



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting Report

Tackling poverty among children with FEAD

14th FEAD Network Meeting

20 February 2019, Brussels

Social Europe

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14th FEAD Network Meeting – ‘Tackling poverty among children with FEAD’

Hotel NH Brussels Bloom,

20th February, 2019

On 20 February 2019, the European Commission hosted the 14th FEAD Network Meeting in Brussels. The meeting brought together the EU-wide network of stakeholders to discuss FEAD’s role in tackling child poverty. The meeting was organised by Ecorys, on behalf of the European Commission, and welcomed 87 delegates from 22 Member States,¹ representing a range of stakeholders, including FEAD Managing Authorities; partner organisations; other local, regional and national actors; European Commission representatives; EU-level partner organisations; and the wider EU community.

Introduction and ‘Network News’

Leo Williams, Director of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), moderator for the event, opened the meeting by welcoming participants, outlining the programme for the day and providing practical announcements. Leo stressed the importance of the day’s topic, citing the 2016 Eurostat figures, indicating that around 25 million children were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union. Against this backdrop, he emphasised that the objective of the meeting was to examine how to address the moral, political and economic challenge of child poverty – through FEAD.



Olivia Geymond, Research Manager, Ecorys, provided a brief update on network activities, and the results of the 2018 FEAD survey. In total, the survey received 126 responses with a very encouraging outcome, showing that learning is happening in the network. More specifically, the survey showed that the number of accompanying measures implemented, and services tailored for end

beneficiaries, has increased since 2017 while more signposting to education, employment services and partnership building is taking place.

Additionally, Olivia announced that the next network event will take place on April 5th 2019 in Brussels, to discuss the practicalities of FEAD delivery across Member States. Olivia advised participants, interested in showcasing their projects, to email the Ecorys team. As a final point, she encouraged participants to join the FEAD Facebook group to receive the latest updates about the network, and connect with network peers.

¹ BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, DK, ES, FI, Fin, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, SE, EU-level.

Welcome from the European Commission

Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director for Social Affairs in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, further extended a warm welcome

on behalf of the Commission to network participants. Katarina made it known that she is a former head of the Managing Authority for FEAD, and ESF, in Croatia and as such, identifies with the challenges and successes network members are facing. Within this context, she accentuated the importance of

the next meeting in April, noting this it was an opportunity to showcase all the different models of FEAD management, and delivery, and as such is fertile ground to explore and highlight good practices and experiences.



In respect of the theme of the current event, Katarina expressed concerns with the high and persistent rates of child poverty in the European Union. In particular, she pointed to the discrepancy with broader macroeconomic trends, in which many Member States have enjoyed significant increases in gross domestic product (GDP), and employment, in recent years. On this basis, she stressed the importance of recognising what has failed to work in the alleviation of child poverty. Subsequently, Katarina went on to highlight FEAD's central role in the empowerment of children, for example, through the Fund's provision of warm school meals for children from deprived families. Lastly, Katarina reflected on the possible implications of ESF+, showing optimism that the new framework might allow for better synergies between FEAD and ESF.

Panel 1: Current status on child poverty in the EU and EU policy frameworks

In the day's first panel session, presenters provided delegates with an overview of the status of child poverty and identified some of the key current challenges, while outlining some of the main EU policy frameworks that address this issue.

Hugh Frazer, expert on European policies to combat poverty and social exclusion, presented the current status of child poverty in the EU, in addition to key EU policy frameworks aimed at targeting child poverty. He highlighted that child poverty is gaining an increasingly important status in EU policy making as a result of increased evidence of its high, and persistent levels, as well as the growing awareness of the negative consequences of undermining children's rights. Hugh further highlighted the clear "legal" basis for EU action and the development of effective, and sustained, lobbying as important factors in putting child poverty on the European policy agenda in recent years. However, Hugh highlighted that the current focus is still not sufficient, calling for more intense and sustained political, and administrative, commitment.

Hugh specifically highlighted the relevance of the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children and the 2017 European Pillar of Social Rights, principle 11. Despite the multiple

frameworks already in place, Hugh emphasised that implementation mechanisms, resource allocation, monitoring and enforcement all need to be significantly enhanced in order to make progress on the frameworks.



Katarina Ivanković Knežević provided further insight on the challenges around child poverty, and the implementation of some of the frameworks – cited by Hugh – from the Commission’s perspective. Here, she noted that since the adoption of the 2013 Recommendation, small steps in the right direction have been made, by placing a greater focus on children within suggestions on poverty alleviation and social inclusion.

However, Katarina highlighted that implementation still poses a challenge. In particular, she noted the importance of integrated services related to early childhood education and care, but also other broader services, such as social and health. As such, Katarina encouraged participants to explore synergies between EU funds and other actors working in fields related to child protection, and empowerment, in order to gain an understanding of ‘the whole picture’ and maximise poverty alleviation efforts, and outcomes.

Sian Jones, Policy Coordinator for The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), further stressed the importance of tackling issues related to income, services and structural poverty in order to empower children. She encouraged an approach to supporting families, while remarking that children are individual right-bearers whose views, and voices, need to be incorporated. She further stressed the importance of the European Semester in ensuring that social policy issues, like child poverty, are successfully advanced. In closing, Sian outlined the importance of a rights-based approach, as well as a clear European poverty target and sub-target on child poverty. She also highlighted the importance of integrating children, and families, into the policy debate.

Panel 2: Tackling action to alleviate child poverty – where does FEAD fit?

The second panel introduced some key programmes, policies and strategies which focused on alleviating child poverty and the role of FEAD.



Martina Kottmann, Ministry for family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth, presented Germany’s national child poverty alleviation strategy. The strategy seeks to assist 2.5 million children who are at risk of poverty in the country. With an OP II approach, Germany has invested EUR 93 million (2016-2020), in anti-poverty policies which support 52,000 people from two main target groups: disadvantaged and newly arrived EU families,

and secondly homeless people. In addition, 67 projects are being funded in the second period (2019-2020), of which two out of three address families with children – including the Act on Good Early Childhood Education and Care (2019-2022), and the Act on Strong Families (2019-2021).

The next speaker, **Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General, Eurochild**, outlined the reasons why a more integrated approach for action is needed to address child poverty, at European level. In some European countries, such as Romania, one in two children are growing up in poverty, so are deserving of sufficient attention at Member State level to ensure progress is made in Europe. Altogether, Jana called for more accountability, a clearer target on child poverty at European level to allow for monitoring and evaluation of policies, as well as moving from a project oriented EU spending approach to a much more strategic vision of EU funding programmes.



Next in the panel, **Irene Bertana, COFACE Families Europe**, provided an overview of the role of family policies, and programmes, to address child poverty. As revealed in the 2017 European Social Policy Network (ESPN) Assessment of EU Member States' National Policies for Children, there has been insufficient progress to implement the 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children. Only four countries (EE, FR, IE, and MT) have taken initiatives to strengthen their policies and programmes in a significant number of areas. Overall, she called for increased EU action, through a multigenerational lifecycle approach: targeting children and older generations in the family equally; increased spending that can support multidimensional strategies; and a change in Member States' governance frameworks towards a participatory, and research based, policy making approach.

Interactive Sessions: FEAD's contribution to tackling child poverty

The afternoon was dedicated to interactive sessions, allowing participants to share best practice examples and ideas from FEAD programmes. Participants split into two groups and participated in two workshops that took place simultaneously. The workshops allowed various FEAD case studies to be presented, before delegates participated in group discussions.

Workshop A: Tackling child poverty through direct food and/or material assistance

Moderated by **Magda Tancau, Development Officer at EAPN**, the workshop objectives were:

1. To further exchange on FEAD funded projects that are delivering material and/or food aid to children, or families, and discuss types of food and/or material being delivered.
2. Discuss about the main challenges in the context of FEAD.
3. Share ideas on how these projects could be shaped to be more inclusive of children.

The workshop began with a presentation of two case studies from France and Cyprus offering direct food, and/or material assistance, to tackle child poverty.

Sophie Ioannou, Inspector General, Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, opened



the workshop presenting a case study on their free breakfast programme. Running since February 2017, the programme offers a free nutritious breakfast to 13,000 disadvantaged pupils in public education. The programme has received positive feedback from 95% of parents surveyed, although 4% still found stigmatisation to be prevailing. As a response, the Ministry continues to explore ways to tackle stigmatisation – for instance through a meal voucher system, to pay for food in schools. Sharing her experience, and lessons learned, from the programme implementation, Ms Ioannou acknowledged the important role of human resources to respect children’s dignity, as well as access to quality, and quantity, of funding.

Next, **Sébastien Thollot, National Executive Member at Secours Populaire Français,** presented the example of solidarity centres offering material assistance, including food products specifically dedicated to children.

The programme is run by 80,000 trained volunteers, reaching up to 1 million child beneficiaries. Specific measures have been developed to promote the fulfilment and empowerment of children, such as the “Copain du monde” programme, which involves children not only in concrete activities, but also in the development of new measures, to fight stigmatisation together with their parents. Among the challenges of the programme, he mentioned mobilising and training volunteers, financing training and making sure children’s needs are addressed over time.



Following the presentations, and a Q&A session, participants were split into smaller groups for discussions about different FEAD programmes across Europe, the challenges and possible improvements to consider going forward. Participants highlighted a number of examples, such as the Austrian Red Cross School Starter programme, Czech Republic and Greece’s lunch provisions, and in the Czech Republic, Spain and Estonia the significant decline in child poverty through the important investment in children’s’ allowances.

The main points of the group discussions were presented by a representative at each table. Stigmatisation issues were among the challenges most discussed. Other challenges discussed were: access to support during school holidays; difficulties in the inclusion of beneficiaries in the decision making process; addressing the different cultural contexts of beneficiaries; the risk of corruption; limited capacity of organisations working in the field and administrative burdens.



Participants' proposals, and ideas, about ways to overcome these challenges were varied including the importance of incorporating more NGOs, and civil society, to ensure tailor-made services for children most in need. One participant highlighted cost-effective state measures that can help fight stigmatisation, such as the successful case of Estonia's free school meal programme for all – since 2017. Other concrete examples were given to fight stigmatisation, such as different e-vouchers and ticketing systems (i.e. Cataluña's family e-card systems to buy food in supermarkets), or school material parcel programmes (i.e. Austria's schoolbag programme offering different product options).

Closing the session, the moderator highlighted key takeaways of the workshop discussions, such as the need for increased participation of beneficiaries in the programme evaluation and additional benefits of combining food distribution, with accompanying measures tailored to different age groups.

Workshop B: Tackling child poverty through accompanying measures

Moderated by **Kath McKenna, Associate Director at Ecorys**, the second workshop explored how FEAD tackles child poverty through accompanying measures. The objectives of the session were:

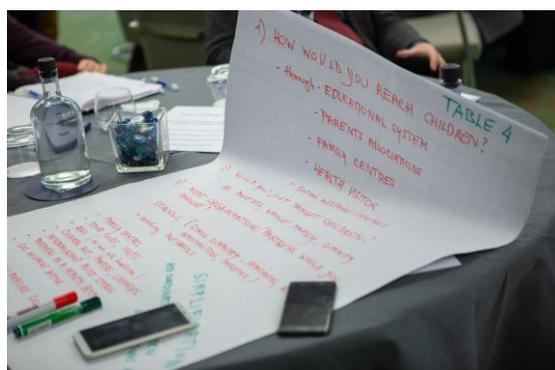


1. To hear about real examples of accompanying measures, their rationale, design, structure and learning from their delivery;
2. To generate ideas for other accompanying measures that could be developed as part of an existing FEAD-funded project, or as a hypothetical project.

Two innovative case studies from Latvia, and Lithuania, were presented at the start of the session.

First **Aija Strazda, Latvian Red Cross**, outlined the provision of accompanying measures for the families with children at the Red Cross accommodation centre – 'Burtnieks'. Clients, a majority of whom are single-parents with children, are offered a place of residence at the center while looking for a job, and/or a new apartment. Within the context of these living arrangements, the Red Cross provide FEAD support packages and accompanying measures which aim to facilitate the reintegration of clients.

Next **Ineta Rimkune, Project Manager, Lithuanian Children's Day Centres Association** and **Aisté Dimskytė, Project Manager, European Social Fund Agency (FEAD Intermediate Body)**, presented an overview of accompanying measures for children delivered in Lithuania. The measures were implemented in the form of leisure activities organised by FEAD partner organisations across Lithuania. These included visits to museums and to the Baltic Sea, day camps, sports activities, a trip to the dentist's office and a cooking course, amongst others.



After engaging with the presenters, delegates broke into small groups for a final exercise, creating a hypothetical project of their own. Delegates were particularly asked to think about the scope of the project activities and target group, potential implementing partners, funding and how to measure the success of the project. Delegates were then asked to present their hypothetical projects to the rest of the room. Key examples included, summer sports tournaments

ensuring children engage in activities over the summer holidays, and using schools as an entry point to provide tailored support services for families.

Closing of the meeting

Towards the end of the day, participants were kindly asked to provide feedback by participating on a new interactive online survey, where live results were shown. The day's meeting was closed by the Leo Williams who reminded participants how to keep updated on the FEAD network's news and on upcoming activities and announced the next FEAD event taking place in Brussels on 5th April on the different approaches to delivery of FEAD.

Keep in touch! – Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an active community of practice, with lively exchange of experiences and shared learning. It allows the sharing of tools, ideas and resources that can help deliver the Fund successfully.

The Network discusses all aspects of planning, managing and delivering activities across Europe. Conversations within the FEAD Network can cover any theme related to the role of FEAD in the fight against poverty, for example food aid, child poverty, issues relating to migration, access to social services or assistance for older people.

By joining the Network, you will be able to interact with people who do similar work to you in different European countries – wherever you are.

To join the online network and stay up to date with news, sign up [here!](#)

[Visit the European Commission webpages](#) to learn more about the FEAD Network and find related articles and documents.

Join the FEAD Network Facebook Group!

The FEAD Network has a Facebook group! The FEAD Network online community is ideal for sharing content and referring colleagues to the group. Keep an eye out for new content including Facebook Live, vlogs and prizes. We will be using Facebook as an interactive tool in future events, so sign up now to take part!



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We look forward to hearing from you!

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