

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

2012/0295(COD) - 07/06/2019 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a summary of the annual implementation reports for the operational programmes co-financed by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in 2017.

FEAD addresses the worst forms of poverty in the EU, such as food deprivation, child poverty and homelessness. While the proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell from 23.5% to 22.4% in 2017, social exclusion risks, particularly for children, the homeless, people with disabilities and people with a migrant background, remain a challenge.

A total amount of EUR 3.8 billion (current prices) is available from the fund. The EU provides up to 85% in matching funds to complement resources allocated by the Member States, bringing the total value of the fund to around EUR 4.5 billion.

The summary is based on the information contained in the 2017 implementation reports. All Member States except the UK submitted an implementation report.

Financial implementation of the operational programmes

Overall, the financial implementation of FEAD programmes continued to accelerate in 2017. On the ground, the total eligible public expenditure (national and EU) approved to support FEAD operations amounted to EUR 637.3, up from EUR 569.5 million in 2016 and significantly more than in 2015 (EUR 444.2 million). The payments made to beneficiaries in 2017 were lower than the previous year (EUR 405.2 million in 2017 as opposed to EUR 434.9 million in 2016) but were slightly higher than in 2015 (EUR 395.2 million). Significant progress was made in payment applications submitted to the Commission. In 2017, a total of EUR 475 million in eligible public expenditure was declared by Member States, against EUR 353.4 million in 2016 and EUR 46.3 million in 2015.

In terms of financial execution, by 31 December 2018, the Commission had paid a total of EUR 955 million as interim payments. By then, financial implementation expressed as the level of interim payments made by the Commission had surpassed 25% of the total 2014- 2020 allocation.

OP I – Food and basic material assistance

21 Member States delivered food aid in 2017. Five Member States (ES, FR, PL, IT and BG) were responsible for 85% of the total amount of food delivered in 2017. Two-thirds of food aid consisted of dairy products and flour, bread, potatoes and other starchy products. The highest increases in tonnes of food distributed in 2017 were in IT and BG, where the food aid programme was expanded.

In 2017, Member States distributed 25% more basic material assistance than in 2016 (EUR 9.4 million).

OP II – Social inclusion

In 2017, social inclusion support was pursued by 4 Member States: DE, DK, NL and SE. After a difficult start in 2016, the project ‘Elderly in the neighbourhood’, in NL, performed very well in 2017. The project sought to alleviate social exclusion among disadvantaged elderly people. After intensifying contacts with the target group, NL succeeded in engaging with three times as many individuals as in 2016. Most

importantly, after 1 year in the programme, around 52% of the elderly people reached were still involved, 39% said that they had improved their social network and 43% had strengthened their digital and financial skills.

Obstacles to implementation

The close monitoring of the programme, as well as the strong cooperation established between the authorities and partner organisations, helped to overcome many of the obstacles that emerged such as: (i) difficulties in engaging with and/or collecting information from end recipients on account of legal constraints, cultural differences; (ii) complicated public procurement procedures; (iii) poor quality or shortage of certain goods; (iv) problems in the planning and logistics of aid distribution.

Conclusions

The report concluded that in 2017, the FEAD programme was on track as regards implementation on the ground. Most Member States had a well-established and properly functioning programme in place that was under constant review and improvement by managing authorities. The provision of basic material assistance, which had initially lagged behind, has recently emerged as a second important component of OP I support. A few specific target groups, and in particular the homeless, have been reached in higher numbers than previously.

After 4 years of implementation, many of the most deprived people in the EU are receiving effective assistance. Despite its limited budget, FEAD complements national efforts to address material deprivation and combat poverty and social exclusion. Overall declining poverty risks in the EU show that considerable progress is being made towards reaching Europe 2020 targets. Overall, FEAD support reached 12.9 million people in 2017, according to data and estimates from partner organisations.

Several Member States made significant adjustments to the programme, seeking to make it more efficient and to ensure a greater impact on the target groups, but areas for improvement remain. Moreover, various Member States increased the funding for ongoing projects that had proved to work well. Remaining weaknesses regarding the completeness of annual reporting, ongoing delivery concerns, and related financial implementation issues should be addressed by the Member States, including through dedicated annual review meetings.