



Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

Meeting report

‘Tackling poverty and the social exclusion of older people through
FEAD initiatives’

16th FEAD Network Meeting

4-5 June 2019, Vilnius, Lithuania

Social Europe

This document has been prepared for the European Commission, however, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This service is provided by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. It is financed by FEAD technical assistance, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

© European Union, 2019

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the organisers would like to thank all the speakers, presenters, rapporteurs, panellists and delegates whose active participation, input and support made this event possible.

Contents

Day 1 (4 June 2018)	5
Welcome from the European Commission	5
Welcome from the Lithuanian Managing Authority and presentation about FEAD in Lithuania	6
Panel discussion on poverty and social exclusion in older age	6
Workshop 1: Examples of FEAD’s work in selected Member States	8
Day 2 (5 June 2018)	10
Project visits and key learnings	10
Workshop 2: The impact of FEAD’s work in selected Member States	12
Closing of the meeting and online feedback	14
Keep in touch! Join the FEAD Network	16

16th FEAD Network Meeting – ‘Tackling poverty and the social exclusion of older people through FEAD initiatives’

Hotel Novotel Vilnius Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania

4-5 June 2019

On 4-5 June 2019, the European Commission co-hosted the 16th FEAD Network Meeting (together with the Lithuanian Managing Authority) in Vilnius. The meeting, ‘Tackling poverty and the social exclusion of older people through FEAD initiatives’, brought together 83 delegates from 19 countries and from across the EU-wide network 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.

Day 1 (4 June 2018)

Jan Aulehle, Director of Communications at Ecorys, moderated the two-day event. He opened the meeting by welcoming participants, outlining the agenda and announcing the FEAD Network’s upcoming events, including the 17th Meeting ‘4 years of FEAD’ on 20 September and the 18th Meeting ‘Monitoring and evaluation’ on 7-8 November in Brussels. Before the start of the meeting, participants had the chance to get to know each other through an interactive icebreaker activity.



Welcome from the European Commission



Marie-Anne Paraskevas, Senior Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, extended special thanks to the Lithuanian Managing Authority for co-hosting the meeting. Next, she outlined the latest policy developments regarding the European Commission’s proposal for a regulation on the European Social Fund+ (ESF+),¹ in preparation for the upcoming funding period (2021-2027).

She announced that triologue negotiations are expected to start in September with the aim of being in a position for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to adopt regulations and provisions in the second semester of 2020. Recently, the European Council agreed a partial mandate for negotiations² and the European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the proposal.³

¹ <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0206%28COD%29&l=en>

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8211-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

³ <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1581197&t=e&l=en>

She also discussed a seminar with FEAD Managing Authorities that the Commission has planned for 14 June, which will look at the common revision of the regulation and specific ESF+ issues.

Ms Paraskevas concluded by announcing that the FEAD Network will continue after this year and a new call for tenders will be launched in the upcoming months. The next network is expected to start its activities in January 2020 and run for two years, into the next programme funding period.

Welcome from the Lithuanian Managing Authority and presentation about FEAD in Lithuania

Eitvydas Bingelis, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Social Security and Labour (the FEAD Authority in Lithuania), gave participants a warm welcome to Vilnius. He outlined the main FEAD projects that are running in the country and stressed the importance of the social partners' dialogue and the continuity of the FEAD Network.



In addition, **Auksė Duksienė, FEAD Programme Manager, Ministry of Social Security and Labour**,

outlined the implementation procedures of FEAD in Lithuania, which targets 200,000 beneficiaries per year (7-8% of the total population). The Managing Authority works with 63 partner organisations in 60 municipalities, some of which work independently through their own resources and in partnerships with local NGOs. The beneficiaries are identified based on their basic level of income as stated in the national law for social assistance.⁴



FEAD in Lithuania provides food and other material assistance, and a range of accompanying measures. The implementing partners can choose which measures they wish to support. The Managing Authority also runs various communication activities to raise awareness of the support available to target groups, through both online and offline channels.

Panel discussion on poverty and social exclusion in older age

Jan Aulehle opened the panel discussion, presenting the speakers and outlining the aim of the session. The goal of the session was to examine the main challenges related to poverty and exclusion among older people in Europe through a policy and research perspective. Moreover, the panel aimed to discuss FEAD OP I and OP II measures that are inclusive and targeted at older people. Each speaker briefly



⁴ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.3EEE59417F13/asr>

presented their work, highlighting key trends and some of the current challenges of the topic.

Hans Dubois, Research Manager, Eurofound, highlighted existing trends and the challenges facing older people as identified through research. Findings relating to the perception of life satisfaction⁵ and income inequalities suggest that measures focusing on income, benefits and pensions alone are not enough to tackle social poverty and exclusion. To improve the quality of life of older people and decrease inequalities, a greater focus should be placed on social assistance and access to services.

Maciej Kucharczyk, Policy Director, Age Platform Europe, introduced a broader perspective on the situation with regards to poverty and social exclusion, outlining issues such as different groups experiencing different levels of inequality, limited access to services, isolation among older people, and higher poverty rates for people who do not own their own home. He warned against practices that simply look at average figures and consider all people over 65 as part of one group. Instead, he stressed the need to be cautious and carefully address the differences between group ages, particularly 85+ year olds, who are sometimes not well represented.

Paula Cruz, Sociologist, EAPN Portugal, presented the findings of a forum conducted in Portugal in 2018 that aimed to understand the needs of older people, in order to inform policy at institutional level. The forum reached almost 800 older people from across Portugal, specifically those in rural and remote areas. Some of the key messages gathered included a call to increase social and economic support, particularly in relation to housing, and a need to develop adequate minimal income schemes and better access to quality services.

The results have been used to inform policy recommendations, mainly in terms of making services such as transport, housing and healthcare more inclusive of the older population, in addition to more professional training. To conclude, she stressed that a change in the paradigm is needed: “Ageing is a social quest – we need to change mentalities about the old and the role they play in society, beginning with solidarity between generations”.

Gražina Rapolienė, Research Fellow, Lithuanian Social Research Centre (LSRC), presented the findings of a research project⁶ looking at the experiences of older people facing poverty and social exclusion in Lithuania. Her presentation highlighted the need for a model that goes beyond material and financial deprivation. In addition, she outlined evidence-based recommendations for policies related to ageing in areas such as civic participation, socio-cultural aspects, services and mobility.

During the wider discussion with the audience, the Commission reiterated how important it is for Member States to develop national strategies that take the potential social exclusion of older people into account, as well as the role that new funds can play in developing adequate services. In particular, there was a view that there should be a continued and stronger focus on FEAD accompanying measures in the future.



⁵ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/fourth-european-quality-of-life-survey-overview-report>

⁶ <http://lsrc.lt/download/VIENAS1.pdf>

The example of e-vouchers was provided as a good practice in relation to tackling inequalities, in that it gives people access to a bigger food basket based on their needs.

Participants also stressed the role of Member States in developing accompanying measures and the dependence on strong political will. The European Pillar for Social Rights was mentioned as a positive framework in terms of recognising the dignity and independence of older people, and one which could enable further policy developments.

Workshop 1: Examples of FEAD's work in selected Member States

The workshop facilitator **Andrea Broughton, Associate Director, Ecorys**, introduced speakers from three countries (Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania). These speakers provided insights into national FEAD programmes that focus on alleviating poverty and the social exclusion of older people.

Alena Kniežová and Silvia Knapiková, representatives from the Slovakian Red Cross (Humenné), started their presentation by

emphasising the importance of cooperation among local authorities, social partners, church organisations and NGOs when it comes to providing FEAD support to the most deprived. The organisation is in charge of the delivery of food and hygiene supplies in the east of Slovakia, and supplies more than 6,000 food and hygiene packages to 1,000 beneficiaries in 60 villages each year. The organisation also provides accompanying measures to vulnerable people, such as transport services that include specially designed vehicles for disabled people or homecare.



To conclude their presentation, they highlighted that implementing FEAD material assistance programmes has allowed them to identify many older people in the region who are in need of social support (and have subsequently begun receiving it). 'We aim for our beneficiaries to live independently and with dignity,' said Alena Kniežová.

Gábor Virág, Project Manager, Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection, spoke about the diversity of older people in Hungary and factors that can force them into poverty (including disability, low pensions, housing conditions, and reduced social networks). The Managing Authority in Hungary provides food aid to people with disabilities and elderly people with very low incomes, who are in need of social assistance.



Gábor Veres, Project Manager, FEAD Managing Authority, continued the presentation, giving details about the accompanying measures provided at distribution sites. These include consultation services that offer beneficiaries information about the FEAD programme, as well as advice on household management.

The last speaker was **Aistė Dimškytė, Project Manager, European Social Fund Agency, the FEAD Intermediate Body**, who presented a case study from Lithuania, where around 9% of the FEAD target group are aged 65 and above. In addition to material assistance such as food products and hygiene goods, there are a variety of accompanying measures offered to FEAD beneficiaries to combat social exclusion. Older people are also offered legal advice, psychological support consultations, events, educational activities and social trips.



In terms of challenges, Ms Dimškytė spoke about how it can be difficult to reach older people living in remote and isolated areas, and engage older people in activities after long periods of isolation. Despite this, feedback from older people after events shows the positive impact of such activities and helps to shape ongoing improvements aimed at increasing their reach.

Following these presentations, the facilitator invited the audience to ask questions. Participants discussed the stigmatisation of older beneficiaries in relation to feelings of shame after isolation, and in comparison to younger people. Later, the facilitator invited delegates to split into smaller groups and discuss four key questions.

Participant discussion: Key messages

1. What are the main challenges when it comes to reaching out to older people in the context of FEAD-funded projects?

Delegates agreed that the main challenges are hidden poverty (particularly in remote areas), limited capacity such as storage spaces, heavy packages, transportation, and the social stigma of receiving support.

2. How can programmes be shaped in order to be more inclusive of older people?

Participants highlighted accompanying measures as an extremely important feature in terms of combating social exclusion. They stressed that it is important to include NGOs, social services and communities in the process. They also discussed the need to increase funding for FEAD OP II measures, suggesting that synergies with other funds such as the ESF could be examined in order to increase funding. Additional suggestions included increasing physical accessibility for recipients, increasing the number of volunteers and providing more tailor-made activities for older people.

3. How do FEAD measures contribute to the social inclusion of older people?

The importance of establishing the target group of older people was highlighted, particularly taking into consideration different conditions and situations among older people. Delegates shared a case study from the Netherlands as a good

example of how older people can be targeted through accompanying measures, and the benefits this has brought in terms of contributing to social inclusion.

4. Which project challenges and learnings can be shared?

Participants said that they find it difficult to make cost-effective decisions about funding distribution in terms of accompanying measures and food assistance. Some countries have very small, remote communities and there are few options in terms of accompanying measures to choose from. It was suggested that older people could be involved in the preparation of projects in order to allow them to decide what type of activities they want to be involved with.

Day 2 (5 June 2018)

Project visits and key learnings

Delegates were divided into three groups on the second day, each of which had the opportunity to visit one FEAD project site in Vilnius. After the field visits, the delegates shared their impressions and key learnings with others.

Group A: Lithuanian Food Bank (Maisto Bankas)

Participants in Group A visited the Lithuanian Food Bank (Maisto Bankas). As a charity, this organisation provides food assistance and accompanying measures to people in poverty, working with other organisations that help the most deprived. The Food Bank redistributes food and material products to 600 charities through its five regional branches in Lithuania.



Paula Calabuig, Research Manager, Ecorys, thanked the volunteers from the Food Bank for their tour around the Vilnius regional warehouse and provided a short summary of the visit for the rest of the participants.

The Food Bank's mission, in cooperation with food producers and traders, is to ensure that safe-to-eat food is not thrown away and reaches people in need. During the visit, participants had the opportunity to taste samples of canned products that the Food Bank produces to fight food waste. This is part of a new initiative that re-uses 50% of products that would otherwise be wasted.

At the end of the visit, the Food Bank gave a presentation about its accompanying measures, including a range of training and culinary sessions. In 2018, it conducted 85 training sessions, attended by 1,700 people. The 'Reserved for the Elderly' project was also launched in 2018, in collaboration with the Social Employment Agency (SOPA), and promotes volunteering activities specifically targeted at older people.

Among other things, participants learned how the Food Bank reaches out to the target group by providing information about pick-up points via SMS, distributing fliers, and publishing and promoting videos through different channels.

Group B: 'Bethany' Social Centre

The 'Bethany' Social Centre and its charity canteen, day centre and hygiene room were visited by Group B. 'Bethany' provides a safe place for people to gather and socialise, helping to empower them and encouraging them to make positive changes in their lives.



Jitka Dolezalova, FEAD Network Coordinator, Ecorys, gave a short summary about the target

group and activities that the social centre implements for the rest of the participants.

The centre is run by Caritas and receives products from the Food Bank that are not taken by FEAD end recipients. It uses these products to provide hot meals for 150 visitors each day, who are mostly single, middle-aged men experiencing social exclusion, poverty or a crisis. Apart from the canteen, the centre has a hygiene room and areas for counselling. It also provides afternoon activities in order to engage people.

The canteen, which opened in 1992, uses the premises adjacent to the St. Peter and St. Paul's Church (provided by the parish) and became a social centre in 2014. Delegates were shown around the premises and given a presentation by a social worker about the activities that take place there. They also viewed the counselling room and listened to the centre's psychologist, who works with vulnerable teenagers.

Some delegates said that it was interesting that an NGO provides these services rather than the local authority, although the Managing Authority explained that this differs from remote regions, where all the services are provided by the government. The delegates agreed that both the staff and the volunteers at the centre share a passion to help others. Overall, the interest of the public in 'Bethany' is increasing, which is also supported by visits to local schools by the volunteers.

Group C: SOPA

Participants in Group C visited the employment centre SOPA, which is an example of FEAD and ESF synergy. SOPA is a member of the National Anti-Poverty Network (NAPN). Since 2006, SOPA has been helping people with fewer opportunities (such as unemployed people, those with mental and physical disabilities, long-term unemployed people, and older people) to find a job and remain in the workforce.

Andrea Broughton, Associate Director, Ecorys, described the activities carried out by the employment centre SOPA for the rest of the participations.

The organisation views itself as a bridge that enables long-term unemployed people to return to employment. The main target groups are people with disabilities, older people, and those with low literacy levels or a social disability.

SOPA uses a step-by-step process that starts with an evaluation of the participant's situation. This is followed by skills training, job search guidance and self-presentation skills. The organisation also cooperates with employers and provides support during the first few weeks and months after a participant has started work.

Andrea described some of the projects that SOPA is implementing, including an ESF-financed project that aims to increase the employment of older people by facilitating their active participation in voluntary activities, the labour market and society through four Job Search Laboratories that are tailored to their needs.



SOPA also runs a project called 'Share the Light', under which long-term unemployed people make crafts and jewellery from parachute cords. The project helps them to develop skills that are valued by employers such as teamwork, quality control, concentration and communication. Around 70% of the people who take part in this project go on to find employment afterwards.

Although SOPA does not receive direct FEAD funding, some of its partners implement FEAD accompanying measures by using SOPA's methodologies.

Workshop 2: The impact of FEAD's work in selected Member States

Florence Tornincasa, Projects and Admin Officer, EAPN, facilitated this session, which aimed to show participants about two country initiatives funded through the FEAD programme and encourage reflection on initiatives that can help overcome the social exclusion of older people.

Lidy Münnhoff, Project Manager, The Hague Public Library, and **Toon Kets, G4 Project Leader, Utrecht Public Library,** presented a case study from the Netherlands that focused on the social inclusion of retired people. A short video introduced participants to the 'Living & Learning – Elderly in the Neighbourhood' initiative, which is running in the libraries of four cities in the Netherlands.



According to **Toon Kets**, building trust is a very important part of the project, in terms of helping to engage older people from various groups, including retired people and those with migrant backgrounds. The initiative employs community leaders or people who are active in religious, minority groups to become their ambassadors and communicate with older people about upcoming activities. The project enables older people to gain IT skills through technical training, as well as engage in creative activities such as painting or sewing. The project has succeeded in creating an effective social network and enhancing the skills of older people.



Anastasia Stergiopoulou, FEAD project leader, Municipality of Dramas, then presented a case study from Greece, which has established the social partnership 'Solidarity in Drama Region'. The partnership includes 21 regional partners and enables the provision of accompanying measures for the social inclusion of older people.

The results from a questionnaire distributed to beneficiaries revealed that many single individuals aged 60 and over suffer from loneliness and have chronic health problems. To combat this, the partnership offers assistance to older people, including individual and group counselling sessions. Since 2015, the partner organisations also provide a variety of workshops on healthy nutrition and well-being, and the effects of this have included an increase in participants' awareness of their health status, better nutrition, weight loss and overall improved self-confidence.

In terms of the challenges faced by the project, Anastasia shared that projects find it difficult to employ permanent professional staff and there is also a lack of space available for activities. Participants also feel embarrassed about sharing their stories. She ended by sharing her motto: "If many small people, do many small things, in many small areas, they can change the face of the earth".

Following the presentations, participants were asked to reflect on four key questions. The table below presents views that were shared during the workshop discussion and through the online tool (Mentimeter).

Participant discussion: Key messages

1. What are the main challenges in relation to targeting older people and reaching out to them in the context of FEAD funded projects?

The most common challenges expressed by delegates were lack of trust and motivation, poor health, mobility and isolation. The issue of hidden poverty was also highlighted. One participant said that it is difficult to identify the needs of the target group, particularly in the case of older people between the ages of 75 and 90.

Using ambassadors to relate to different groups from different social and migrant backgrounds was described as a best practice that can create trust when disseminating information to encourage participation. Other solutions included choosing end recipients by economic criteria, using SMS messages as a more

direct communication tool, and handing out questionnaires at the distribution points.

2. How can programmes be shaped in order to be more inclusive of older people?

Delegates agreed that an individual approach should be taken into account when designing programmes. Involving older people can add great value in terms of making sure that programmes are designed to their specific needs.

One participant shared the Amsterdam Public Library's project as an example in which feedback from beneficiaries has made it possible to make simple adjustments that have had a big impact. By taking their views into account, the library has been able to create a welcoming space for older people and increase participation in programmes.

In addition, the individual approach was discussed in terms of the types of communication activities that are needed to reach out to older people.

3. How does FEAD delivery and accompanying measures prevent stigmatisation?

According to the participants, the inclusion of young people in projects can reduce age-based stigmatisation, while also having a positive impact on beneficiaries by expanding their social network, facilitating the exchange of experiences and facilitating community building.

Participants also felt that stigmatisation could be reduced by increasing flexibility in terms of the variety of food and hygiene products on offer. They also discussed the importance of creating suitable distribution places, tailored to the beneficiaries, which could include shelter or seats to decrease stigmatisation while people are queuing for their parcel.

4. What are some of the project challenges and learnings that can be shared?

Flexibility when it comes to choosing accompanying measures based on local cultures and target groups was mentioned as a key learning. Participants maintained that the current funding rate for OP II should be increased in order for beneficiaries to receive a greater level of support through the accompanying measures.

The delegates agreed that it is important to connect with other activities funded by other funds, and which involve a variety of organisations, by drawing on good practices.

Closing of the meeting and online feedback

Jitka Dolezalova concluded the event by asking participants to provide live feedback through the online tool. The satisfaction survey will remain open after the meeting.

Jan Aulehle then closed the meeting by inviting the delegates to send recommendations for topics to be covered during future FEAD Network meetings. He thanked the Lithuanian Managing Authority for hosting the meeting, and all the speakers and the delegates for their participation in the event. He also encouraged participants to connect with others via the FEAD Network Facebook group.



Keep in touch! Join the FEAD Network

The FEAD Network is an active community of practice, with a 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!](#)

To learn more about the FEAD Network and find related articles and documents, [visit the European Commission webpage.](#)

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!



[FEAD Network](#)

Contact us

Visit our website: <http://ec.europa.eu/feadnetwork>

Or email us with your questions: FEAD.Network@ecorys.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

This service is provided by Ecorys on behalf of the European Commission. It is financed by FEAD technical assistance, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.