



## **The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) in Europe post-2020 The positive impact of food and material assistance supporting the most deprived in Europe**

Brussels, 5 November 2018

On 30 May 2018 the European Commission released its proposal about the European Social Fund plus (ESF+) under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027. The text is currently under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The European Commission proposes merging five funds<sup>1</sup> into ESF+, among which the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), with the purpose of simplifying and unifying European Social policy, allocating it an envelope of 100 billion EUR in shared management between Member States and the European Commission. Of that amount 2% will be allocated to the issue of food and/or material assistance. This means 2 billion EUR less than in the current programming period. There is broad agreement concerning FEAD's ability to alleviate food and material deprivation while contributing to social inclusion and achieving EU and national objectives of poverty reduction.<sup>2</sup>

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) welcomes the new ESF+ and supports the idea of making a unified fund for a single policy. However, **considering the current level of poverty and hunger in Europe, FEBA is worried by the decrease of funds allocated to food and/or material assistance.** The European Food Banks Federation recalls **the important role played by the FEAD in the current programming period: it is effectively supporting the Food Banks to pursue the goals<sup>3</sup> they share with civil society organizations to alleviate hunger and provide assistance to the most deprived.**

FEBA is confident that the European Parliament will hear the concerns of the stakeholders and civil society and will improve the new integrated approach that the ESF+ proposes.

In this light FEBA has five main recommendations:

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<sup>1</sup> ESF+ will group the European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme, and the Programme for the Union's action in the field of health.

<sup>2</sup> See European Commission, [FEAD Mid-Term evaluation. Report on the Open Public Consultation](#), VC/2016/0664, November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



1. In our view, **Member States should allocate a minimum of 4% of their ESF+ resources under shared management to confront the problem of material deprivation.**

Considering that in 2016 7.5% of the population in the EU-28 were severely materially deprived, the resources to address material deprivation should be maintained in real terms at a sufficient level for the next programming period, or at least maintained at the levels of the current programming period 2014-2020.

2. We call for **strong collaboration between Member States, social partners and civil society organizations in the planning and implementation of the ESF+ strand under shared management** (*Article 8 paragraph 1*). The involvement, experience, and expertise of social partners and civil society organisations in implementing employment, education and social inclusion activities should be leveraged from the beginning and throughout the implementation of the programmes.

3. **We believe that Member States must support capacity-building programmes for social partners and civil society organisations with a defined allocation of the ESF+ resources under shared management** (*Article 8 paragraph 2*). The fact is that civil society organisations often lack the financial resources to build capacity of their many volunteers in the delivery of assistance programmes.

4. In our opinion, **the instrument of electronic vouchers or cards provided as a measure of food and/or material assistance is inappropriate and may increase the social exclusion of the most deprived citizens** (*Article 17 paragraph 2 subparagraph 2*).

- It does not respect the privacy of deprived persons, since such electronic vouchers or cards would need to be nominative.
- Provision of accompanying measures along with food and/or material assistance would become impossible, while this has been the cornerstone of the implementation of the current FEAD.
- Further, children, a large section of deprived persons, would get access to neither electronic vouchers nor cards and thus might not benefit from support at all.
- There is no guarantee that electronic vouchers or cards would be used for their intended purpose.
- Supermarkets and other retailers would need to be included in the audit trail.
- Finally, supermarkets and other retailers would debit the electronic vouchers or cards against retail prices, while the current method through public procurement obtains more food and/or material assistance for the same public money.



For these reasons we propose to delete the provision of electronic vouchers or cards and enhance the collaboration with the social partners and civil society organizations instead.

5. **Make compulsory the provision of accompanying measures alongside** the delivery of food and/or basic material assistance because both, taken together, are an effective tool in enabling the most deprived persons to move towards social inclusion.

### About FEBA



The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a European umbrella non-profit organization and works in collaboration with 24 members and 4 projects in European countries. For more than 30 years, FEBA mission has consisted in representing its membership at European and international level, supporting and strengthening food banks in Europe by providing training, sharing best practice and knowledge, and developing partnerships, and fostering the creation of new food banks.

FEBA brings together 388 food banks and branches which are committed to fight against food waste and to feed the most deprived. Our members provide 4.1 million meals each day to 8.1 million most deprived people through 44,700 charitable organizations thanks to the professionalism of 23,500 co-workers (88% volunteers). In addition to surplus food from the food supply chain, FEBA members also redistribute food from the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) and the Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual donations.

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