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Europe is facing new poverty. The social crisis is in front of us

MAY / 2020

The crisis is depriving thousands of citizens from the West of the continent. In the most affected countries, request for food has increased from 25% to 30%.

[...] The social and economic crisis takes over from the health crisis, and it is not sparing developed countries. Everywhere in Europe or in the USA, the sudden cessation of activities linked to containment have impoverished thousands of people.

The gradual resumption of activity should provide only a very limited respite from the announced in tourism, entertainment or catering. Consequences: the lines get longer for the redistribution of food aid. Vouchers have appeared. And on the websites of charitable associations, calls for donations are more pressing.

In a [joint appeal](#) launched at the end of April, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA), Feeding America (FA) and The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) declare to be engaged in a "massive struggle" to "feed an ever increasing number of

families and individuals", in a context that is more difficult because "the food distribution channels are disrupted by transport interruptions and quarantine measures".

"The social crisis is ahead of us and, from experience, we know it will last longer. While Eastern Europe seems a little bit more spared, in Italy, France, Spain, Belgium, the demand for aid has already increased from 20% to 25%. In the UK, it

is even more difficult. Unemployment is rising everywhere" confirms Jacques Vandenschrik, President of FEBA. "Before, 30 million people were already in a situation of poverty in Europe. And we thought that figure would fall to 20 million in 2020...".

To read the full article in English or French, please click [here](#).

Poverty at national level

France / Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires

The coronavirus outbreak threw many people into poverty overnight. The humanitarian associations are on the bridge, but they must innovate in the face of a new situation that is upsetting the traditional systems.

"Our role is not to distribute these foodstuffs directly, but at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, some associations - deprived of their elderly volunteers and vulnerable to the virus - suspended their distribution activities for a while. That's why we had to distribute food directly to shelters and hostels in Dijon." Gérard Bouchot, President, Banque Alimentaire de Bourgogne

To read the full article in French, please click [here](#).



Italy / Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus



Almost one in three Italians is at risk of poverty, according to an ISTAT study on the period immediately preceding the Coronavirus. More precisely, 6.5% of families are in absolute poverty and the poor are getting poorer and poorer.

"In recent months, unknown and unforeseen events have come to our attention together with already known and perhaps forgotten facts. Among these, the most obvious are two: food is an absolute priority and access to food should be possible for everyone. Many images are testimonials of these two evidences, such as long lines at the entrance of supermarkets, but also the faces of the volunteers who work every day to bring food to the elderly, disabled, deprived people and families in difficulty in this period." Marco Lucchini, Secretary General, Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus

To read the full article in English or Italian, please click [here](#).

Lithuania / Maisto bankas

During the quarantine in Lithuania, the number of unemployed increased by about 40 thousand. The consequences are relentless: people are running out of money for basic necessities, including food.

"When calculating the victims of the coronavirus, we should not forget to look at the long-term consequences of the virus—the list of poor people is becoming longer and longer every day, and not just the poor but also the unemployed are all affected by food shortages." Simonas Gurevičius, Director, Maisto bankas

To read the full article in English, please click [here](#).





EUROPEAN COMMISSION / Press Release

Press Release



The EU response to COVID-19

MAY / 2020

To face one of the **greatest labour crises**, which could increase Europe's unemployment by 7.8% in the second quarter of 2020, the EU has taken initiatives to address immediate needs and mitigate negative impacts on various policy sectors, including **employment and social policy**.

These include measures to mitigate job or salary losses, as well as measures to support the most vulnerable or deprived groups who may be disadvantaged by the current situation.

- ➔ **SURE initiative:** the temporary **Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)** initiative is designed to protect jobs, mainly through short-term work schemes, and to provide income replacement for the self-employed. On 19 May 2020, the Council adopted SURE which can provide up to **€100 billion of loans under favourable terms to member states**. The instrument enables member states to request EU financial support to help finance the sudden and severe increases of national public expenditure, as from 1 February 2020, related to national short-time work schemes and similar measures, including for self-employed persons, or to some health-related measures, in particular at the work place in response to the crisis.
- ➔ **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+):** as a response to the most urgent needs, the Commission proposed an initiative made up of two packages, CRII and CRII+ **to make €37 billion available from the EU Structural Funds to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable sectors**, including labour markets. These initiatives allow the Member States to have greater **flexibility to make transfers between cohesion policy funds so that resources are available where they are needed most and offer support to those most in need by amending the rules of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD** - see below).
- ➔ **European Social Fund (ESF):** the Commission is making all coronavirus crisis related expenditure eligible under cohesion policy rules. As ESF funding is already used to ensure access to quality services, including healthcare, it can be used to pay for healthcare equipment and protective equipment for healthcare workers, to recruit additional healthcare staff and to deliver community-based services for the most vulnerable. Commissioners Nicolas Schmit and Elisa Ferreira have **written** to the Member States to inform them of the amounts available for each country and of the ways financing from ESF and ERDF can be mobilised under the CRII and CRII+.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT / Statement



Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

5 MAY / 2020

On May 5, European Parliament President Sassoli and group leaders held a special meeting in the presence of European Commission President von der Leyen. The **debate revolved around the 2020 Commission Work Programme, the MFF proposal, and the Recovery Plan**. In the statement "Be brave on EU recovery plan", President Sassoli said:

"Now is the time to be courageous and ambitious with the actions backed by the EU budget. Parliament must be a key player in this process together with other institutions, so it can contribute to making it the best possible tool to help the European economy and its citizens. It is urgent to find an agreement on the recovery plan and the next multiannual budget.

Members had set very ambitious targets before the current crisis. Now is not the time to lower our ambitions and settle for a plan and a budget that would not be up to the challenges ahead.

The recovery package must be sizeable and add value, and must be embedded in a strong MFF. We must not lose sight of our long-term investments and strategic objectives. The crisis increased the imbalance between European regions and the recovery plan should help fill this gap.

Means have to be available now for our Member States, companies and affected workers. Time is of the essence. As budgetary authority, the Parliament must be associated to the design of the recovery plan. We will also have a critical look at the MFF revised proposal and we reiterate the request for a contingency plan.

Parliamentarians need to have full say on where the money is invested since they represent citizens and the common good. As it has demonstrated since the beginning of its mandate, the Parliament is not a mailbox.

The increase of the own resources, announced by the Commission, is positive, but it should be permanent and be accompanied by new types of own resources, which remains a prerequisite to any agreement on the MFF.

All of Europe is affected by the current crisis. We, as European leaders, must rise to the challenge. We must protect the most vulnerable among us. More than ever, Europe needs to be strong and work for all Europeans, who look to us now in this moment of crisis."

Recovery Fund / Next Generation EU

The Recovery Fund is not a simple fund, but Plan for Recovery from the recession caused by the Covid-19, based on three pillars and closely linked to the **EU Multiannual Financial Framework**, which, among other things, guarantees democratic control by the European Parliament.

On 27 May 2020, Ursula Von der Leyen proposed a new recovery instrument, called **Next Generation EU** – EUR 750 billion. Next Generation EU - together with the core **MFF** - sums up to EUR 1.85 trillion in the proposals. It goes alongside the three safety nets of EUR 540 billion in loans, already agreed by Parliament and Council. In sum, **this would bring EU recovery effort to a total of EUR 2.4 trillion.**

The money will be raised by temporarily *lifting the own resources ceiling*, to allow the Commission to use its very strong credit rating to *borrow money on the financial markets*.

This is why **Next Generation EU** will:

- Invest in repairing our social fabric;
- Protect our Single Market;
- Help rebalance balance sheets across Europe.

To make this happen, **Next Generation EU will direct its massive financial firepower to invest in our common priorities through European programmes.**

Of that total, EUR 500 billion will be distributed in grants and EUR 250 billion in loans passed on to Member States. The Recovery Fund is the **fourth instrument of the EU anti-crisis package**, inextricably linked to the MFF 21-27. This proposal will then end up on the table of the Heads of State and Government meeting in the European Council, which should examine it at their meeting in Brussels on 17 and 18 June. It will have to be approved by the leaders, and it is not certain that the June Council will be enough, in fact another summit is planned for July.

Farm to Fork Strategy

20 MAY / 2020

On 20 May 2020, the European Commission adopted a [Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system](#) (F2F Strategy).

In line with the [European Green Deal](#), it proposes to **transform our food systems** into global standards for competitive sustainability, the protection of human and planetary health, as well as the livelihoods of all actors in the food value chain.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated how vulnerable the increasing biodiversity loss makes us and how crucial a well-functioning food system is for our society.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to endorse these two strategies and its commitments.



What's in it for Food Banks?

You can read the specific section (2.5) on **reducing food loss and waste** (p. 14) of the Communication where the following points are mentioned:

- the **social dimension of reducing food waste** for the recovery and redistribution of surplus food
- the objective of halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030 (**SDG Target 12.3**)
- the intention to set a **baseline** and propose **legally binding targets** to reduce food waste across the EU
- the importance of **date marking** ('use by' and 'best before' dates)
- the **EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste** will help show the way forward for all actors.

How does the Strategy ensure action is being taken against food waste?

The Commission will seek to scale-up action across the EU, mobilising Member States, food businesses and civil society notably through the work of the [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste](#) and encouraging implementation of its [recommendations for action](#) by all players and the dissemination of the [EU Food Donation Guidelines](#).

Committed to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goal target to halve per capita food waste at retail and

consumer levels by 2030, the Commission will propose, by 2023, **legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU**.

These will be defined against a baseline set following the first EU-wide monitoring of food waste levels, measured according to a common [EU methodology](#). The Commission will consider further opportunities to integrate food loss and waste prevention as part of all relevant EU policies and take action to strengthen the evidence base for food waste prevention interventions.

The Strategy will be reviewed by mid-2023 to assess whether the action taken is sufficient to achieve the objectives or whether additional action is necessary.

Related documents on the European Platform on Food Losses and Waste:

- Website - link [here](#)
- Recommendation for Actions in Food Waste Prevention - link [here](#)
- EU Food Donation Guidelines - link [here](#)
- EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste Newsletter

1st Edition / April 2020 - link [here](#) (focus on FEBA - p. 6)

2nd Edition / May 2020 - link [here](#) (focus on FEBA [here](#))



COVID-19: FEAD continue supporting people in need

28 MAY / 2020

APRIL 2020

In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, on 2 April the **European Commission** adopted an ambitious proposal for a [Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus \(CRII Plus\) Package](#) which includes a proposal for amending the [FEAD Regulation](#):

- It provides sufficient flexibility for Member States to **adjust the schemes of support to the current context**, including by allowing alternative schemes of delivery (e.g. electronic vouchers) and by allowing Member States to amend certain elements of the operational program for the distribution of food/basic material assistance (FEAD OP I) without requiring an adoption by Commission decision.
- All FEAD expenditure for operations fostering crisis response capacities in the context of the Coronavirus outbreak are **eligible as of 1 February 2020**. If the COM proposal is accepted, these actions can be financed from that date.
- This proposal makes it possible to provide the necessary **protective materials and equipment** to partner organizations outside the technical assistance budget.
- The proposal also allows **Member States to benefit from a higher co-financing (up to 100%)**, upon their request, for the next accounting year (1 July 2020-30 June 2021)
- The proposal includes **specific provisions** regarding the eligibility of costs incurred by beneficiaries **in case the delivery of food/basic material assistance or social inclusion assistance is delayed** as well as for suspended and not fully implemented operations.
- Finally, it reduces administrative burden for MS, allowing them to focus on the response to this crisis, by providing lighter monitoring, audit and control requirements during this period.

In fact, on Friday 17 April 2020, the European Parliament [adopted](#) the additional measures so that EU funding can be granted immediately and with exceptional flexibility to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures include the possibility to finance the provision of protective equipment for workers and volunteers, the temporary 100% co-financing from the EU budget and lighter reporting and audit measures during the COVID-19 crisis.

Finally, the 23 April 2020 the Council [adopted](#) these new rules intended to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak

on the most deprived EU citizens. The amendments to the regulation on FEAD will make it easier for member states, partner organisations and other parties involved to access the fund and protect their staff involved in distributing the aid. **Around 13 million EU citizens benefit from the fund each year.**

- Amending Regulation - full text [here](#)
- Regulation on FEAD - full text [here](#)
- The specific measures for addressing the outbreak of COVID-19 amending Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 were published in the Official Journal of the EU on 24 April 2020.

MAY 2020

The Commission now proposes further amendments to the Common Provisions Regulation and the FEAD Regulation, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and in view of the growing needs on the ground. These amendments make **available for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 additional resources for the FEAD**, as part of the **increased resources to cohesion policy under the EU budget 2014-2020**.

Under the new REACT-EU initiative, current cohesion policy programmes will be topped up between now and 2022. It also allows Member States to inject further resources to the FEAD.

The REACT-EU package **includes €55 billion of additional funds** that will be made available to the 2014-2020 [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#) and the [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) as well as the [European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#). These additional funds will be provided in 2021-2022 from Next Generation EU and already in 2020 through a targeted revision to the current financial framework.

The additional resources will provide food and basic material assistance together with accompanying measures, or to dedicated social inclusion measures. To ensure a quick delivery, **Member States will receive a substantial pre-financing payment on the additional resources, and are not required to add any national co-financing.**

- Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 as regards the introduction of specific measures for addressing the COVID-19 crisis – link [here](#)
- To have more information on **REACT-EU**, please click [here](#)



European Food Banks & FEAD / Solid answers on the specific measures

These are the main measures:

- Eligibility of expenditure for FEAD operations promoting crisis response capabilities following the coronavirus epidemic starting on 1 February 2020;
- Eligibility of expenditures related to protective devices for partner organizations;
- Possibility of providing basic food aid and material assistance through electronic cards (less risk of contamination).
- Provision of 100% co-financing (instead of 85%) to be applied for the accounting year 2020-2021

The EU will pay 100% of the fund, so the Member State does not have to co-finance the fund from national resources (15%). This would mean decreasing the 15% that each State contributes or implies that it does not need to apply it since the EU assumes 100%.

Co-financing rate:

As regards the possibility of a higher co-financing of 100% for one accounting year, this would normally concern the relationship between the EU and Member State, not partner organisations.

The aim of this provision is to provide temporary liquidity and additional cash-flow to Member States during the accounting period of the crisis. It is an option to be used for those Member States who are facing cash-flow problems. It does not increase the EU funds for the national FEAD allocation.

In Article 20, the following paragraph is inserted:

"[...] at the request of a Member State, a co-financing rate of 100% may be applied to public expenditure declared in payment applications during the accounting year from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021".

Personal protective equipment:

As regards the purchase of personal protective equipment, this can be either procured centrally by the Managing Authority through a new provision on eligibility in the Regulation, or it can be financed from the Operational Programme's Technical assistance budget.

To have more information, please click [here](#).

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