instance, vegetables, fruit and bread) is given a low score to **encourage recipients to adopt a healthy diet**. Products that are close to their expiry date also receive a low score as a way of reducing food waste.

The families that benefit from food assistance sign an agreement through which they commit to co-thinking their pathway out of poverty together with project workers. This agreement specifies goals, opportunities and duties, and requires them to take part in training sessions, actively look for a job and participate in community events for a minimum of six months and up to a year. During this period, social workers and volunteers closely assist the beneficiaries in **defining what kind of activities they need to attend to develop the desired skills**. These activities include household planning and budgeting, rights and duties of the workers, family law, sewing and cooking classes, and CV checks.

In 2017, the project accompanied over 1 000 families, facilitated 11 workshops and training sessions, and organised 2 community events as well as a Festival of Sustainability to raise awareness of the need to combat food waste. In addition, a number of local organisations help mobilise parishes, informal groups and local associations and engage them in project activities, thus multiplying beneficiaries' opportunities and reinforcing their bonds with the local community.

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Latvia – Promoting social inclusion and fighting stereotypes

Dagda disabled brotherhood NEMA

WHY?

Poverty is a widespread phenomenon in the area of Dagda in Latvia. However, people prefer not to define themselves as 'poor' or 'indigent', as these terms are often equated with being socially dependent on others, and associated with a sense of guilt, shame, and humiliation. Aware of this reality, project leaders want to **fight stereotypes** according to which the poor and most deprived people are 'insignificant to society', and provide them with a **sense of autonomy and self-respect**.

WHAT?

In addition to FEAD-funded food distribution, the partner organisation carries out a number of accompanying measures such as sport, health and leisure related activities to spur participants' self-development and improve their communication skills. This is important to increase their **psychological well-being and sense of self-worth**, and provide them with the confidence that they can find a way out of their current situation. This is also pivotal to improve their physical and mental health and, in the long-term, promote their social inclusion and independence.

HOW?

The project works with the recipients of FEAD-funded food distribution in the area of Dagda, especially families with children. To be eligible, people and families in need, crisis or emergency situations must provide a statement issued by the social services. The partner organisation offers a variety of activities on a regular basis, responding to the participants' different interests and needs.

Health promotion is recognised as an important way to develop participants' self-respect, mental and physical well-being. Therefore, a substantial part of the project is dedicated to healthy gymnastics, body purification, and Latvian traditions such as Nordic walking and line dancing. In addition, participants receive information about healthy food and how to follow and promote a healthy diet at home. This includes practical recommendations and the opportunity to taste a healthy fruit mix.



"We are each of us angels with only one wing, and we can only fly by embracing one another."

— Luciano De Crescenzo (Italian singer), Motto of the NGO "Dagda disabled brotherhood NEMA"

WHO?

The project is managed by employees and volunteers of the NGO 'Dagda disabled brotherhood NEMA' (Dagdas invalīdu brālība NEMA). The implementation of the activities requires the daily involvement of both the local government and the social services. The former provides the facilities for the accompanying measures and, if needed, helps with transportation for activities that take place outside Dagda. The social service informs the target group about the opportunity to benefit from FEAD aid and encourages them to participate in the accompanying measures. This is a fundamental part of the project, as it favours the **integration of the participants within the local society**

Leisure is valued as a way to socialise and acquire useful skills and a sense of utility. Therefore, the partner organisation runs workshops and masterclasses teaching participants how to cook, sew, knit, make household accessories from recycled materials, and grow plants as a source of food and a relaxing pastime. Participants in the handicrafts masterclasses are able to use the acquired skills on an everyday basis and an exhibition is organised for them to showcase their work. As a result, **some participants have become self-employed** and have been able to make a profit out of their handicrafts.

Finally, the NGO offers **individual consultations** on employment opportunities, household issues, and participation in voluntary work, as well as bimonthly **self-help groups**. These activities strengthen the participants' sense of dignity and utility, foster their integration into the local community, and fight the negative stereotypes they are associated with. Through those accompanying measures, end-recipients gain practical and communication skills, and interact with each other and with the project leaders, which increases their self-confidence and in turn offers them better life prospects.

In 2017, the NGO managed to implement over 150 accompanying measures, involving around 460 participants. Among these measures, 54 were individual consultations, 50 were related to sport, health promotion and leisure activities, and 52 were workshops or masterclasses.

¹ FEAD support is provided to persons with a household income level not exceeding EUR 188 per person per month.

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Latvia – ‘Fish and not only’: Learning how to fish to improve self-sufficiency

Latvian First Aid Unit

WHY?

Poverty and social exclusion are pressing issues in the region of Liepaja, affecting a significant number of households. The abundance of water sources such as rivers, lakes and ponds in Latvia prompted the Latvian First Aid Unit to promote fishing as a way to support vulnerable members of society to be self-sufficient and foster a sense of community belonging in the long term.

WHAT?

‘Fish and not only’ seeks to **foster the social inclusion** of the most deprived families who reside in Liepaja and five surrounding municipalities (Aizpute, Durbe, Grobina, Nica and Priekule). Beneficiaries of FEAD food distribution can participate in workshops that provide them with practical knowledge on how to fish and then use these skills independently on a daily basis to improve the well-being of their families. Fishing can indeed allow them to **save money on food and provide for the household’s daily needs**. The project also offers the participants the chance to meet and work together as a further method of combatting social exclusion.



“For the first time in my life, I learnt that we have so many fish and you can make soup using them.”

— Participant of ‘Fish and not only’.

WHO?

The project is led by the partner organisation Latvian First Aid Unit (Latvijas pirmās palīdzības vienība): two employees and two volunteers oversee the organisation of the learning workshops. They collaborate with the ichthyologist Jānis Burdajs, an expert on different fish species, and the teacher Gunta Riekstiņa, from the ‘fishing school’ of the Liepaja Children and Youth Centre, both of whom have extensive experience in teaching young people how to fish.

HOW?

To be eligible, participants must have a statement issued by the social services which attests they are in need or they are dealing with crisis or emergency situations. With the support of experienced teachers, participants learn how to fish and use these skills in their daily life. The workshops are organised near to water sources, which allows teachers to provide participants with practical tips, such as how to prepare a fishing rod and use natural indicators to determine the best fishing time. At the end of each session, all the participants, organisers and volunteers work together to cook their own fish soup, providing them with an **opportunity to socialise**.

Equipping the **younger participants** with practical and long-lasting knowledge of how to fish is also among the goals of the events. For this reason, a learning game is organised to engage them and give them the chance to practically employ the new skills they have gained. The Latvian First Aid Unit was able to organise a cycle of six events and engage 28 participants in 2017, including families and children. Many participants stated that it was the first time they had had the opportunity to fish and realised how useful fishing can be for improving household food self-sufficiency.

¹ FEAD support is provided to persons with a household income level not exceeding EUR 188 per person per month.

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Lithuania – Tackling the social exclusion and educational poverty of children

European Social Fund Agency

WHY?

In Lithuania, around a third of the population lives in rural areas. Because of restricted infrastructure and structural investments in these areas, there are limited basic services and employment opportunities available outside of the agricultural sector. Educational poverty and social exclusion risks are hence three times higher than in urban areas, and **children are the group** which **are most at risk**. Against this background, the FEAD Managing Authority of Lithuania has decided to dedicate some of its accompanying measures to children from socially disadvantaged areas or families. Investing in the education of children is not only crucial to nurture their personal development, but also strengthens social cohesion between parents, grandparents, teachers and educators more widely.

WHAT?

In addition to distributing FEAD food aid to the most deprived people in Lithuania, the project has set up **day camps** and organises **recreational and educational activities** for children. While those activities are primarily meant for the children of FEAD recipients, they also involve their parents, grandparents, psychologists, social pedagogues and care workers. Through the project, children get the opportunity to meet with local celebrities, share their experiences, engage in dialogue with elderly people, and attend group visits to museums, theatres or cinemas. Because many FEAD recipient households cannot afford summer vacations, the project also organises day trips and short holidays to the Black Sea.



“Big things start with small ones”

— Project motto

WHO?

The project is managed by the European Social Fund (ESF) Agency, which is the authority managing FEAD in Lithuania. The ESF Agency is supported by a range of different partners, such as the Lithuanian Food Bank, the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, the Marijampole Region Samaritan Community and the Lithuanian municipal administrations.

HOW?

The project strongly relies on partner organisations that have established links with the target group, and know about their needs, wishes and expectations. Because of their **closeness with the target group**, the partners are responsible for encouraging people to be active and to participate in the accompanying measures in the first place. Depending on their capacity and resources, they either dedicate staff or manage volunteers to run the activities.

The type of activities they implement depends on the expertise of the partners. For instance, several local divisions of the Lithuanian Red Cross Society have made the choice to focus on **health educational activities**. Such activities include visits to health and dental clinics or health food centres, and lectures inspired by the book ‘Smart Children ABC’ published by the Red Cross main office.

The project has had a positive impact in terms of both social inclusion and educational achievements. It has given many children the opportunity to take part in recreational activities for the first time. The activities with elderly people or social workers and doctors are seen as particularly formative. Such activities lead to valuable **informal learning**, which children do not get to experience in the traditional school system.

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Malta – Building partnerships to provide tailored and accessible support

Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)

WHY?

The needs of FEAD end recipients go beyond material assistance. The most deprived households, particularly those with children and the elderly, face multiple issues that relate to employment, childcare, energy and water provision, among other things. These people are often not aware of the services and opportunities they could access at the local level to meet their needs. This is problematic, as the lack of adequate assistance can perpetuate their social vulnerability and exclusion. Directing these people towards **tailored and accessible interventions** is therefore key to improve their living standards and alleviate their risk of poverty.

WHAT?

The project refers FEAD end recipients to local services that are the most relevant to answer their specific needs and can foster their social inclusion and mobility. To that end, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), has **built partnerships with a wide range of national stakeholders**, such as the National Literacy Agency (NLA), the Water and Energy Agency (WEA), Jobsplus (Public Employment Services), the Housing Authority, and other actors at the regional level that offer community-based services and are able to reach out to FEAD recipients.

Because the partners offer different levels and types of expertise – in the areas of energy consumption, education, housing, employability, health, and family support – the project is able to provide tailored individual assistance. Furthermore, collaborations are established at the regional level, which allows project coordinators to **assist the target group close to home**.

HOW?

All FEAD end recipients and their families/households are eligible to benefit from the accompanying measures. The FSWS refers the FEAD end recipients to the relevant service providers. For instance, the collaboration between the FSWS and the Water & Energy Agency has enabled over 250 FEAD end recipients to benefit from the White Goods Exchange Scheme. This nationally funded measure aims to **promote greater awareness of energy consumption** and ensure that old and high energy consuming appliances are replaced.



“The sum of the parts is greater than the sum of the whole.”

— Aristotle

WHO?

The Managing Authority of the FEAD Operational Programme is the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD) of the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality. The Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS) is the intermediary body, and oversees the project. The Foundation for Social Welfare Services is a public entity within the MFCS, which acts as the partner organisation for FEAD in Malta. It is responsible for building the collaborations with other national stakeholders, who ultimately support FEAD recipients in various areas.

Furthermore, through its collaboration with the Ministry for Education, the FSWS has supported **children in vulnerable and low-income families** by providing them with school uniforms, stationery and other basic goods; and by organising extra-curricular activities. The FSWS and the responsible department within the Ministry for Education hold regular meetings during which they focus on planning and improving strategies to reach out to the most vulnerable beneficiaries.

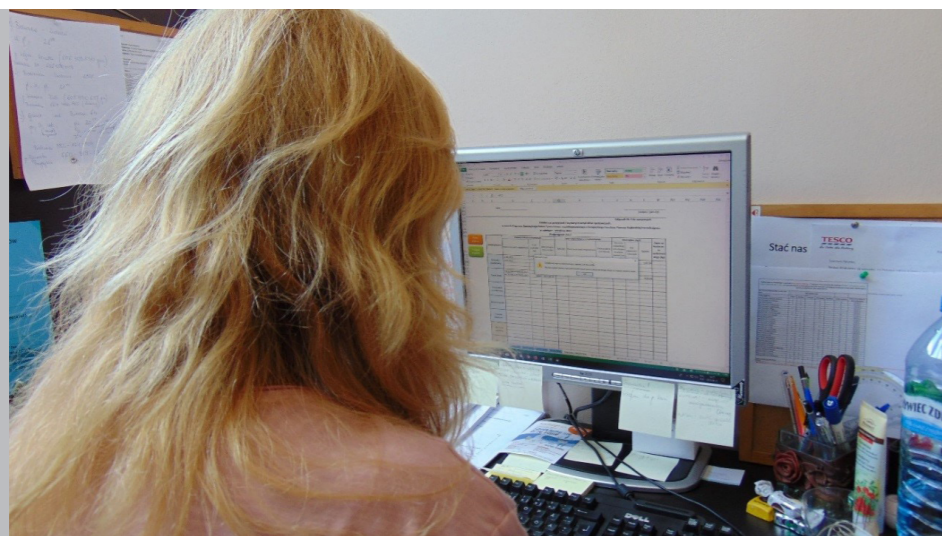
Beyond education, thanks to its collaboration with the National Literacy Agency, the project has donated brand new books to over 400 FEAD eligible households with children under the age of 3, with the aim of **encouraging reading sessions within the family**. Parents were also offered the opportunity to participate in sessions providing advice on how to read with children.

Finally, in terms of employment support, the FSWS refers FEAD recipients who require assistance in **finding employment** to Jobsplus, the national public entity responsible for training and employment. In addition, the FSWS collaborates with Malta Enterprise, and can thus direct FEAD recipients to the national scheme that allocates grants to individuals aspiring to **start their own enterprise**.

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Poland – ‘Little Helper’: Using IT to facilitate food aid reporting

Federation of Polish Food Banks

WHY?

Considering that there are more than a thousand local partner organisations implementing the Operational Programme for Food Aid in Poland, FEAD reporting procedures for the food banks, which act as regional partner organisations, can easily become cumbersome and time-consuming. Yet it is crucial to ensure that such administrative requirements do not hamper the **efficient implementation** of food aid projects. Food banks and Local Partner Organisations (LPO) therefore need to closely **coordinate and harmonise their administrative processes**.

WHAT?

Against this background, the Federation of Polish Food Banks has developed ‘Little Helper’, an IT software that helps to reduce time-consuming reporting processes. Little Helper **supports the overall monitoring of the food distribution chain**, and in particular helps to keep track of the number of food parcels received by each LPO and, subsequently, the number of food parcels received by end recipients.

Little Helper facilitates the transfer and aggregation of data, since all information is contained in a single online spreadsheet, and no longer on paper. The software also **cuts down the time needed** for the calculation and validation of data, and enhances the accuracy of the reporting, as it reduces the occurrence of errors during the monitoring process.

WHO?

Little Helper has been set up through collaboration between the employees of the Federation of the Polish Food Banks (FPBZ) and the Krakow Food Bank.

HOW?

Little Helper consists of an IT file built based on Microsoft Excel and exists in **basic and extended versions**. Both versions are available online and offline. The basic version allows to record monthly incoming and outgoing FEAD food products and in particular, the number of food parcels delivered by the food banks to the LPOs and subsequently to the FEAD end recipients. It thereby contributes to the preparation of basic warehouse documents as well as monthly, quarterly and yearly reports. In the extended version it is possible to record the different types of food items distributed, and to forecast the quantity of food needed to satisfy the needs of the clients of the specific LPO. Both versions provide data relating to potential food loss and contribute to the production of the documents and annexes required by the FEAD national guidelines.

Little Helper has proven to be highly popular, with **more than half of the 1 330 local organisations** cooperating with the food banks deciding to adopt this tool within the first year of its application (2017-2018). The use of this system has increased the willingness of LPOs to engage in FEAD delivery, as it reduces their administrative and monitoring burden. Moreover, within the first year of its implementation, Little Helper has significantly **reduced the number and impact of errors** along the reporting process.

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Poland - Innovative methods for recruiting volunteers

Polish Committee of Social Welfare

WHY?

Recruiting volunteers in the social sector is challenging in Poland. Most people prefer to volunteer for commercial organisations, as it increases their chances of being offered paid employment. Against this background, the Polish Committee of Social Welfare finds it difficult to attract a sufficient number of volunteers to deliver its FEAD project. It has hence decided to try more **innovative recruitment methods**.

WHAT?

The Polish Committee of Social Welfare is taking advantage of its leadership role in delivering both FEAD and ESF funded projects, to **promote positive exchange between these two streams of initiatives**. As it manages seven different ESF projects in different thematic areas, such as employment, education, social integration, development of the potential of employees and enterprises, and construction of efficient and effective public administration, the Committee encourages their participants to become volunteers for the delivery of FEAD-related activities. Engaging European Social Fund (ESF) participants as volunteers in FEAD-related activities is a way to address this shortage, while providing them with the opportunity to contribute to and feel valued by their communities

As part of the ESF projects, beneficiaries are offered psychological support to help them cope with difficult situations and everyday life. An integral part of this support is aimed at making ESF participants **more open-minded and aware of the contribution they can make to society**, as well as how volunteering could be beneficial to them as well. As a concrete follow-up to this, the Polish Committee of Social Welfare also provides ESF participants with information on the volunteering opportunities they offer within FEAD.

WHO?

The project is managed by the Polish Committee of Social Welfare. Local partners play a fundamental role in the project, which is largely focused on improving communication and information sharing. In particular, organisations involved in the seven ESF projects facilitate the recruitment of volunteers by simplifying the process of finding and inducting ESF participants.

HOW?

The developed model of recruitment has proved so successful that over 60% of the volunteers supporting FEAD delivery for the Polish Committee of Social Welfare were originally participants of ESF projects. The project was found to have a **significant impact on volunteers' self-esteem and confidence**. Not only it has provided them with the opportunity to give back to society, but they have also acquired useful skills that have made them more organised at work and in their daily life. As a result, volunteers have reported that they feel increasingly empowered and motivated.

This recruitment model **can generate positive results in different contexts**. Beyond information sharing, psychological support and 15 hours of training raising awareness on the benefits of volunteering, the model includes open door events, media campaigns and a stronger cooperation with the private sector. To provide the project with a workforce of volunteers, private firms take advantage of their corporate social responsibility strategies and paid volunteering days.

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Portugal – Supporting the most deprived to adopt a healthier diet

Mission Structure for the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived (POAPMC)

WHY?

Individuals with a lower socio-economic status generally lead a less healthy lifestyle. This is due to a variety of reasons, one of which is that these individuals often opt for food items with a lower nutritional value because they are cheaper. They are also generally **less aware of the nutritional value of foods** and the manner in which they should be prepared. In Portugal, the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived (Programa Operacional de Apoio às Pessoas Mais Carenciadas – POAPMC) attempts to support these individuals to live a healthier lifestyle by providing food with a high nutritional value every month. As a result, the financial burden of purchasing food is decreased, and individuals are encouraged to improve their eating habits.

WHAT?

When designing the Portuguese food aid programme, the FEAD Managing Authority emphasised the importance of distributing food that allows for a balanced, healthy diet. Food baskets are delivered to beneficiaries on a **monthly basis** and offer **50% of the nutritional needs** that an individual requires. The food baskets are composed of 18 food products that include refrigerated, frozen and dry products as well as fresh products such as meat and poultry.

WHO?

The programme is managed by the Mission Structure for the operational Programme for the Most Deprived (POAPMC), in partnership with the National Social Security Institute which handles all procurement issues. The National Directorate of Health was consulted to obtain expertise in providing food baskets suitable for all age groups of the population. Approximately 600 partner organisations (civil society organisations and municipalities) distribute the food baskets and offer accompanying measures.

HOW?

During the early stages, the contents of the food baskets were determined in consultation with the National Directorate of Health and civil society organisations. The Social Security Institute was subsequently tasked with launching and overseeing the procurement process and purchasing the food to be included in the baskets. As of September 2018, monthly food baskets have been distributed to more than 60 000 recipients across Portugal through the programme, amounting to a total of nearly 900 000 tonnes of food.

The baskets themselves are distributed by an array of partner organisations, including NGOs and local authorities. Employees and volunteers in the partner organisations deliver accompanying measures that focus on improving **food and nutrition knowledge and cooking skills among beneficiaries**.

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Portugal – Guaranteeing territorial equity in FEAD delivery

Mission Structure for the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived (POAPMC)

WHY?

Food insecurity affects one in six people in Portugal. The issue is particularly prevalent in remote rural areas, low-income inner-city neighbourhoods and large metropolitan regions, as well as for groups who live in **isolation**. Against this background, one of the priorities of FEAD in Portugal is to guarantee both **territorial and demand-side equity**.

WHAT?

To ensure all Portuguese people to have equal access to a balanced diet, the Operational Programme for the Most Deprived in Portugal (Programa Operacional de Apoio às Pessoas Mais Carenciadas – POAPMC) strives to distribute food baskets evenly across the country. It does so through a dedicated **territorial planning** strategy and through the involvement of **civil society entities**. Although food distribution is the main aim of the programme, the initiative also empowers the partner organisations it works with.

HOW?

The Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security designed a **territorial planning** strategy in several steps. First, the Ministry determined the cost of the food basket products. Based on this information, the Ministry calculated the number of people that they could potentially cover under the distribution scheme, while respecting the commitment to deliver one food basket per month to each end recipient over two years. Finally, the country was divided into **135 target areas**, based on the number of people residing in each municipality. This ensures that each civil society organisation supports at least **150 people per target area**.

Civil society entities are tasked with overseeing the equal distribution of the food baskets across the territory. Their primary role is to identify the end recipients of the programme. They also establish formal partnerships with the local entities that intend to be responsible for collecting, storing and delivering the food baskets to the end recipients on a monthly basis. Most of the time, food is distributed in public distribution areas; however in some exceptions the baskets can be delivered directly to the end recipients' homes.

WHO?

The programme is implemented by the Mission Structure for POAPMC in collaboration with the National Social Security Institute and the Planning and Strategy Office. These entities all fall under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. The programme also relies on over 600 partner organisations, including the National Directorate of Health, and a wide number of civil society organisations.

An important dimension of this territorial equity strategy is achieved by **monitoring each step of the food delivery scheme** through an online system – from the moment it reaches the partner organisations to the moment it reaches the end recipients. When the end recipients receive the food basket, they sign a form confirming the reception. However, the information system guarantees the confidentiality of the end recipients and does not register names or addresses; it only registers their social security number. Since the start of the programme, **60 000 individuals have received a food basket** each month. Furthermore, the programme has distributed nearly **9 000 tons** of food across Portugal.

Because partner organisations are not equally resourced across the country, the programme also trains and **empowers the staff of the organisations it works with**. Partner organisations receive manuals such as 'Goods with protein in the food basket delivered by the operational programme of the most deprived', 'Programme of food distribution: considerations for an adequate nutritional offer', and the orientation manual of the programme that explains how to make the most out of the food baskets. In 2018, 38 training sessions took place across the country, with more than 680 staff members from partner organisations participating.

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Slovakia – Distributing food and material aid directly at the doorstep of FEAD end recipients

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

WHY?

In Slovakia, parts of the population live in extremely deprived conditions and lack the material and social assistance that would help them improve their quality of life and get on a sustainable path out of poverty. Particularly vulnerable groups include families with dependent children, the elderly, disabled and unemployed people. Not only do these groups lack social and material assistance per se, but more critically they cannot take advantage of existing aid opportunities because their **mobility is restricted**, and they cannot always afford to travel.

WHAT?

Acknowledging this difficulty, the project has set up a system to **distribute food and toiletry parcels directly to the villages of the end recipients**. This spares the target group the efforts of having to go far away to get aid. The elimination of travel costs for vulnerable people has significantly improved their participation in the project compared to previous years. Proximity delivery of FEAD aid also helps to create stronger links with the target group, thus **facilitating the provision of counselling** and other social services.

HOW?

To provide support as close as possible to the target group, FEAD aid in Slovakia is directly delivered in 2 554 municipalities (out of the 2 933 Slovakian municipalities), which are spread across 79 districts. The project would not be able to cover the territory so extensively, without the **effective collaboration of partner organisations and local organisations**. The Ministry works closely together with the Red Cross, Caritas and the Charity of St. Alžbeta, which in turn can choose to work with affiliates namely local associations.

WHO?

The project is led by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. Partner organisations are responsible for distributing food and toiletry packages from districts to every municipality or town, and for carrying out the accompanying measures. Finally, the FEAD Operational Programme working group defines the content of the packages. This working group is composed of representatives from the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, beneficiaries and representatives from the municipalities who are interested in the project, charities, the Red Cross and other non-profit organisations.

The Ministry identifies FEAD recipients centrally, based on regularly updated administrative data, and relays this information to partner organisations so that they can plan their distribution accordingly. Each partner organisation has been allocated **distinct territorial units**: Caritas is responsible for 41 districts, the Red Cross operates in 36 districts, while the St Alžbeta charity focuses on 2 districts. This division of labour enables over 85 000 food packages and over 57 000 toiletry parcels to be delivered across the country at each distribution round. Toiletry packages are usually provided once a year, while food packages are distributed twice a year. In exceptional circumstances, the Central Office authorises additional distributions.

In cities and villages, the distribution of food and toiletry packages is usually conducted **in administrative or other public buildings**. As people living alone, the elderly and disabled people face a distinct set of challenges, partner organisations and affiliates deliver aid **directly to their home**, to ensure the most vulnerable people truly benefit from the intervention. This also helps to build contact with those who need it the most, and allows tailoring support according to their specific needs.

The distribution of food and basic materials is an ideal **first step to approach at-risk individuals**, gain their trust, understand their needs and support them in their daily challenges. Such support includes individual counselling about life choices, healthy eating and hygienic habits, information on how to cook and store FEAD products contained in the packages, as well as advice on how to minimise food waste. The partner organisations also provide FEAD recipients with the contacts of other social workers and organisations that can offer them further help and services related to their specific needs.

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Slovenia – Hope for the elderly, sick and lonely

Caritas Slovenia

WHY?

Collecting food aid from designated distribution points is not an easy task for vulnerable individuals, particularly if they live in rural areas. It's especially problematic for disabled, ill or elderly people, as they are generally **unable to leave their homes**. In order to ensure that these individuals aren't excluded from FEAD support services, Caritas Slovenia aims to personally provide them with food aid.

WHAT?

Out of every 1 000 FEAD aid recipients, at least 80 people receive food parcel directly to their homes. Caritas employees or volunteers visit these individuals twice a year. Additionally, disadvantaged people are **invited to gatherings** where they can worship and socialise once per year. These visits and events are opportunities to find out who needs what kind of help.

HOW?

As a result of providing FEAD food aid, Caritas Slovenia has been able to identify a wide range of individuals in need of support. These people generally have a low income; live under the poverty threshold; are elderly, sick or disabled; or live 10 or more kilometres away from distribution points and don't have their own modes of transportation. It should be mentioned that each food parcel is **personalised to the needs** of the individual receiving them. The parcels are prepared at the distribution point and consist of basic FEAD food items, as well as additional items such as food specific to a certain diet (e.g. gluten free), hygienic material, clothing and personal items.

WHO?

The project is managed by **Caritas Slovenia**. Caritas is one of the partner organisations distributing FEAD food assistance across the country, while simultaneously offering a range of accompanying measures.

End recipients are **regularly in contact** with a designated Caritas employee or volunteer so they know them well. Some are open and grateful when they receive their parcels, while others need a lot of time to establish a mutual sense of trust. The employee or volunteer **builds that trusting relationship** by regularly visiting and speaking with the end recipient, and uncovering what their specific needs are. As a result, the employee or volunteer can best identify which accompanying support measures will best help the individual in their transition out of poverty and social exclusion.

The project was introduced in 2006 and with the help of FEAD funding, Caritas has been able to help up to 100 000 people annually. Most of the work is carried out by volunteers, and approximately 3 500-4 000 of them are working on this particular project. Approximately 30% of the cost are covered by FEAD, while the rest is funded by Caritas or local communities.

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Slovenia – Nurturing the personal development of children from socially disadvantaged families

Red Cross Slovenia

WHY?

Participating in social and cultural activities at a young age has an enormously positive impact on children because it helps them develop essential skills such as creativity, expression, reflection, identity and imagination. Moreover, attending activities conducted by young mentors can offer young people in distress, who are reluctant to accept help from official departments and institutions, an alternative outlet to overcome social, behavioural and learning difficulties. This is what spurred the Red Cross Slovenia's project 'We Are Together'.

WHAT?

The 'We Are Together' project targets children in school and pre-school from socially disadvantaged families to ensure they enjoy **access to social and cultural experiences** that would otherwise be inaccessible to them, with the aim to nurture their overall **personal development**. The programme runs throughout the entire year and offers everything from cultural experiences and social excursions, to help with homework and mentoring.

A special part of the programme is the **individual monitoring of children** whose families are not in a position to provide support vis-à-vis schoolwork or everyday guidance, like accompanying kids to medical examinations or providing daily advice. These are the activities children are typically more comfortable participating in through friendly groups and with informal voluntary leaders. As such, with the help of young volunteers that can support them through their individual hindrances, the children are assisted in overcoming social, behavioural and learning difficulties in a less intimidating way.

HOW?

The programme is implemented through three categories of activities: tutoring, creative workshops and a holiday programme (e.g. summer camps, excursions). These activities focus on motivating the children to learn by stimulating their curiosity and creativity, as well as **developing their social and behavioural skills** through the instalment of values like respect for themselves, others and the environment. Another important objective is teaching the children how to respond to stressful situations without using violence, through exercises.



“Together we can make childhood more beautiful.”

— Polonca Jakob Krejan, Associate, Project Unit for Implementing Cohesion Policy at the Ministry of Work, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Republic of Slovenia.

WHO?

The Slovenian Red Cross manages the project, with project employees and volunteers jointly carrying out the activities. In 2018, the project had two full-time employees – a secretary and an associate – alongside 14 young volunteers. One of the project's volunteers, Gašper Leskovec, recently won the most prestigious award for voluntary work in Slovenia as a result of his efforts in the project (for the 19 years an below age category).

Teaching aid is offered with the help of young volunteers recruited from local high schools who are able to attend at least once a week. Tutors are recruited based on their ability to teach children various school subjects alongside their demonstration of creativity and compassion. Learning assistance and workshops take place separately, so that the volunteers can dedicate enough time and space to the tutoring process, and cater to any specific needs that individual pupils might have.

Through workshops and learning aid, the project connects children who experience diverse types of distress with young volunteers. The children and volunteers often establish **special bonds** of trust through the designated activities, and the young high school tutors constitute an important source of inspiration in the lives of many of the children. The volunteers are typically hardworking and accomplished, and exert a positive influence on the children that attend the programme. Some of the key outcomes of the project include increased performance of the children at school, improvement of social skills, as well as the development of a sense of community more generally through the '**peer-to-peer method**'.

¹ See: <https://postojna.si/novica/89895>; and <http://www.predsednik.si/up-rs/luprs.nsf/objave/5F90838D48940090C12581450049EB0F?OpenDocument>

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Spain – Online management system for food distribution

Red Cross Catalonia

WHY?

Food distribution centres in large urban areas face many challenges when it comes to distributing food in an efficient way, without duplicating the services of other providers. This is even more of an issue if the centres are spread out geographically and lack a coherent coordination system. A particular challenge for organisations distributing food in Catalonia is tracking the time of the reception, the origin of the delivery and the name of the organisation receiving the products. Catalan food distribution centres (like Red Cross and Caritas) have therefore introduced eQuàliment, a **system to manage the distribution of food** in an efficient, equitable and transparent way.

WHAT?

eQuàliment is an online platform that helps manage the distribution of food in large urban areas, where duplication in terms of providing the service twice to the same recipient is a logistical challenge. It is used by local governments, charities and food banks, some of which are FEAD partner distributors. The platform supports **all elements of the food distribution process**, from managing the list of eligible beneficiaries, to tracking the food distribution. It also helps to prevent the duplication of beneficiaries' data; to optimise resources, to provide better and more equitable assistance, to promote voluntary services, and to increase planning capacity and transparency, as well as rigorous statistical information.

WHO?

eQuàliment was created by an IT consulting firm named Districte Digital and a corporate social responsibility consulting firm named Bidea, in collaboration with the Open University of Catalonia. The platform is used by several distribution centres of the Red Cross and Caritas, both of which are partner organisations participating in the FEAD programme.

HOW?

eQuàliment is an online platform that anyone with an account and internet connection can access, without having to install an additional software. The website is regularly updated and provides support at four different levels:

1. To manage the allocation of beneficiaries to the various distribution centres of an area in accordance with data protection laws;
2. To help distribution centres with the planning and management of deliveries for all beneficiaries to avoid overlaps and duplications;
3. To help organisations manage stock and categorise the food they receive from supermarkets and individuals;
4. To provide summary statistics of the food that has been distributed by keeping track of deliveries, and of quantities of products distributed to end beneficiaries.

All of these services are provided through a single, centralised platform that allows the **holistic management of food distribution**, making management easier and minimising the time and resources spent on coordination. The platform let users choose the type of assistance needed in their project management cycle. Although the platform is not financed through FEAD as such, it has proven popular among FEAD partner organisations in Catalonia.

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Spain – Solidarity supermarkets to dignify food distribution

Spanish Food Bank Federation

WHY?

Food Distribution Centres (or CDAs) were introduced in Girona, a province of Catalonia, in 2009 as a response to the increased need for food provision to the most deprived after the economic crisis hit Spain. The lack of stable food supply to food distribution centres encouraged the managing institutions to partner up with food donors such as supermarkets to set up 'solidary supermarkets'.

WHAT?

CDAs look like commercial supermarkets, although they are supplied by municipalities. These solidarity supermarkets provide food products and basic household products, allowing families at risk of poverty and exclusion to choose the specific items they need or desire, ensuring the process is **dignified and reducing queuing time**. The project has been used as a model to design other food distribution centres in the country.

In addition to food distribution, the centres also deliver workshops on how to **optimise household incomes, as well as on nutrition, gender empowerment, domestic repairs**, etc. These workshops have been supported by FEAD in the last two years, thanks to the financial contribution dedicated to accompanying measures.

WHO?

The project is led by the CDA Consortium, the Food Bank of Girona and the Spanish Food Bank Federation, and receives support from local councils, Caritas of Girona, the Food Bank of Girona, Girona's regional government, the Caixabank Foundation and the Catalan regional government. Volunteers help end recipients and provide advice on how to make the best possible use of their food basket. In addition, two people at risk of social exclusion are trained and employed in the centres for a duration of two years,

HOW?

Ten CDAs provide services to the largest municipalities in the province of Girona. The social services of each municipality select the eligible families and refer them to CDAs. The project operates in areas with high rate of immigration, where only 40% of the families supported are Spanish. Each year around a third of families are newly incorporated into the programme and a similar number manage to exit extreme poverty. However, over a third of recipients have benefitted from the programme for three years or more, which indicates poverty remains a concern in the province.

Eligible families get a bi-weekly appointment to access the food distribution centres. On average, each family receives around 20 kg of FEAD funded food every two weeks, in the form of a pre-set **nutritionally balanced food basket**. They can also purchase products according to a system of vouchers, which is financed through national funding streams.

CDAs support **around 27 000 people** (8 500 families), representing 75% of the total people supported in the province of Girona. Almost **three million kg of food** were distributed through CDAs in 2017. Most food products are provided by the Food Bank of Girona through FEAD support, as well as from donations of producers or supermarkets, or own purchases done by CDAs.

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Sweden – ‘Make Sense’: Social inclusion and empowerment of EU citizens living in vulnerable conditions

Association of Local Authorities in Västernorrland County (ALAV)

WHY?

People coming from other EU countries are an important immigrant group in Sweden, but social and economic integration in the northern regions of the country comes with a specific set of challenges. This includes sparsely populated areas, poor infrastructure and difficult life conditions due to the harsh northernmost climate. This inspired the Make Sense project, which runs meeting centres dedicated to EU citizens in vulnerable social and economic conditions in the northern cities of Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik and Umeå, with the aim to promote their **social inclusion and empowerment**.

WHAT?

Make Sense proposes **activities, basic education and counselling for better health and social orientation** in designated meeting places across the three cities in which the project operates. The project tailors its services to the individual's needs and hence the help offered ranges from more immediate support, such as guiding clients to shelters for the night and ensuring that clients receive medical assistance, to assisting clients in setting up a bank account.

HOW?

The personnel of each centre includes a local manager and a number of field workers with cultural and linguistic skills to interact with the EU mobile citizens. Fieldworkers **facilitate contact** between the clients and health care providers, dentists, local authorities, banks and the Swedish public employment service. Because **health care** is one of the project's cornerstones, the project has developed a range of health and wellbeing-oriented activities in particular. In the short term, the project offers end recipients the possibility to shower and wash clothes at the meeting places, which also makes it easier for participants to engage in other activities.

“ One of the project's success factors has been its mix of stakeholders. We have both municipalities and NGO's involved in the project, side by side as equal partners.”

— Sara Selmros, Make Sense Project Manager, ALAV.

WHO?

The **Association of Local Authorities in Västernorrland County (ALAV)** is responsible for managing Make Sense, and in particular for coordinating, planning, monitoring progress and reporting financially. ALAV is a platform for local government cooperation in the county and an arena for the municipalities' to exchange knowledge and expertise. However, the municipal authorities in Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik and Umeå are involved as hands-on partner organisations, alongside a number of local NGOs.

Non-profit partners work closely with the target group in each municipality on a daily basis. Their responsibilities primarily encompass the provision of project staff; as well as running the meeting places, outreach activities, counseling services and volunteer coordination. These partners make indispensable efforts to support vulnerable EU citizens in their own right; they run shelters, support labour market integration, perform social and diaconal work, and distribute food and clothing. Make Sense also works with a number of local volunteers to engage with clients in each of their designated centres.

In the long term, the project's dental hygiene activities and CPR training (first aid treatment) aims to help people on a lifelong basis by increasing participants' knowledge on how to **handle life-threatening situations and improve their general health**. Make Sense also offers lessons in the areas of self-care and sexual and reproductive health.

To date, almost 300 beneficiaries have received support through the Make Sense centres. When possible, Make Sense also **employs people from the target group as fieldworkers**, which further contributes to their empowerment and helps spur their social inclusion. Make Sense recruits previous end recipients based on relevant language skills, former experiences with homelessness and cultural knowledge. The project has found that end recipients have a unique insight resulting in excellent fieldwork alongside the organisation's Swedish employees.

In addition, Make Sense publishes an **annual calendar to put individual end recipients at the centre of their narrative**. Every month, the calendar features the personal story of a migrant that Make Sense has encountered throughout the project cycle. In so doing, the catalogue provides end recipients with a platform to share their life stories, focusing on their personal aspirations and hopes for the future. This simultaneously contributes to raising awareness about human rights for vulnerable EU citizens in Sweden and beyond.

For more information regarding the project, contact
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The catalogue is one of several outputs deriving from knowledge-sharing activities of the FEAD Network in 2018. This community of practice has been established by the European Commission to allow all stakeholders and partner organisations to share tools, ideas and resources that can help with the delivery of FEAD-funded initiatives.

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