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## War in Ukraine: repercussions on food security in Europe An alarm call from FEBA and its members

*This document is aimed at informing the European Commission on the challenges and opportunities for members of the European Food Banks Federation deriving from a new crisis due to the flow of refugees from Ukraine and to signal important issues likely to affect negatively the food security in the EU.*

24 February 2022, the day on which Russia started its invasion of Ukraine, marks the beginning of a worrisome period. With the unfolding crisis and relentless bombardment, it has become increasingly clear that this war does not just have devastating impacts on the Ukrainian population but has sparked an **avalanche of repercussions across Europe and beyond**. Sanctions, supply-chain disruptions, and pure destruction aggravate a situation already marked by high input costs and bottlenecks resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Among the consequences are **rising levels of inflation, increasing energy costs, and spiking prices for fertilizers, raw materials, and staple food – a development with widespread ramifications for actors of the entire food system, from farm to fork.**

**Hence, food security must once again be placed on a top position of the political agenda.** In the short-term, Ukrainian people not able or willing to leave their homes in cities under attack, being displaced internally, or making their way to other EU/European countries are affected the most by acute food shortages. The impacts are likely to trickle down throughout the European community, with, as often, **the most deprived being hit the hardest.** This notion is reiterated in the recent Communication on [Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems](#) published by the European Commission. Although within the EU the availability of staple food is not considered to be at stake, the **affordability of food items being part of a nutritious diet is jeopardised.** Hence, vulnerable citizens must be protected from food insecurity interrelated with poverty and social exclusion.

On 1 March the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) launched the [campaign #AllTogether4Ukraine](#). The aim is to raise funds and food to support its members – at the moment in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia – who are helping the people of Ukraine.

Since then, FEBA has strengthened the daily dialogue with its membership and is mainly supporting members as follows:

1. monitoring the situation and assessing the needs;
2. providing financial support, in particular to the affected members;
3. and, last but not least, coordinating the delivery of food – donated by Western members as well as food business operators.

In addition, the FEBA Board of Directors decided to grant the temporary status of Associate Member to Banca de Alimente in Moldova and Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România (FBAR) in Romania. The latter replaces Banca pentru Alimente București which has been a FEBA Associate Member since 2019.



The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) has gathered narratives about **experiences made on the ground and actions taken by the members of its network** and therefore is deeply concerned by the evolution of the crisis.

This document is mainly focussing on **two topics**: (1) the activities conducted, and challenges faced by FEBA Members in the most affected countries, i.e. Ukraine and its neighbouring countries; and (2) the potential consequences of the war on the procurement and provision of food in Europe, including the food in the framework of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the new Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE).

## 1. The Food Banks' crisis response in Ukraine and surrounding countries

The [Kyiv City Charity Foundation "Food Bank"](#) (KCCF) continues its operations via two warehouses in Kyiv from which **they support the local population, territorial defence volunteers, medical institutions, military personnel, and people who fled massively destroyed cities**, such as Sumy or Chernihiv. Additionally, they are operating in Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Uzhhorod, and Ivano-Frankivsk. To date, KCCF has delivered over **706 tonnes of food and non-food products**, such as water, fresh fruits and vegetables, baby food, and canned goods. The items were donated by FEBA Members as well as from retail stores and local producers. Additionally, financed through donations, KCCF purchased food from some food business operators. 3,000 people receive food through the KCCF. Among many examples, the attempt to provide life-saving food aid food to an orphanage housing over 100 disabled and special needs children in Nizhyn was successful. Despite the immense security risk, **10 tonnes of humanitarian aid were delivered to Kharkiv**, the second most shelled city in Ukraine. Given that the majority of food producers in the country ceased their operations and concomitant acute food shortages are becoming an increasing problem, the range of **food items needed most urgently** comprise shelf-stable dehydrated and canned products, hard cheese, flour, grains, oil, and sugar. **Logistics and access to the most affected areas** within the country have reported as being **ongoing challenges**. To facilitate the transport of food and hygiene articles into Ukraine, **KCCF has set up two temporary distribution points in L'viv and Chernivtsi**, located close to the Polish and the Romanian borders, from where they can be redistributed.

In addition, an estimate of more than **226 tonnes of food and non-food products have been donated by some FEBA Members** and delivered to other charitable organisations in Ukraine.

The small country of **Moldova**, considered the poorest in Europe, has experienced a high influx of refugees, comprising both people transiting and remaining. This translates directly into the upscaling of activities carried out by [Banca de Alimente](#), the Moldavian Food Bank, which supports the government in logistical tasks related to the redistribution of food and hygiene articles. **From the outbreak of the war, 83.6 tonnes of food have been received of which 42.25 tonnes with a value of 65,000€ have been redistributed until the end of March. Thereby, an average of 5,300 refugees in 37 reception centres and shelters have been supported.** The **most urgent challenges** identified are to cover **the needs of children** of different age groups related to nutritional requirements, psychological support, or recreational activities. While emergency food aid at the Ukrainian border focusses on energy-rich, ready-to-eat items, and water, in the medium and long term, baby food and non-perishable food for women and the elderly top the list of demands.

[Banki Żywności](#), the Polish Food Banks Federation and its 32 local branches have been involved in the humanitarian aid provided to displaced people that so far crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border, desperate for peace and security. At national level, the Federation has organised a range of activities, comprising **fundraising, food collections, recovery of food donated by companies, as well as redistribution of food**



**to hundreds of charities in Poland and abroad.** To date **over 1,352 tonnes** of food stemming, among others, from large retail chains and companies, have been transferred by the Federation to local Food Banks, reception points, refugee hostels, shelters, and individuals in Poland to support both refugees and households hosting them. According to estimations, around 250,000 people have been reached. Moreover, food deliveries to Ukrainian cities, such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Hrubieszow, L'viv, Lutsk, and Nowożyńska, via a central warehouse near Kielce close to the Polish-Ukrainian border have been arranged. The **most significant challenge** is to provide **food, clothes, and hygiene products** to enable decent living conditions. Along with the increase in the number of refugees in Poland, the demand for food will grow - mainly for long-term household cooking products (cereals, pasta, flour, etc.). Given that up to 1.2 million people displaced by the war are expected to remain in Poland for the duration of the conflict, with a large number of women with small children, seniors, and persons with disabilities unable to find employment among them, the Polish Food Banks Federation assumes a **steady increase of operating costs.**

[Banca pentru Alimente Bucuresti](#) (BpA), FEBA Member in Romania, is functioning as hub not only for the area of Bucharest and the other 9 Food Banks belonging to the Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România (FBAR) but is also delivering food to KCCF in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, and Banca de Alimente in Moldova.

As regards Bucharest, BpA is supporting **94 NGOs that are directly assisting over 7,330 refugees**, in addition to the local end beneficiaries. In order to keep them nourished, a campaign has been launched with retail companies to collect food in stores.

Almost **384 tonnes of food have been recovered and collected at national level or received from other FEBA Members** and have been redistributed in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.

[Potravínová Banka Slovenska](#), FEBA Food Bank member in Slovakia, is currently focusing all their efforts and assistance on supporting charities that **provide meals at border crossings, in refugee centres, and at the railway station** in Košice. The Food Bank also supplies food to **facilities and private homes**, where people accommodate and take care of refugees at their own expenses and to two **central “hotspots” in Michalovce and Humenné** providing shelter to those fleeing the war. So far, **more than 120 tonnes of food have been redistributed in addition to the Food Bank’s regular activities.** 80% of this volume within Slovakia. Thereby, between 4,500 and 6,000 refugees have been helped weekly. The remaining 20%, amounting to around 23 tonnes, were delivered to Ukraine with the support of charities and municipalities. Given the challenge to satisfy the growing demand for food and cover the concomitantly increasing operating costs, the Food Bank got in contact with stakeholders from the food supply chain, as well as governmental institutions to secure material and financial assistance.

## **2. Potential consequences of the war on food security of the most deprived and refugees**

Although more than 2,800 tonnes have been redistributed to support the people of Ukraine to date., FEBA wants to highlight two main concerns:

- 1) **Food aid provided to refugees is on top of the assistance given to 12.8 million end beneficiaries that were already assisted through a network of 48,126 charitable organisations across Europe.** We stress that a 35% increase of end beneficiaries had already occurred as a result of COVID-19. FEBA is also reflecting on the repercussions that this crisis will have on all Food Banks in the EU/Europe as refugees are fleeing from Ukraine and moving across Europe.
- 2) **Spiralling prices, inflation rates, and lack of raw materials will hamper the possibilities to provide much needed assistance** and will have an impact on food donations received from food business operators.



FEBA has informed its members concerning the adoption of the **Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE)** allowing Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. FEBA is also suggesting its members to engaging in dialogue with their national Managing Authorities regarding CARE as well as taking into consideration the new needs in the Partnership Agreement and the programmes in the context of the new programming period 2021-2027.

With the reference to the FEAD, some of our members have informed us about a problematic development. Indeed, in some Member States **tenders for FEAD products have been suspended or have been unsuccessful** due to an increase of prices or a shortfall of raw materials.

Since some of our Western members as well as food businesses are donating food to be delivered to our Food Banks in Ukraine as well as Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, FEBA has also been in contact with DG SANTE asking for guidance as regards the **labelling of food products in a foreign language** that may create an obstacle to the further redistribution of food.

**The parallel occurrence of rising food prices and lack of raw materials are likely to reduce the volume of food donations made available for Food Banks. In the face of increasing numbers of people in need of support, this can threaten food security across the European continent.** Awareness of this alarming scenario should be risen in order to take preventative measures to cushion the consequences. If the most vulnerable of our societies are not protected, this can have problematic repercussions for social inclusion and national, and European cohesion.

Summarising the aspects outlined above, the war in Ukraine is having devastating **impacts on the wellbeing of Ukrainian people, poses challenges to neighbouring countries, and sparked cascading effects on food production and availability in the EU/Europe and beyond**, given that exports from Russia and Ukraine account for 12% of globally traded calories.<sup>1</sup> Hence, this multifaceted crisis with the scale and scope of its immediate and long-term consequences being determined by the length of the war **threatens to impact food security levels**.

Therefore, **FEBA and its members commits to ensure their support to help the people of Ukraine and calls for the European institutions to put into place all measures needed to mitigate the potentially profound impacts of the crisis, especially in terms of food insecurity and social cohesion.**

#### About the European Food Banks Federation

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a European non-profit organisation and works in collaboration with 24 Full Members and 6 Associate Members in European countries. Since 1986, 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 a network of over 300 Food Banks which are committed to fight against food waste and to reduce food insecurity. In 2020, our Full Members redistributed 860,000 tonnes of food to 48,126 charitable organisations providing food assistance to 12.8 million most deprived people thanks to the professionalism of 37,016 co-workers (85% 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 and corporate food collections.

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<sup>1</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute, *How will Russia's invasion of Ukraine affect global food security?*, 24 February 2022.