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FEBA Position towards the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

The position of FEBA and its members

In this position paper, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) highlights its position towards the upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (EU APS).

FEBA welcomes the [European Commission's announcement on 18 July 2024 introducing the creation of an EU Anti-Poverty Strategy](#), which reaffirms the commitment to reducing poverty and social exclusion across Europe. The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (EU APS), which is expected to be finalised in early 2026, aims to address the root causes of poverty, going beyond income support by integrating social services, education, and employment pathways.

As the EU advances toward its 2030 targets under the European Pillar of Social Rights—namely, lifting at least 15 million people out of poverty—FEBA underlines that a comprehensive and rights-based approach must include food aid and material support as necessary elements. This position paper outlines FEBA's recommendations and key policy proposals to ensure that material assistance plays a central role in fighting poverty across all Member States.

In [2023, 94.6 million people in the EU](#), equivalent to 21.4 % of the population, were at risk of social exclusion or poverty. While this figure marks a slight improvement from 2022, the reality remains: millions of families struggle daily to secure adequate, nutritious food, which compromises their health, dignity, and social inclusion. FEBA's network of over 350 food banks in 30 European countries witnesses firsthand how rising food and energy prices have deepened food insecurity.

The current framework of EU social policy instruments, the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights and its 2021 Action Plan, though non-binding, sets clear targets for poverty reduction and acknowledges the need for social protection and access to essential services. Despite this framework and its implementing instruments, only one of the texts, namely the European Child Guarantee, mentions healthy nutrition as a necessary service to combat social inclusion, while no other includes food aid or material support as a right. **The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must therefore address this gap and include access to nutritious food and material aid as a basic human right** and as a crucial instrument to address the root causes of poverty and social exclusion. To effectively tackle poverty and social exclusion, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must adopt a **cross-sectoral approach that combines immediate food aid**

with long-term strategies aimed at fostering inclusion and resilience. This means coordinating policies across various sectors, ensuring that material assistance is integrated into broader support systems. **Food aid should be accompanied by measures such as financial literacy training, access to healthcare, education opportunities, and pathways to stable employment.** By doing so, the strategy can provide individuals with the tools to move out of poverty and ensure a more dignified approach.

FEBA's policy recommendations

- 1) **The EU APS should explicitly acknowledge food aid and material support as fundamental tools in the fight against the root causes of poverty and social exclusion.** These measures must be framed not only as immediate, short-term relief, but as essential components of a rights-based social safety net.
- 2) **The EU APS should call for a significant increase in dedicated resources, recommending that at least 10% of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) post-2027 be dedicated for food and material support,** alongside reinforced accompanying measures that foster long-term social inclusion.
- 3) **The EU APS should promote a smooth transition between funding mechanisms and encourage simplified access to EU funds for NGOs.** This includes clearer co-financing rules, reduced administrative burdens, and secure funding continuity.
- 4) **A comprehensive EU APS must adopt a cross-sectoral approach that links food security to wider policy areas such as health, employment, education, and environment.** Food aid should be embedded in strategies that also address systemic inequalities and promote social inclusion.
- 5) **The EU APS should be aligned with and build on the European Pillar of Social Rights, its Action Plan and its implementing instruments.** Only clear alignment will ensure consistency and coherence across EU social policy instruments and other national and EU relevant policies and strategies.
- 6) The EU APS should support mechanisms to ensure that **social protection schemes, including minimum income and pensions, are automatically adjusted to inflation** and the cost of living, preventing deepening poverty and reducing pressure on emergency aid systems.
- 7) The EU APS must include **robust monitoring tools to track progress on reducing food and material deprivation.** Regular assessments and stakeholder input should inform policy adjustments and ensure accountability.

In conclusion, FEBA believes that the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must be a comprehensive, rights-based framework that integrates food aid and material support as essential components in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. FEBA calls for increased resources and a cross-sectoral, coordinated approach that ensures solutions to food insecurity, so that people experiencing poverty or social exclusion can ultimately break the cycle of poverty.