



Brussels, 30.6.2016  
COM(2016) 435 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT**

**Summary of the Annual Implementation Reports for the Operational Programmes Co-  
financed by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived in 2014**

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### I. Introduction

The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) was created by Regulation (EU) No 223/2014<sup>1</sup>, with the objective of contributing to alleviating the worst forms of poverty in the EU, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation. Under the terms of the Regulation, the FEAD can be used to support the most disadvantaged groups in society, by providing food, basic consumer items such as clothing, footwear and toiletries, or by organising social inclusion activities. The FEAD can also be used to finance the collection and distribution of food donations as a measure to combat food waste.

The **total available amount of FEAD funds is EUR 3 813 million at current prices** and the allocations to all Member States are set out in Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

The FEAD is being implemented in all EU Member States during the 2014-2020 programming period. It is being implemented via **operational programmes**, approved by the Commission. Member States can decide how to make best use of the funds by choosing to develop a food and/or basic material assistance operational programme (OP I) and/or a social inclusion of the most deprived persons operational programme (OP II). Member States also have freedom in determining the target groups, the specific types of support provided and the geographic coverage of their programmes.

While **social inclusion of the most deprived** is central to OP II, it is also an essential part of OP I. The provision of material assistance must be complemented by accompanying measures, designed to promote the social inclusion of the end recipients<sup>2</sup> (e.g. referring them to the appropriate services, offering guidance on a balanced diet and providing advice on budget management). OP I thus responds to the basic material needs of the most disadvantaged and also helps them make a step towards reintegration into society.

Member States cooperate with **partner organisations** to implement the FEAD programmes. These organisations, which can be public bodies or non-profit organisations, provide the material assistance (OP I) or set up and run the social inclusion measures (OP II), as described in the programmes. This cooperation means that the Fund is also supporting capacity building within the partner organisations in the area of social policy.

The monitoring arrangements for the Fund specify that Member States must send a **report** on the implementation of their programmes **to the Commission** each year, by 30 June of the following calendar year.<sup>3</sup> The Commission assesses the implementation reports and, if necessary, asks the Member State

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (OJ L 72, 12.3.2014, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to Article 7(4) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 the provision of accompanying measures is not required in cases where the food and/or basic material assistance is provided solely to most deprived children in childcare or comparable facilities.

<sup>3</sup> Article 13(1) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

concerned to make changes.<sup>4</sup> The Commission is also required to present a **summary** of the reports submitted by Member States to the European Parliament and the Council in due course.<sup>5</sup>

This summary reflects the information contained in the implementation reports for the year 2014, in the form in which they were accepted by the Commission.<sup>6</sup> It gives a general overview of developments relating to the FEAD at EU level, and presents the information provided by Member States, following the structure of the reports. The values reported for the common indicators can be found in the Annex.

## II. General developments

The FEAD Regulation was published in March 2014. Negotiations between the Member States and the Commission on the content of the programmes absorbed most of the year. The starting date for eligibility was set as 1 December 2013,<sup>7</sup> however, activities were therefore under way even before the adoption of some of the operational programmes.

The majority of operational programmes were presented to the Commission at the beginning of September 2014. A total of 25 programmes had been adopted by the end of the year, while the remaining three (DE, SE, UK) were approved in early 2015. Upon adoption of each programme, the Commission also paid the Member State concerned 11 % of the budget of its programme as pre-financing. This facilitated the provision of urgent assistance to the most deprived.

The outcome of the programming exercise showed that 24 Member States had chosen to implement an OP I, while four had opted for an OP II. The specific types of assistance Member States decided to provide are as follows:

OP type	Type of assistance	Member States
OP I	Food	BG, EE, ES, FR, MT, PL, SI, FI, UK (9)
OP I	Basic material assistance <sup>8</sup>	AT, CY (2)
OP I	Food and basic material assistance	BE, CZ, IE, EL, HR, IT, LV, LT, LU, HU, PT, RO, SK (13)
OP II	Social inclusion activities	DE, DK, NL, SE (4)

## III. Level of implementation of the operational programmes

Consistent with the developments presented above, the majority of Member States specified in their reports that 2014 was dedicated to the preparation of their programmes, consultations with the relevant parties and the negotiations with the Commission. The process of preparing programme implementation

<sup>4</sup> The Commission was able to accept the last of the Member States' 2014 reports on 11 April 2016. This then governed the timing of the adoption of this Commission Report.

<sup>5</sup> Article 13(9) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of preparing this summary, an annual implementation report had not yet been sent by the UK.

<sup>7</sup> Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

<sup>8</sup> Article 2(1) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 defines 'basic material assistance' as basic consumer goods of a limited value and for the personal use of the most deprived people, for example clothing, footwear, hygiene goods, school material and sleeping bags.

also involved designating programme authorities (managing and certifying authorities)<sup>9</sup>. In addition, some Member States started working on their information systems, and held initial discussions with the relevant stakeholders on the nature of the assistance to be provided with the FEAD financing.

As expenditure is eligible under the FEAD from 1 December 2013, the reports prepared by a number of the Member States implementing OP I showed implementation of the programmes to have begun in 2014, alongside the preparatory work. Positive values were therefore reported for the common input, output and result indicators<sup>10</sup>.

A total of 13 Member States (BE, CY, ES, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO and SI) committed expenditure to operations. At the end of 2014, the total amount of expenditure committed to operations totalled EUR 330.7 million. Eight Member States (BE, ES, FR, LT, RO, PL, PT and SI) had already begun providing assistance in 2014. A total of EUR 95.9 million was paid out in five Member States (BE, ES, FR, LT, RO) for operations relating to the provision of food. Assistance was also purchased in IT in 2014, but its distribution did not start until 2015.

The early eligibility date of expenditure and the high level of pre-financing provided for in the FEAD Regulation made it possible for these eight Member States to achieve results very quickly. Member States' previous experience with the Food Distribution Programme for the Most Deprived People, implemented until 2013, was also a factor contributing to the early launch of the programmes.

A total of **228 707 tonnes of food were distributed in 2014** by the above-mentioned eight Member States, with RO, FR and ES accounting for respectively 42.3 %, 28.8 % and 21.3 % of the quantity distributed. The output indicators show that the selection of products distributed varied between the Member States: while some concentrated on a small number of groups of products, others selected a wider range of foods. FR was the only Member State that distributed products from all seven categories covered by the FEAD common indicators. All eight Member States distributed food in the form of packages, while two (BE, ES) also provided meals to the end recipients.

Examples of the contents of a food package:

BE: semi-skimmed milk, canned salmon, filets of mackerel in tomato sauce, beef, macaroni, potato flakes, peeled tomatoes, peas and carrots, mushrooms, fruit cocktail light syrup, peanut oil, jam, breakfast cereals, vanilla pudding powder

ES: food for adults — 2 kg of rice, 2 kg of lentils, 2 litres of milk, 1 kg pasta, a box of 800 g biscuits, a can of 780 g green beans, a can of 500 g preserved fried tomatoes; baby foods — 4 cans of follow-on milk (800 g), jarred baby foods (8 packages, 250 g each)

RO: 3 kg of flour, 3 kg of corn flour, pasta, 2 litres of oil, 2 kg of sugar, 12 pieces of preserved meat.

<sup>9</sup> Article 31 of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

<sup>10</sup> As set out in the Annex to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1255/2014 of 17 July 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived by laying down the content of the annual and final implementation reports, including the list of common indicators (OJ L 337, 25.11.2014, p. 48)

In the majority of Member States, the purchase of assistance is organised centrally and the assistance is then delivered and distributed by partner organisations. As the purchase has to be made following the rules on public procurement, the ability of national authorities to organise procurement procedures quickly and efficiently will be essential for ensuring the regular distribution of support.

**A total of 10 964 726 people, of which 5 612 926 women, are estimated to have benefited from FEAD assistance in 2014.** Approximately a quarter of the recipients (3 092 695 people) were estimated to be children aged 15 years or below and 1 220 615 people aged 65 years or above. Among the recipients, there were an estimated 621 979 people with disabilities, 719 708 migrants, people with a foreign background (including refugees) and minorities, and 69 451 homeless people.

The number of people supported by the FEAD in 2014 already significantly exceeds the initial forecast. The impact assessment for the Proposal for a Regulation on the FEAD<sup>11</sup> estimated that the Fund could support between 1.96 million and 2.13 million people a year. It should be noted that in accordance with the requirements of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1255/2014 the values reported for the common indicators on the number of people receiving support from the FEAD are based on estimations provided by the partner organisations.

Member States report having provided a variety of accompanying measures alongside the distribution of food. These included:

- advice on food preparation and storage, advice on personal hygiene (LT);
- referral to the appropriate social services (BE and FR);
- individual counselling and workshops on available programmes for the end recipients, having a healthy lifestyle and coping with stress (SI);
- psychological and therapeutic support, cooking workshops, education on nutrition, tackling food waste and managing a household budget (PL).

Accompanying measures are an integral part of the implementation of OP I, and the Commission will therefore expect all Member States to provide detailed information about the measures undertaken in their 2015 reports.

The reports provided by the Member States that have chosen OP II show there to have been only limited implementation in 2014. This is also due to the relatively late adoption of the programmes in SE and DE (only in 2015).

#### **IV. Horizontal principles**

- Coordination with the ESF and other relevant EU policies<sup>12</sup>

The question of coordination between the assistance provided through the FEAD and through the ESF was considered as early as the programme preparation stage. Each Member State had to outline in its programme how it proposed to ensure effective coordination. While some Member States focused on

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<sup>11</sup> SWD(2012) 350 final.

<sup>12</sup> Article 5(6) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

preventing double funding, others go a step further and explore the potential for complementary activities. This is very much welcomed by the Commission.

In general, there is a clear demarcation between the activities eligible for financing under each Fund (AT and LT). In addition, Member States have developed a variety of coordination mechanisms, such as shared management and control systems for both Funds, joint selection committees for projects (LU) and advisory groups that suggest ways in which the beneficiaries could cooperate (PL). In ES, the end recipients of FEAD programmes will be encouraged to participate in ESF social inclusion actions.

- Gender equality, integration of the gender perspective and prevention of discrimination<sup>13</sup>

Most Member States report on how they incorporated gender equality and non-discrimination into the programmes' implementation rules. In the majority of cases, the most deprived individuals are identified on the basis of economic criteria, which prevents discrimination in access to aid based on gender, origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation. Some Member States (BG and MT) also include social criteria (e.g. families with children and single parents) in the provision of assistance. In addition, countries have designed their support in such a way as to meet the needs of different groups of the most deprived (AT will offer a choice of school bags for both boys and girls). The process for selection of operations used in CZ and PT is designed specifically so as to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination. Lastly, partner organisations play an important role in guaranteeing gender equality and non-discrimination in the delivery of assistance. In LV, partner organisations can provide food and basic material assistance at the place of residence if the recipient requests such service.

- Climate and environmental aspects, with a view to reduction of food waste<sup>14</sup>

The criteria used by Member States to select food products include their being durable and easily kept and having a long shelf-life, the aim being to reduce food waste. LU is also running campaigns to raise awareness among food shops, in order to promote donations. PL promotes the purchasing of food packaged in environmentally friendly paper, as this is a rapidly biodegradable and recyclable material. Similarly, the food distribution programme in RO encourages the reduction of paper consumption and the reuse of materials.

- Contribution to the balanced diet of the most deprived people<sup>15</sup>

Member States have incorporated health and food safety requirements into the specifications for the purchase of food. They consult with partner organisations, social partners, competent authorities and experts on the selection of food products for distribution. BE has updated its list of products after consultation with health experts. LU has set up a platform where it can discuss issues relating to nutrition, food safety, equality and non-discrimination with partner organisations. IT has adapted the list of food products to regional diets, while ES has developed its list of food aid taking into account the national strategy for nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention. In FR, the procurement procedure includes taste tests of certain products to ensure that the quality meets the required standards for distribution. In BG, one of the criteria used to select soup kitchens to participate in the programme

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<sup>13</sup> Article 5(11) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

<sup>14</sup> Article 5(13) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

<sup>15</sup> Article 5(13) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014.

is their ability to fulfil the requirements for food safety and contribute to the balanced diet of the end recipients.

During the course of the programming period, the Member States and the Commission will need to consider the possibility of using the FEAD to finance the provision of fresh food to the most deprived, and to assess the Fund's potential capacity for this.

## **V. Conclusion**

The FEAD programmes were developed to meet the specific objective of alleviating the worst forms of poverty, within the limits of the support that can be provided by the Fund. The programmes aim to target the groups of people who are the most difficult to reach and to provide them with immediate relief. The social inclusion aspect of programmes, on the other hand, helps integrate disadvantaged people into society. These features of the FEAD programmes also highlight the specific value of the Fund — it provides dedicated support to a group of people who may not be in a position to directly access and benefit from other EU funding instruments, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds).

The FEAD output indicators demonstrate that a large number of people were already reached by FEAD support in 2014. At the same time, the modest budget of the FEAD relative to the high number of people at risk of poverty in the EU (122.3 million people in 2014<sup>16</sup>) means that its contribution to the overall efforts to reduce poverty in the EU is limited. Complementarity with other instruments and measures at EU and national level is therefore key.

The 2015 reports are expected to show more of the FEAD programmes starting to be implemented, in a growing number of Member States. This will also be reflected in the submission of payment claims to the Commission and the implementation of OP II. The aim of the Commission will be to ensure that the 2015 reports contain comprehensive and adequate information as to how the FEAD programmes were implemented in all Member States. This is essential in order to obtain an accurate overview of the implementation of the Fund at EU level.

The FEAD has always been envisaged as an instrument with simple management, which is able to address social emergencies. This is why the rules for using FEAD funds have been simplified in comparison with those for the ESI Funds. The success of FEAD actions will depend on Member States keeping the implementation provisions simple during the programming period, and not introducing an administrative burden beyond the requirements of the FEAD legislative framework.

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<sup>16</sup> Source of data: Eurostat.