

Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)

In a nutshell

Created in 2014, the €3.8 billion Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) supplements EU Member States' own aid. Member States can choose between food and/or other basic material assistance or social inclusion activities. Partner organisations selected by the Member States manage FEAD support. The FEAD complements other EU instruments that seek to promote social cohesion, the European Social Fund in particular.

EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) heading and policy area

Heading 1 – Smart and inclusive growth
Subheading 1b – Economic, social and territorial cohesion

2014-2020 financial envelope (in current prices and as % of total MFF)

Commitments: €3 824.46 million (0.35 %)

2018 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €556.87 million (0.36 %)
Payments: €401.40 million (0.29 %)

2019 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €567.78 million (0.34 %)
Payments: €401.20 million (0.27 %)

Methods of implementation

Shared management (Member States and European Commission)



In this briefing:

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- Other EU programmes and action in the same field

EU role in the policy area: legal basis

In 2014, [around 122 million people](#) were 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' ([AROPE](#)) in the EU28 – a quarter of the population. This means they were in at least one of the following situations: at risk of monetary poverty (17.2 % of the total population), living in households with very low work intensity (11.1 %) or severely materially deprived (9.0 %).

Since the onset of the 2008 financial and economic crisis, fighting poverty and social exclusion has become a key priority for the European Union. One of the aims of the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) is to reduce the number of people 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' by at least 20 million by the end of the decade. Anti-poverty and social inclusion measures are core objectives of the recent [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), showing that the topic is still high on the European agenda.

Since 1987, the EU's food distribution programme for the most deprived ([MDP](#)) has been an important source of food provision for the needy, making meaningful use of agricultural surpluses. With the reduction of intervention stocks and a [judgment](#) by the Court of Justice of the EU ruling out the use of EU funds to purchase food, the MDP was discontinued at the end of 2013. At a time when needs were increasing, the European Parliament called on the Commission to maintain a [food aid programme](#). On 24 October 2012, the European Commission announced a proposal to set up a new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for the 2014-2020 period. Unlike its predecessor, the new fund benefits all Member States.

[Regulation \(EU\) No 223/2014](#) of the European Parliament and Council of 11 March 2014 established the FEAD. This regulation was amended by [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046](#) of the European Parliament and Council of 18 July 2018, which introduced several simplifications. The Commission adopted all the [implementing and delegated acts](#) by the end of 2016.

The legal basis for the FEAD Regulation is to be found in Article [175\(3\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) considering that specific actions in favour of the most deprived are needed to complement other existing EU funds that promote social cohesion. In line with [Article 174](#) TFEU, the fund is also supposed to play a part in strengthening social cohesion within the EU.

Objectives of the programme

The FEAD's objectives are described in [Article 3](#) of Regulation (EU) No 223/2014. The general objective is to promote and enhance social inclusion and therefore ultimately contribute to the goal of eradicating poverty in the Union. The fund is therefore helping to reach the target of reducing the number of people 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' by at least 20 million, in accordance with the Europe 2020 strategy. It seeks to alleviate worst forms of poverty by providing non-financial assistance for the most deprived in conjunction with other EU funds, such as the ESF, and with Member States' national poverty eradication and social inclusion policies.

Funded actions

The EU contribution to the FEAD is more than €3.8 billion (in current prices) for the 2014-2020 period. In addition, Member States are to co-finance at least 15 % of the costs of their national operational programmes (around [€674 million](#)), bringing the total resources channelled through the fund to approximately €4.5 billion.

The principal actions undertaken under the FEAD are:

- **food support** (distribution of food packages and meals to people in deprived situations, school lunches for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, collection and distribution of donated food, etc.);
- **material assistance** (basic hygiene items for adults and children, basic household items, clothing, sleeping bags for the homeless, school supplies, etc.);
- **accompanying measures** to alleviate adversity through advice and guidance (regarding basic rights, nutrition and health, available social services and access to education services, temporary shelter for the homeless, etc.);
- **social inclusion activities** (improving access to existing support and social services, psychological support, training in self-reliance, language courses, etc.).

Implemented under shared management, each Member State is free to adapt the assistance it provides, focusing on food aid, basic consumer goods or social inclusion activities, depending on local needs (see Box 1). FEAD assistance is delivered via partner organisations (public bodies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs)), selected by Member States on the basis of objective and transparent criteria. There is also a [network](#) of national FEAD managing authorities, organisations delivering or involved in FEAD-funded activities, EU-level NGOs and EU institutions. The network's main objective is to share best practice on how to deliver non-financial assistance for the most deprived in the EU.

Box 1 – The FEAD in practice: examples of activities in different Member States

Food support:

- Belgium: distribution of freshly made soup using unsold products
- Cyprus: prevention of malnutrition and early school leaving with free breakfasts
- Spain: solidarity supermarkets to take the stigma out of food distribution

Material assistance:

- Austria: distribution of school starter parcels effectively across the country
- Croatia: distribution of hygiene products, school material and sports equipment
- Slovakia: distributing food and material aid directly to the doorsteps of FEAD end recipients

Accompanying measures:

- Cyprus: 'baby dowry' – supporting disadvantaged parents in welcoming a new-born
- France: 'red cross on wheels' – providing mobile social assistance
- Germany: 'ACASA in Dortmund' – counselling vulnerable EU mobile citizens

Social inclusion activities:

- Czech Republic: 'chefs without borders' – reintegrating homeless women through cooking
- Latvia: 'fish and not only' – learning how to fish to improve self-sufficiency
- Slovenia: dance and English workshops

Source: [European Commission](#), 2018.

Assessment of programme/actions

As required by Article 17(1) of the FEAD Regulation, the [mid-term evaluation](#) of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived was published on 27 March 2019. The document presents the FEAD's main achievements for the period up to the end of December 2017. According to the report, between 2014 and 2017, the FEAD supported more than 12 million people per year and, during this period, more than 1.3 million tonnes of food were distributed. Social inclusion measures, meanwhile reached about 66 000 people.

Given the FEAD's very limited resources compared with other EU funds, the main conclusion of the mid-term evaluation is that there are strong arguments in favour of continuing the programme.

In its [Special Report No 5/2019: FEAD-Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived](#), published on 3 April 2019, the European Court of Auditors assesses whether the initial set-up of the FEAD and the Member States' operational programmes effectively target the most in need and do contribute to the Europe 2020 poverty target. The Court points out that the fund remains primarily a food aid scheme with 80 % of its budget devoted to food support. As a result, although the FEAD offers Member States the possibility to focus on social inclusion, those measures are scarcely implemented. The Court concludes by stating that the ability of the fund to reduce poverty has yet to be demonstrated.

Other EU programmes and action in the same field

The main funding instrument fighting poverty and social exclusion remains the broader [European Social Fund](#), which makes EU funding available to co-finance actions aimed at combating discrimination and helping people access the labour market. In May 2018, the Commission issued a proposal for an [ESF+](#) (with a provisional budget of €101.2 billion in current prices for the 2021-2027 period) to incorporate the FEAD and other programmes, such as the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) and the EU Health Programme.

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