

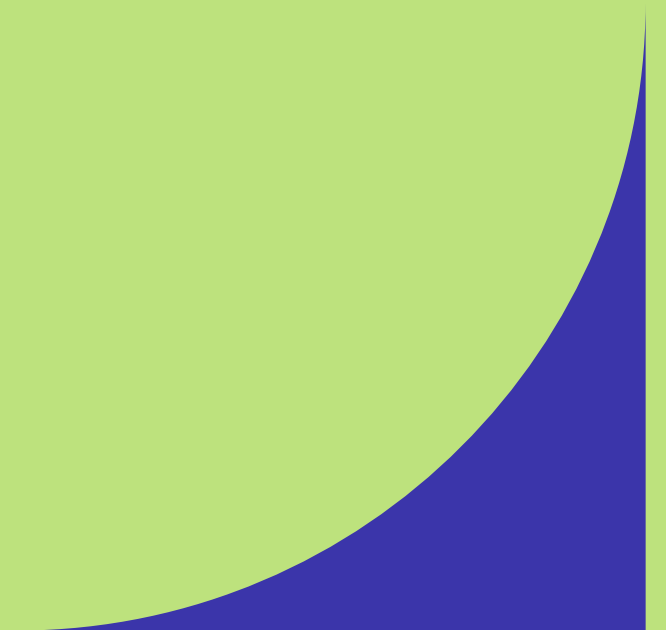


**FEBA Annual Forum
on Food Aid & Social
Inclusion 2025**

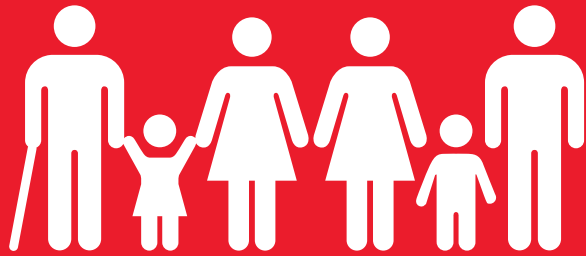
17 October 2025

How Material Support Can Pave the Path Towards Social Inclusion

2025 Report →



1 NO POVERTY



Commemorating the:

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

OVERVIEW

The FEBA Annual Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion is an opportunity to facilitate dialogue on important topics at the intersection of material support and social inclusion. This year, the FEBA Annual Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion commemorated the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and brought together FEBA members, European Commission representatives, speakers from various social and civil society organisations, national-level civil servants, and private sector representatives.

This year's Annual Forum focused on the role of ESF+ for material support and fostering social inclusion, as well as sharing additional connected best practices from experts working at the national level. The webinar additionally featured a panel discussion on the different stakeholder positions regarding the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the first of its kind at EU level.



Moderated by Ignazio Corrao

Senior Policy Officer | FEBA



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Esteban Arriaga Miranda

CEO of the European Food Banks Federation

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Esteban Arriaga Miranda, CEO of the European Food Banks Federation, opened the forum by highlighting the significance of holding the event on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

He emphasised that poverty is not a monolith but a complex, multi-dimensional issue with interlinked elements that deprive people of their fundamental rights. Esteban stressed that, through 40,000 partner organisations across Europe, food banks are working to provide a holistic approach to poverty, using food as a means to foster solidarity, dignity, and social cohesion.

Esteban advocated for a more comprehensive approach to poverty eradication, arguing that the discussion should not be framed as “either/or” choices (e.g., food or vouchers, children or parents) but rather as “and” solutions.

FEBA's CEO called for a robust, ambitious Anti-Poverty Strategy and increased ESF+ funding to effectively address poverty in Europe.

2.KEYNOTE ADDRESS



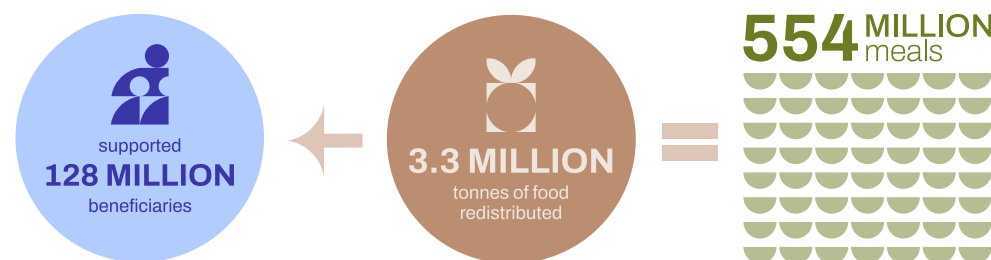
Simona Pulbere

Policy Officer | DG Employment,
Social Affairs and Inclusion,
European Commission

Simona Pulbere from DG Employment emphasised that the polycrisis of recent years has amplified pre-existing inequalities, with more Europeans facing food and material poverty.

Simona highlighted the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan as the framework for tackling poverty, with targets to reduce poverty by 15 million people (including 5 million children) by 2030.

Simona noted the significant achievements of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in the 2014–2022 period, which supported 128 million individuals with 3.3 million tonnes of food equivalent to 554 million meals.



The Policy Of explained that the ESF+ has introduced an integrated approach, combining material support with broader social interventions to enable people not only to overcome immediate difficulties but also move out of poverty and participate fully in society. Simona underlined the Commission's commitment to ensuring ESF+ continues to meet evolving needs while creating stronger links between social inclusion, sustainability, and access to opportunities for all.

On the MFF, Simona added that material deprivation remains a part of the future ESF+ fund and that at least 14 per cent of the financial envelope of the National and Regional Partnership Plans will be dedicated to social objectives, as well as the Social Climate Fund.

3.KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FEBA ESF+ IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2024



Dr. Luisa Fadel

Research Officer | FEBA



Dr. Luisa Fadel introduced the FEBA ESF+ Implementation Report, with an overview of the current situation regarding poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Luisa explained that, despite a slight decline from previous years, nearly one in five people (**93 million**) **remain at risk of poverty and social exclusion**, with women consistently more affected than men.

In 2024, **approximately 38 million people** were unable to afford a proper meal every second day. That same year, ten FEBA members received ESF+ funding, providing vital support and enabling food banks to continue their operations and reach those in need.

Figure 1. Trends in the percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27 (2020–2024), by gender.

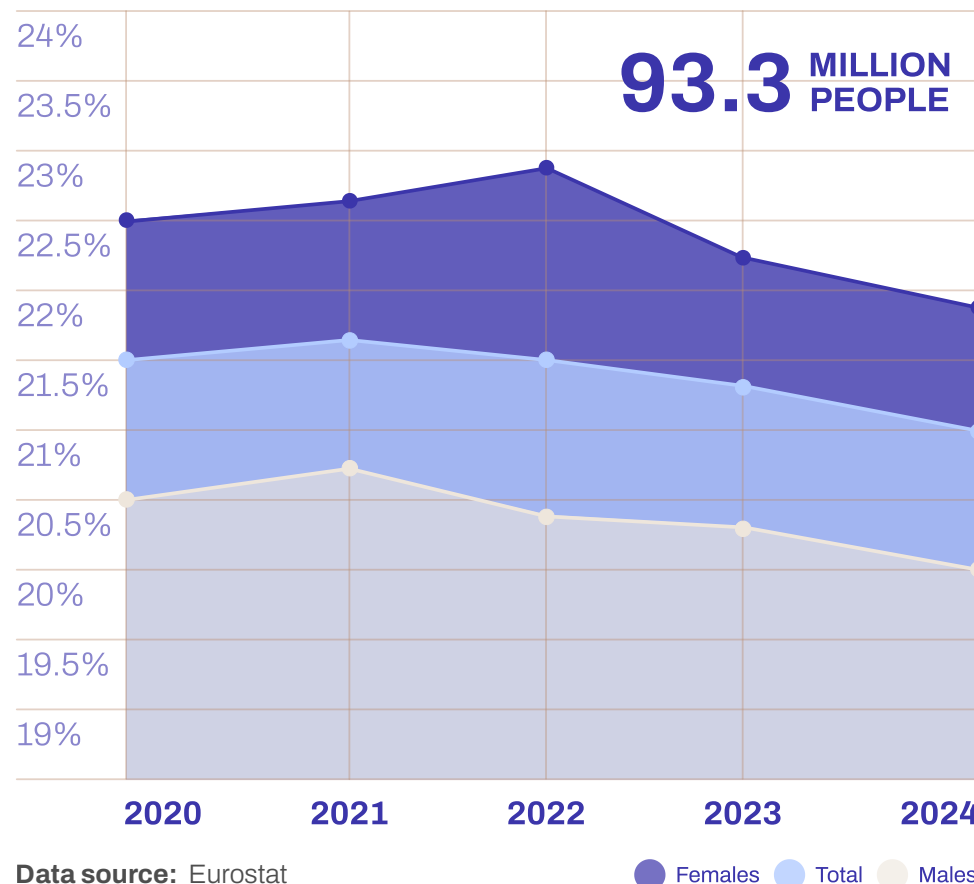
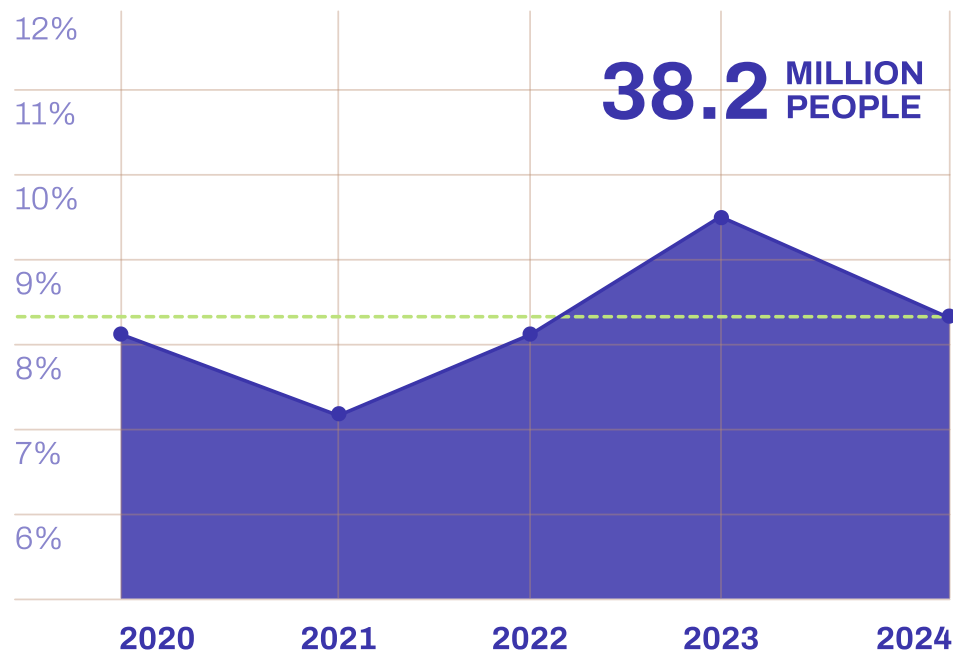


Figure 2. Trends in the percentage of people unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish, or a vegetarian equivalent every second day in the EU-27 (2020-2024)



38.2 MILLION PEOPLE

13.5%

single parents with dependent children

13.2%

single-person households

10.1%

large families (i.e., households with three or more dependent children)

Data source: [Eurostat](#)

Looking back over the past decade, FEAD, now integrated into ESF+ funding, enabled food banks to collect 1.5 million tonnes of products. However, in 2024, the amount of food products funded through ESF+ dropped, totalling less than half of those provided in 2023.

Despite this decrease, **ESF+ products still constituted 6.6 per cent of the total food received by European food banks, enabling the redistribution of 115 million meals to vulnerable people.**



The funding primarily supports operational costs and social inclusion activities like cooking workshops and budgeting classes. Food banks emphasised that as well as providing food itself, fostering social inclusion, improving health outcomes, and creating community connections are all crucial activities.

4. GOOD PRACTICES AT NATIONAL LEVEL TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL INCLUSION



Jiří Bradáč

Project Coordinator | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs



The Ministry collaborates with 21 partner organisations, including all Czech food banks and major NGOs, who in turn work directly with target groups. The Ministry handles public administration, project management, and procurement, while partner organisations decide who receives assistance. The programme provides long-lasting food, canned products, baby food, and special dietary products (including gluten-free and lactose-free options), as well as hygiene items, clothing, school supplies, and outdoor equipment for people experiencing homelessness.

The most requested items are canned meat, dairy products, and baby food. Jiří emphasised that **food and material assistance help establish trust with vulnerable populations, making them more receptive to other social services that can improve their long-term situation.**

Jiří Bradáč from the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs presented the “Pompo 3” project, co-financed by ESF+ with a budget of approximately €28 million divided equally between food and material assistance.

The **Czech model offers a wide range of 62 food products and 20 hygiene items, with a flexible system that allows partner organisations to preserve their own working methods.**





Greta Caglioti

Social Innovation Specialist |
Banco Alimentare Foundation

Greta highlighted their work on accompanying measures, explaining that 7 per cent of the material support budget is allocated for implementation by partner organisations (75 per cent for professional social workers, 25 per cent for other expenses like communication).

Before implementing new measures, they conducted a survey to understand the real needs of their network and strengthen relationships with territorial partners. **The survey revealed that the main services provided were reception and listening, information and guidance, and service accompaniment**, with 17 per cent of organisations having qualified operators (mainly educators and social workers).

This approach allowed them to identify gaps, avoid duplicating existing services, and improve efficiency by providing targeted support, such as hiring psychologists at the food bank level to serve multiple organisations across territories.

Greta Caglioti from Banco Alimentare Foundation presented Italy's approach to social inclusion through food banking. The foundation coordinates a network of 21 regional food banks that support over 7,600 diverse organisations, including those providing periodic food support (78 per cent), housing communities (9 per cent), canteens (8 per cent), emporiums (3 per cent), and street units (1 per cent).

In 2023, they redistributed over 90,000 tonnes of food (40 per cent from ESF+) to more than 7,000 partner organisations, reaching 1.7 million people with the help of 2,000 volunteers.





Emily Fitzsimons

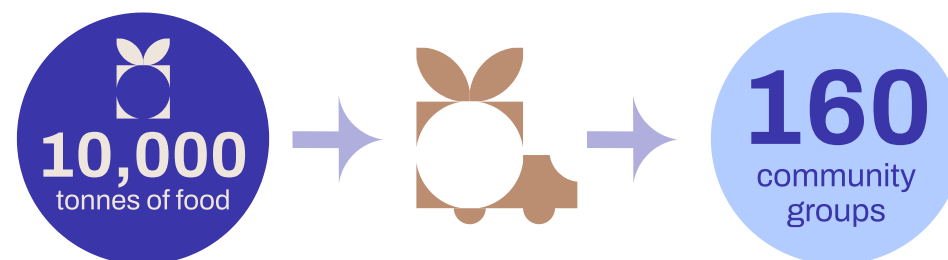
Project Manager | FoodCloud

The government functions as the managing authority and handles funding, application processes, product selection, and EU reporting, while FoodCloud collects data on all the orders that are used for EU reporting and manages procurement, storage, and order preparation from three warehouses.

Community groups collect and distribute food to beneficiaries through parcels or meals. Emily highlighted best practices including working through a network of community groups in order to reach the most isolated individuals and provide the most suitable services.

One of the examples mentioned was a Cork-based organisation, which operates in a shop-like setting with appointment systems, product choice, and an adjoining café, reducing the stigma associated with traditional food parcels.

Emily Fitzsimons from FoodCloud Ireland presented their ESF+ implementation model, which has distributed 10,000 tonnes of food through 160 community groups since 2016.



Another example in Tipperary combines meals-on-wheels with a community kitchen, improving nutrition and providing vital social contact for isolated individuals.

Emily emphasised that **food is often the first connection point that allows other necessary support to be identified, particularly for mental health and well-being**. Emily explained that the system was designed with community needs and order flexibility in mind.

Additionally, Emily highlighted that **supply needs to be reliable and consistent, allowing charities to focus on their core services rather than food administration** and enabling them to provide additional support like nutrition courses, independent living assistance, and educational opportunities.

5. PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE EU ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY



Dr. Hannah Adzakpa

Legal Adviser | Caritas Germany



Kahina Rabahi

Policy and Advocacy Coordinator |
European Anti-Poverty Network



Enrico Tormen

Policy and Advocacy Adviser |
Save the Children



Dr. Hannah Adzakpa

Legal Adviser | Caritas Germany

Dr. Hannah Adzakpa from Caritas Germany emphasised that an ambitious EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must recognise **human dignity as its foundation, moving beyond individual-level characteristics to address structural and systemic issues** that hinder full societal participation.

Hannah highlighted several critical concerns, including the limitations of current poverty measurement methods at EU level, namely the fact that **vulnerable populations living in communal spaces** (such as prisons, asylum seeker accommodation, and Roma settlements) **are excluded from EU-SILC surveys** and are therefore not reflected in the AROPE Indicator.

Hannah advocated for an intersectional approach that acknowledges how non-discrimination issues connect with poverty and argued that participation of people experiencing poverty should be standardised rather than exceptional. She called for stronger poverty impact assessments in EU policymaking, noting that current guidelines are extremely weak, focusing only on job loss rather than comprehensive distributional impacts.

The Legal Adviser stressed that while social policy is primarily a Member State competence, the EU has exclusive competence in areas like state aid law that significantly affect Member States' ability to fund social services and fight poverty.

Hannah urged for **“anti-poverty mainstreaming”** across EU policy fields where the EU has the competence and highlighted the particular vulnerability of mobile EU citizens, who under current EU law cannot access social assistance systems in host Member States, leaving them without essential services.





Kahina Rabahi

Policy and Advocacy Coordinator | European Anti-Poverty Network



Kahina Rabahi from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) identified several critical factors for an effective EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, beginning with the need to shift from poverty alleviation to eradication by addressing systemic causes of poverty, including resource inequality, unfair wealth distribution, exploitation, and discrimination. She argued for **redefining poverty beyond relative and absolute indicators to consider cost of living and quality of life, examining the political function of poverty within capitalist economic systems that rely on low-paid or even unpaid labour.**

Kahina emphasised that the Strategy must coordinate with other EU initiatives while expanding beyond the European Pillar of Social Rights

to address discrimination based on socioeconomic background, the criminalisation of poverty, and intergenerational poverty. She underlined that the question of how to fund the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be one of the most important factors to ensure its success.

The specialist strongly criticised emerging narratives of competitiveness and growth as conditions for social rights, noting that instead, social rights are typically sacrificed for growth.

Kahina also expressed concern about the increasing securitisation and militarisation of the economy, pointing out that every EU country has received recommendations within the last

European Semester Report to increase defence budgets, while recommendations on homelessness, social housing, and minimum income remain limited. She welcomed the Commission's efforts to involve people experiencing poverty in strategy development but stressed that participation mechanisms must accommodate needs like childcare, interpretation services, and protections for migrants.

Lastly, Kahina warned against growing hostility toward civil society organisations, which creates mistrust, and highlighted civil society's role in facilitating the success of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.





Enrico Tormen from Save the Children presented the report “Child Poverty: The Cost Europe Cannot Afford”, highlighting the alarming statistics that nearly one in four children in the EU (19.5 million) live at risk of poverty and social exclusion, with 6.28 million children being classed as severely deprived.

Despite the EU's 2021 commitment to lift 5 million children out of poverty by 2030, an additional 446,000 children have fallen into poverty since 2019, meaning 240 children per day are becoming impoverished. To reach the 2030 goal, 2,500 children would need to be lifted out of poverty every day from now on.

Enrico emphasised that child poverty costs countries approximately 3.4 per cent of GDP annually, while investments like school meals can generate up to 34 times their value in economic and social returns. He advocated for the Anti-Poverty Strategy to address poverty jointly with the Child Guarantee, combining universal safety nets with targeted support for the most vulnerable to break intergenerational poverty cycles.

Critically, Enrico warned that the proposed new MFF architecture risks weakening social investments by merging ESF+ into a larger fund, and eliminating dedicated earmarking for child poverty.

Save the Children supports the European Parliament's request for a €20 billion dedicated budget for the Child Guarantee, maintaining the 5 per cent ESF+ earmarking to fight child poverty across all Member States and implementing a child poverty marker to track spending and results.

Save the Children further supports the integration of essential services within income support and the adoption of an ambitious child poverty reduction target.





Kinga Albert

Social Inclusion Officer |
EU Red Cross



Stephanie Delva

Public Policy and Government Relations
Manager Europe | Kellanova



Mathis Porchez

Policy Analyst | DG Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission



Kinga Albert

Social Inclusion Officer | EU Red Cross

Kinga Albert from the Red Cross EU Office emphasised that poverty should be understood as a symptom of systemic issues and structural problems rather than individual failure, noting the increasing demand for food aid amid austerity measures that are restricting welfare systems across Europe.

According to Kinga, these **systemic issues must be addressed at all policy levels, including within the Anti-Poverty Strategy, EPSR Action Plan and the Affordable Housing Plan**, and it is essential to ensure synergy between these policy instruments. She explained that Red Cross National Societies provide various forms of food aid, such as food parcels and vouchers, with many implementing ESF+ funded programmes.

Kinga stressed that **food aid often serves as an entry point** for people experiencing poverty to access further assistance and community support, sharing an example of a Belgian day centre that evolved from providing meals to creating a women's community that now takes annual trips together.

On the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Red Cross advocates for poverty to be recognised as a systemic failure requiring structural solutions to address housing issues, in-work poverty, and discrimination, and treating food aid as part of a holistic approach rather than a standalone solution.

Kinga highlighted the **Red Cross position on the importance of providing proper recognition and support for civil society organisations to fill those gaps left by systemic failures** and the need to re-evaluate data collection methods that currently exclude vulnerable populations like those in communal housing, prisons, asylum accommodation, and Roma settlements.

Kinga concluded that these measures would help ensure the strategy effectively addresses the complex, multidimensional nature of poverty across Europe.





Stephanie Delva from Kellanova presented the private sector perspective on combating food poverty, highlighting the company's “Better Days Promise” commitment to feed 400 million people in need globally by 2030, including 35 million in Europe.

Stephanie shared a personal experience of a young girl asking for extra food packets to take home because she wasn't sure she would have dinner, underscoring the real need that exists even in developed European countries. Kellanova focuses on two main pillars: breakfast clubs and food donations.

The breakfast clubs provide safe, inclusive spaces for children to have meals before school, reaching over 350,000 children annually through 1,000 projects across Europe, improving not only nutrition but also academic performance, for instance by increasing school attendance and fostering social inclusion overall.

On the topic of food donations, Stephanie noted that while the company provides substantial quantities across Europe, one challenge is that businesses are becoming more efficient in reducing food waste through circular economy practices, and as a result of this the amount of surplus food available for donation decreases.

To address this, Kellanova is updating policies to unlock new avenues for surplus food donation, such as their partnership with FareShare UK to donate over- or underweight food that remains perfectly safe. Stephanie emphasised policy enablers such as the importance of stakeholder collaboration and policy support, as well as ESF+ co-funding for public-private programmes.

Additionally, she highlighted that tax incentives, liability protection, and relabelling guidance are low-cost, high-impact measures that could significantly increase food donations, referencing FEBA's work with Harvard University on policy access as a valuable resource for identifying best practices.





Mathis Porchez from the European Commission explained that the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy is needed because, despite slight decreases in overall poverty, progress toward the European Pillar of Social Rights targets (reducing poverty by 15 million people, including 5 million children, by 2030) remains insufficient, with child poverty actually increasing.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has announced an ambitious strategy aimed at eradicating poverty by 2050, addressing both social needs and economic competitiveness by recognising the significant costs of poverty on EU economies and societies.

The strategy development follows several key principles, taking a person-centred approach and identifying concrete solutions for specific needs, including through a life-cycle approach that addresses needs from childhood to later life. It also takes a systemic approach, extending beyond employment and social policy to areas like energy and agriculture and recognising national and local authorities' roles given the EU's limited competence in social policy.

Based on consultations and research, the Commission recognises poverty as a fundamental rights issue with multidimensional and territorial aspects, whereby root causes include insufficient

income, gaps in access to quality jobs, and service limitations, as well as intergenerational poverty.

According to Mathis, the strategy aims to promote equal opportunities from early childhood, implement the active inclusion approach combining income support with labour market inclusion and service access, address the non-take-up of social rights, and foster synergies with other initiatives like the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, the Quality Jobs Roadmap and Affordable Housing Plan.

From root causes to policy levers: what the policy literature says

WHAT IS POVERTY?

- An issue linked to fundamental rights
- A multidimensional (going beyond income) and territorial issue
- Various disadvantages experienced throughout the life cycle and by specific groups

WHAT CAUSES IT?

- Insufficient income
- Gaps in access to quality jobs
- Gaps in access to education, housing, social and essential services
- Growing up poor (intergenerational transmission of poverty)



WHAT WORKS TO ADDRESS IT?

- Equal opportunities from the earliest age onward
- Active labour market inclusion
- Addressing non-take-up of social rights
- Social investment

Data source: European Commission, DG EMPL

6. CONCLUSION

The FEBA Annual Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion brought together diverse stakeholders from EU institutions, Member States, civil society organisations, and the private sector to discuss the critical intersection of material support and social inclusion.

The event highlighted the essential role of ESF+ funding in supporting food banks across Europe while emphasising that food aid serves as an entry point to more comprehensive social inclusion services. Participants agreed that poverty is not an individual failure but a systemic issue requiring structural solutions.

The upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy was broadly welcomed, with stakeholders calling for an ambitious approach that addresses root causes, ensures adequate funding, involves people with lived experience, and coordinates with other EU initiatives.

As Esteban Arriaga Miranda concluded, poverty is not blind but occurs within power structures that disproportionately affect certain groups, requiring both needs-based and rights-based approaches. While acknowledging progress through instruments like ESF+ and the developing Anti-Poverty Strategy, participants emphasised the need for more robust, comprehensive responses to achieve the goal of eradicating poverty in Europe by 2050.



Contribution to the Call for Evidence on the EU Anti- Poverty Strategy



FEBA Policy and Advocacy Team

24 October 2025



Check out FEBA's [Position Paper](#)
on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy!



For a more comprehensive overview
check out [recorded event](#).



Annual Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion 2025: “How Material Support Can Pave the Path Toward Social Inclusion”

FIND OUT MORE ON [EUROFOODBANK.ORG](https://eurofoodbank.org)



To find more about discussion from
previous year read our [2024 Report](#).



FEBA ANNUAL FORUM
**ON FOOD AID AND
SOCIAL INCLUSION**



How material support
can pave the way for
social inclusion

2024 REPORT





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