

Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) 2014-2020

2012/0295(COD) - 27/03/2019 - Follow-up document

This Commission staff working paper presents the main findings of the mid-term evaluation of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value of FEAD implementation in the period up to the end of December 2017 and to draw conclusions and lessons.

The evaluation covers FEAD's implementation in all Member States during the 2014-2020 programming period for food and/or basic material assistance programmes (operational programmes I) and social inclusion programmes (operational programmes II).

Conclusions and lessons learned

According to the report, FEAD has been successful overall in fulfilling its objectives. However, some areas have been identified where there is room for improvement.

- **Effectiveness:** FEAD has provided much-needed food and basic material assistance to a large number of most deprived persons (higher than forecasted by the impact assessment), and therefore has helped to alleviate the worst forms of poverty. Support has reached, in particular, families with children at risk of poverty, older people with limited income, homeless people, people with disabilities and people who are often not reached by public services, such as migrants. Furthermore, the Fund promoted the social inclusion of the most deprived, complementing the policies of those Member States which have opted for this type of support.

Given its limited scale, FEAD support could not and was not expected to lift people out of poverty.

The accompanying measures are an innovative element of FEAD design, and the rules allow guidance and social inclusion support to be provided as a complement to the food and material assistance aid provided. The introduction of accompanying measures has therefore brought a stronger social inclusion approach to FEAD.

Overall, implementing bodies see FEAD as adaptable and responsive to emerging needs for the types of food and items distributed and for identifying end recipients, while formal programme changes, such as modifying the programme set up, are considered lengthy.

All the horizontal principles (of reducing food waste and ensuring a balanced diet, promoting gender equality and equal opportunities, and ensuring respect of dignity and partnership) together contribute to the programme's success. However, scarce use has been made of the provision to fund the collection, storage and distribution of food donations in order to reduce further food waste.

- **Coherence:** overall, FEAD is coherent and complementary to national poverty alleviation systems. It has increased the number and type of end recipients reached and provides forms of support, which would not otherwise be available to the most deprived or specific population groups. FEAD is coherent with the Europe 2020 strategy and with the newly adopted European Pillar of Social Rights. By targeting different groups or providing complementary measures, it also complements other EU funds, notably the European

Social Fund and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, but also the Employment and Social Innovation programme.

- **Efficiency**: rules governing FEAD's implementation make it simpler to address 'social emergencies' than European Social Fund rules.

- **European added value**: the FEAD has a notable volume effect in nearly every Member State. Two thirds of Member States were able to provide support to new target groups such as homeless people and migrants from within the EU, support that otherwise would most likely not have been provided. The report stressed, however, that Member States remain responsible for their public policies to fight poverty and social exclusion.

Lessons learned

Given the Fund's limited resources, it is important that programmes continue focusing on those who are most in need and where funding gaps exist in the respective country, more prominently children and homeless people. Identifying the 'most deprived' through objective criteria set by national authorities is in line with subsidiarity.

Maintaining flexibility to implement both types of programmes is recommended, in particular when defining the 'most deprived', fine-tuning and revising eligibility criteria and modifying the design of interventions and changing the composition of food packages according to needs. As a complementary delivery mechanism, the use of electronic vouchers can be considered for the future for more flexibility while preserving the dignity of end recipients.

Further alignment of FEAD and the European Social Fund could be sought in order to create pathways from basic support to social inclusion support for active labour market integration, albeit only for the target groups that are the same.

Member States could simplify the Fund's governance, plan operations better, reduce the amount of unnecessary paperwork, use framework contracts to purchase food, use flat rates also for reimbursing administrative costs, such as rent, or better involve local NGOs to allow for more flexibility in identifying end recipients.

FEAD's efficiency could be further improved through better information and by further building the capacity of programme authorities and partners, as provided for in the proposal for a regulation on European Social Fund Plus.