

Mapping Report

Exploring ESF+ Practices for Addressing Material Deprivation Across Member States

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INTRODUCTION

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the European Union's (EU) main instrument for investing in people and supporting the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). With a budget of almost EUR 99.3 billion for the period 2021–2027, the ESF+ will continue to provide an important contribution to the EU's employment, social, education, and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas.

ESF+ is an important tool that supports the European Union's commitment to reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion across Europe. ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation is one of the key instruments in reducing poverty, alleviating material deprivation, and providing support to the most vulnerable groups. As Member States face a growing number of socio-economic issues, adequate material support for the most deprived individuals becomes increasingly important.

This report explores various systems for providing material support in the context of ESF+. The adopted ESF+ programmes reveal different approaches that can be taken to address material deprivation. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the use of ESF+ to address material deprivation for the most vulnerable people.

The report provides a thorough understanding of the design and implementation of ESF+ material support programmes, including the types and frequency of provided support, distribution mechanisms, and identification of end beneficiaries. Additionally, it includes country fiches of material support schemes in each country.

We will analyse different practices across Member States to serve as a valuable tool for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders, with the aim of encouraging exchange and communication between countries on various approaches, and ultimately contributing to more effective material assistance systems, promoting good practices and more inclusive policies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Poverty and social exclusion remain significant challenges in the EU. According to recent data, the At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE) rate was 21.6% in 2022, which indicates that approximately 95 million people in the EU are experiencing poverty or social exclusion¹. In 2022, 8.3% of the EU population were unable to afford a meal containing meat, fish, or a vegetarian equivalent every second day². Reducing poverty and social exclusion is one of the EU's main objectives.

One of the scopes of ESF+ is to tackle socio-economic disparities and promote social inclusion across the European Union. It now includes the former Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) with a specific objective dedicated to material support (specific objective m) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived persons, including children, and providing accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion. All Member States are required to allocate a minimum of 3% of their ESF+ resources to this objective. The ESF+ builds on the work of the FEAD implemented during the previous programming period 2014–2020, proving effective in reducing material deprivation and aiming at social inclusion of vulnerable groups. As a result, its efforts will continue in the new programming period of 2021–2027.

The FEAD was an important instrument in combatting material deprivation in the EU, more than 15 million individuals received food support, with children comprising almost 1/3 of recipients. In 2021, 2.9 million tonnes of food were distributed and over 2 million people benefitted from basic material assistance with FEAD support.

ESF+ ensures the continuation of support to the most deprived through food and/or basic material assistance (Article 4(1)(m) ESF+) and social integration measures (Article 4(1)(l) ESF+) in accordance with the legal framework of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 for the ESF+ and Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 for the Common Provisions. These measures aim to improve the outreach and effectiveness of support programmes, creating a more cohesive and responsive approach to addressing societal disparities and promoting social inclusion.

1 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230614-1>

2 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230710-1>

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this mapping report is designed to provide a comprehensive and objective overview of the implementation of ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation across different Member States. The data for this report were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to and completed by the managing authorities responsible for the execution of material support initiatives in their respective Member States.

The questionnaire was prepared by the expert team of the Community of Practice on Material Support. The questionnaire was designed to capture relevant information about various practices used by Member States in the context of ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation, including their implementation, distribution, and identification schemes.

The questionnaire was distributed to managing authorities. The managing authorities filled out the questionnaire between 12 June and 31 August. It is important to note that 17 out of 24 Member States that selected SO(m) responded to the questionnaire. These Member States include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain. Therefore, the report is based only on the responses of these Member States.

It is noteworthy that the report reflects the 2021–2027 programming period. However, the new programming period has not yet started in some Member States. Therefore, some information is based on their plans rather than actual implementation.

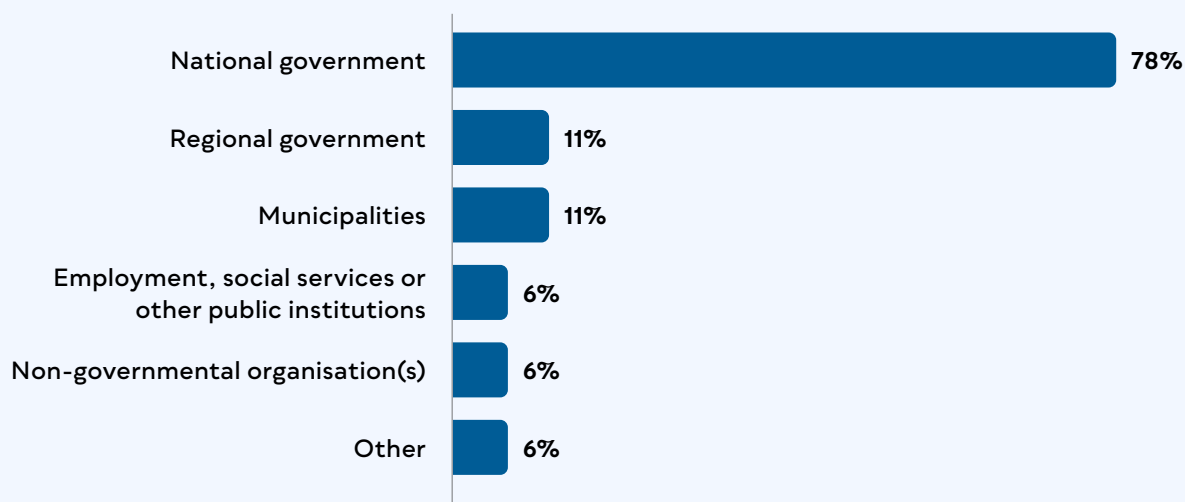
The data collected from the completed questionnaires were analysed to identify common trends and differences in the approaches taken by different Member States in implementing material support programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

To ensure the timely and efficient delivery of material support to recipients, it is crucial to implement material support programmes effectively. Managing authorities play a key role in programme implementation as they are responsible for coordinating and executing the programmes efficiently. Their main responsibilities include designing the programme, allocating resources, engaging partners, and monitoring the distribution processes.

Governmental bodies typically function as managing authorities, particularly social ministries. They work in close collaboration with other governmental institutions to ensure that material support initiatives are integrated into larger frameworks that align with broader social and economic policies. 78% of Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI) indicate that the national government is responsible for implementing the material support programme (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Entities responsible for implementing the ESF+ support programme for addressing material deprivation



In some Member States, intermediate bodies are delegated to implement the programme or specific functions, such as public procurement. In 11% of Member States (ES, GR), regional governments share the responsibility of programme implementation. In **Greece**, regional governments and municipalities will participate in procurement contracts to distribute food and material support along with accompanying measures across the country. In **Spain**, direct management of the programme will be delegated to all the Autonomous Communities and Cities (CCAA), which will act as intermediate bodies. Municipalities play an important role in implementing material support projects in 11% of cases (GR, HR).

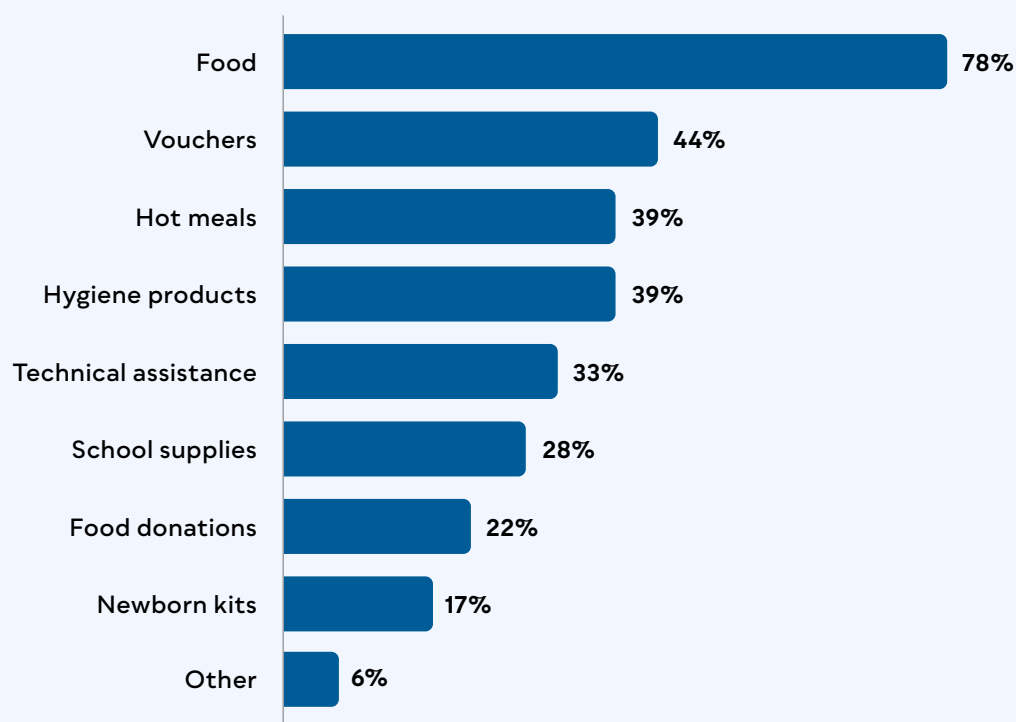
6% (LT) delegate the implementation functions to employment, social services, or other public institutions. In **Lithuania**, the European Social Fund Agency (ESFA) implements the project in collaboration with municipal administrations and NGOs.

Non-governmental organisations are responsible for the implementation in 6% of Member States (HR). Other institutions are entrusted with the implementation in 6% of Member States (FI). In **Finland**, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland is the managing authority, while the Finnish Food Authority serves as the intermediate body responsible for funding projects.

TYPES OF MATERIAL SUPPORT

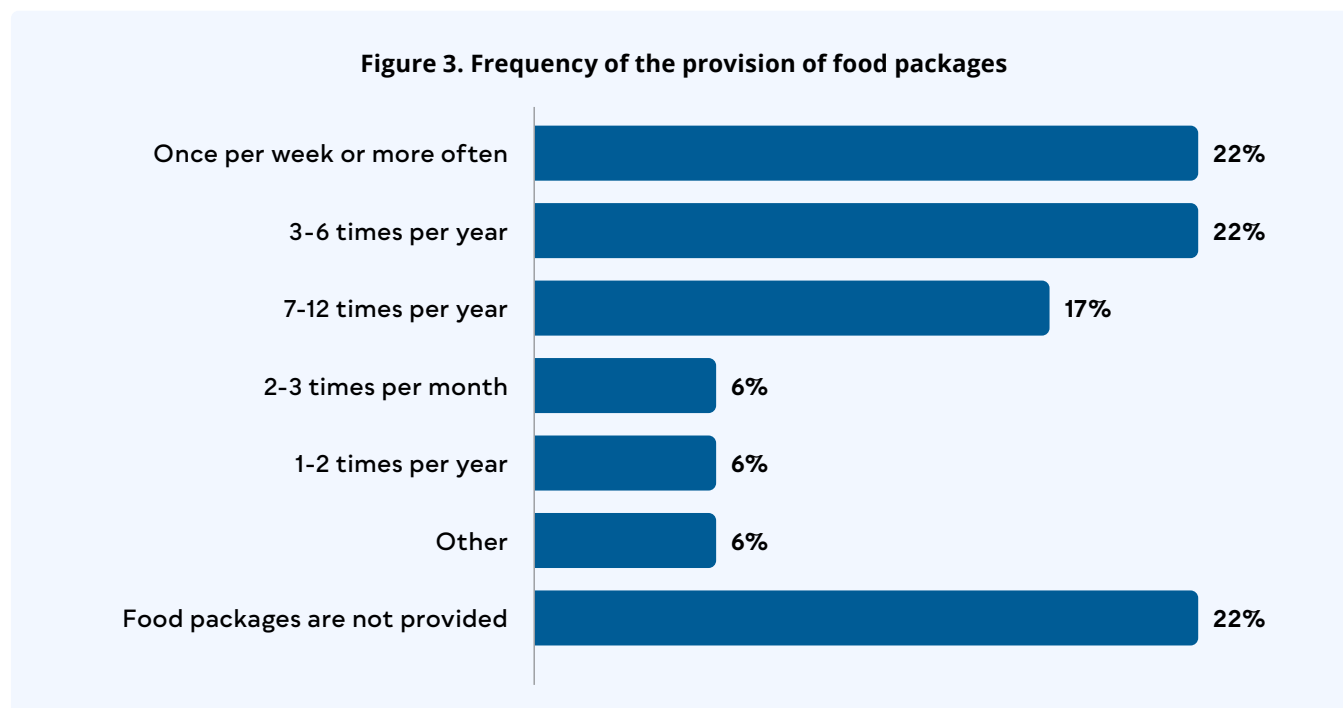
To effectively reach vulnerable individuals in all Member States, each country can choose the measures that best suit their unique circumstances. Material support options are extensive, allowing for a personalised approach that considers the needs of diverse target groups. This approach empowers individuals and promotes inclusion, resulting in the most effective assistance possible.

Figure 2. Different types of provided material support across countries



The main instrument of material support within the ESF+ framework is **food distribution**. Among the surveyed Member States, 78% (Figure 2) have included direct food provision in their programmes (BE, BG, CY, EE, GR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI). Food distribution initiatives generally aim to ensure that individuals and families facing economic challenges have access to nutritious meals, thereby contributing to their overall health and well-being.

The survey highlights the diversity of systems and different approaches, especially concerning the frequency of food package distribution (Figure 3). 22% of Member States indicated that they distribute food once a week or more often (CY, EE, IE, LU). The same number of Member States (GR, HR, MT, PL) indicated that they distribute food 3–6 times a year. In **Belgium**, it was indicated that the distribution of food varies according to the partner organisations and ranges from daily, to every couple of days, to every month. 22% of Member States (AT, ES, FI, LT) indicated that food packages are not a part of their material support programmes.



Countries that do not provide food packages (AT, ES, FI, LT) offer material support in the form of **vouchers**. Vouchers are becoming an increasingly common form of support, offering flexibility and allowing individuals to tailor their preferences, dietary requirements, or personal circumstances. Vouchers usually take the form of e-cards, enabling people to shop at supermarkets. Vouchers can also provide categorised support, e.g., only allowing purchases of food, school supplies, etc. Vouchers are available in 44% of Member States (AT, BG, EE, ES, FI, IT, LT, PT).

39% of Member States (BE, BG, GR, HR, IT, LV, PL) provide **hot meals**. They are primarily targeted at those who may not have access to cooking facilities or are in urgent need of prepared food. The programme ensures access to nutritious and well-balanced food, with meals usually offered regularly, e.g., daily or weekly. The meals may be provided at schools, soup kitchens, or other locations, depending on the programme's structure and target group.

Hygiene products are essential for meeting basic needs. Hygiene packages typically include items such as soap, shampoo, personal care products, and hygiene essentials. Hygiene products are provided in 39% of Member States (BE, BG, GR, HR, IT, LU, LV).

Technical assistance usually indicates economic resources that can be used to support the preparation, monitoring, audit, information, control, and evaluation measures necessary for implementing the programmes. Technical assistance is provided within the ESF context in 33% of countries (BE, BG, EE, ES, HR, LU).

Some of the programmes emphasise the importance of education by providing **school supplies** for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This support equips them with necessary tools to complete assignments and effectively engage in the learning process, fostering valuable learning opportunities. Such initiatives are implemented in 28% of Member States (AT, GR, HR, IE, LV).

In some countries, **food donations** are promoted as part of the ESF+ initiative. Collaborations with food redistribution organisations enable material support programmes to distribute donated food items to those in need, effectively utilising surplus food. Donations help bridge the gap between available resources and the actual needs of individuals and families. Donations are funded in 22% of Member States (EE, HR, LT, PL).

To ensure the well-being of newborn babies and their mothers during this critical time, 17% of Member States (BG, CY, HR) provide **newborn kits** containing essential items such as diapers, clothing, and hygiene products to ensure a healthy start for babies.

Customised material support programmes can effectively address specific issues in each Member State. Countries can offer **other types** of support to supplement these programmes. In **Italy**, for instance, small items of furniture are provided to support housing-first initiatives.

The survey findings indicate that food distribution is the most common form of support, with **Malta** and **Slovenia** relying solely on it. In contrast, **Finland** exclusively uses vouchers, taking a distinctive approach. However, the majority of Member States employ a combination of support methods, with 83% using two or more types of material support in their programmes. The varied approaches and strategies employed reflect an effort to address the diverse needs of vulnerable groups, acknowledging that effectiveness may vary across different contexts and initiatives.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

National governments typically set **income-based eligibility criteria** for food and material support. The income threshold is used in most Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, GR, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, PL, PT, SI). The threshold may also be linked to the poverty line or minimum income basket to ensure support reaches those experiencing financial challenges. For instance, in **Belgium**, the criterion is living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, while in **Spain**, the main target group is families living below the severe poverty threshold. However, regional governments can adjust it based on their unique circumstances.

The income criterion is often combined with other factors. **Household composition**, such as larger households or those with dependents, is considered when determining eligibility (BG, CY, ES, HR, LV, PT). **Bulgaria** uses a rating system to determine whether support is required for an individual, family, or household. In Spain, support is only provided to families with dependent minors.

Some countries prioritise **vulnerable groups** based on factors such as age, health, disability, and employment status (AT, BG, CY, HR, EE, IE, IT, PL) due to their heightened vulnerability to material deprivation. For example, **Austria's** programme targets students in households receiving means-tested minimum income. **Cyprus** provides free breakfast for vulnerable students in public schools. An Advisory Committee selects eligible students based on five categories: Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI), public benefits, unemployment, orphaned children, single-parent families, and large families. **Ireland's** programme targets children from low-income or low-intensity households, victims of domestic violence, individuals recovering from addictions, disadvantaged members of the Roma and Traveller communities, those transitioning to independent living from emergency accommodation, and homeless persons. Support for homeless persons is also targeted in **Poland** and **Estonia**.

Material support is also closely linked to social assistance schemes in many countries (BG, CY, EE, GR, IT, LT, LU, PL, PT). In **Italy**, the eligibility income threshold aligns with the minimum income requirements, and in **Portugal**, the criterion for determining 'economic need' is the same as the Social Assistance System's criterion used for potential benefits. In **Greece**, individuals receiving Guaranteed Minimum Income will also receive material support. In **Lithuania**, those who receive monetary support from the state budget or whose children receive free meals at school may also be eligible for vouchers or food donations.

The **Finnish** programme offers e-vouchers to individuals or families who are evaluated on a case-by-case basis without any eligibility criteria. People in need of support can visit one of the implementing organisations providing help via ESF+ projects. The end recipients can remain anonymous without proof of material deprivation.

IDENTIFYING THE END RECIPIENTS

Figure 4. Entities responsible for identifying the end recipients of food and/or basic material assistance

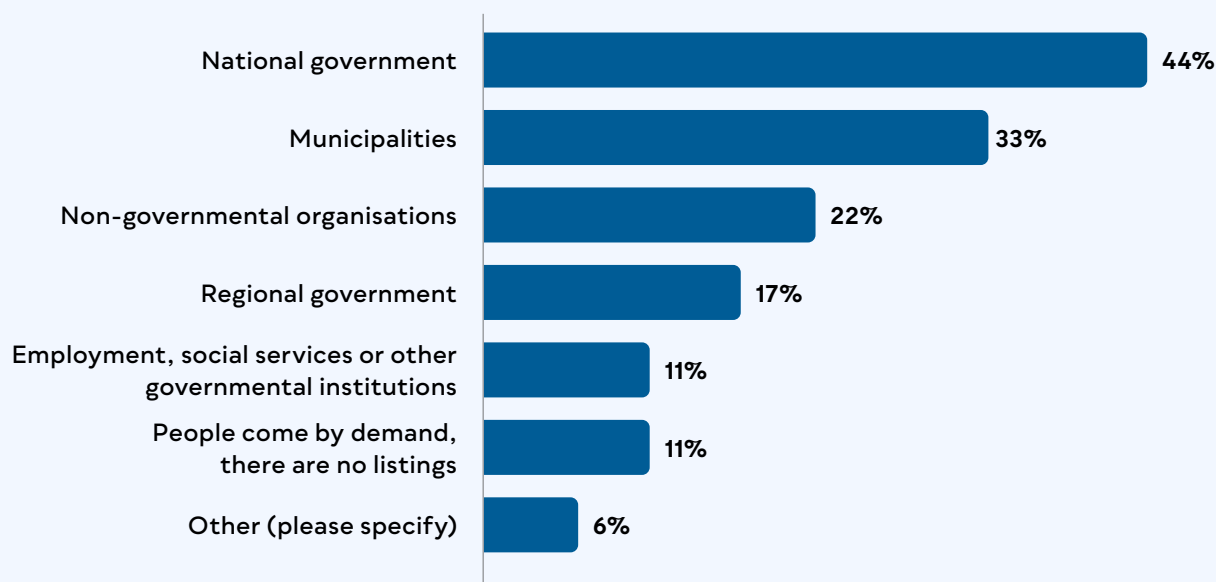


Figure 4 shows that the responsibility for identifying final beneficiaries differs among Member States. In 44% of Member States (CY, EE, HR, IE, LV, MT, PT, SI) the national government is responsible for identifying the end recipients. **Slovenia** uses national statistical data to identify the most deprived groups, while **Portugal's** Social Protection System Services employ a tool called 'active family process' to support and guide individuals and families in need.

In contrast, 33% of Member States (BE, BG, EE, GR, LT, PL) assign the responsibility for identifying end recipients to municipalities, recognising the importance of local entities in understanding and addressing community needs. Municipal administrations evaluate submitted application forms in **Lithuania** and add eligible recipients to the end recipient lists. **Belgium** has three types of verification mechanisms: beneficiaries of the partner organisation can have a certificate issued by the Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW), the list of beneficiaries can be approved by the PCSW, or the PCSW and a partner organisation can agree that the partner organisation can check if a person meets the criteria. In this case, the partner organisation must establish its mechanism for identifying the most deprived.

NGOs are responsible for beneficiary identification in 22% of Member States (BE, HR, IT, PL), underlining the valuable role of civil society in this process. Eligible individuals in **Poland** can request a referral letter from partner organisations. In Italy, one of the eligibility criteria is having urgent and unavoidable needs assessed by NGOs.

In some instances, the responsibility is shouldered by regional governments, as observed in 11% of countries (AT, ES). In **Austria**, the nine federal ministries distribute an information letter before beneficiaries can visit the distribution points. In Spain, 19 Autonomous Communities and Cities identify the end beneficiaries.

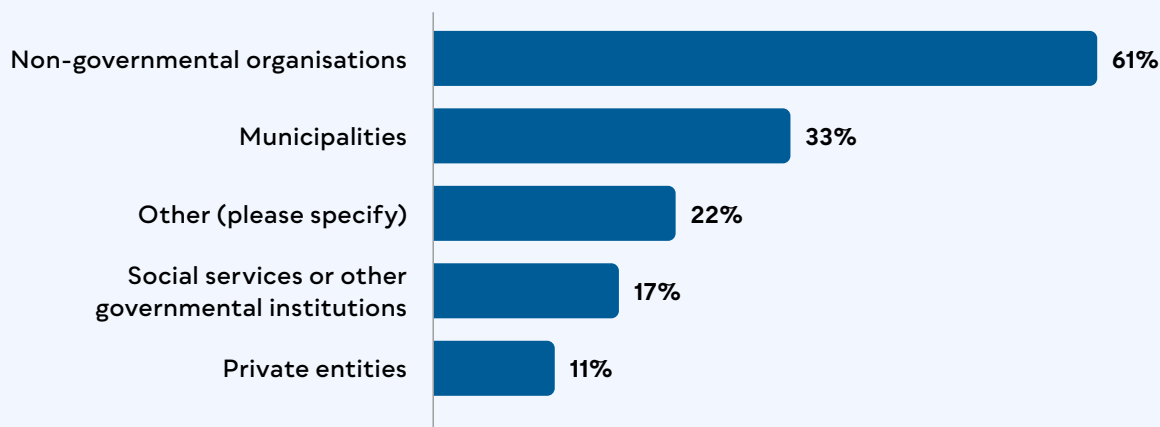
Similarly, employment, social, or other relevant institutions are responsible for identification in 11% of Member States (IT, LU). In **Luxembourg**, Social Office professionals conduct a social anamnesis to determine eligibility for food aid.

11% of Member States report (FI, IT) that there are no listings, and people come by demand. In **Italy**, support will be provided to first-time applicants, regardless of whether they meet the eligibility criteria. In **Finland**, people in need of support can visit one of the implementing organisations providing help via ESF+ projects and receive assistance without the necessity to prove their need for support.

DISTRIBUTION

The distribution strategies for material support programmes are tailored to each country's context and strategic considerations, taking into account various factors such as geographical distribution of beneficiaries and the type of provided material assistance.

Figure 5. Entities responsible for distributing food and/or basic material assistance



In 61% of Member States (AT, BE, BG, GR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, PL, SI), NGOs are primarily responsible for distributing material support under the ESF+ framework. NGOs use their extensive networks and versatile delivery mechanisms to distribute material aid efficiently and effectively. In many Member States, these distribution points also serve as hubs for associated social services, adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of end recipients. In **Austria**, designated social service providers (NGOs) operate distribution points, where accompanying measures, such as referrals to social and public services, are also offered. In **Poland**, national partner organisations must have at least five regional partner organisations and local partner organisations to be eligible. Food items are transported to regional partners, who, in turn, distribute them to local NGOs. There are 93 regional partner organisations and 2,542 local partner organisations. In **Slovenia**, the managing authority selects specific food providers to deliver food to designated warehouses owned by selected NGOs. These NGOs are responsible for distributing food to various distribution points.

On the other hand, around 33% of Member States' (BE, GR, HR, IT, MT, PT) municipalities are responsible for distributing material assistance. Municipalities are able to understand and respond to the specific needs of their communities, leading to a more responsive and relevant distribution process. In **Italy**, there are approximately 10,000 NGOs that distribute food, while both regions and some municipalities distribute material aid. Municipalities have the option to distribute food or material support through vouchers. In **Belgium**, suppliers deliver products to Relay Organisations (ROs) that store them in central storage points (PCSW and NGOs) and redistribute goods to final beneficiaries in the form of food parcels or meals. The PCSW and NGOs determine their own distribution methods.

In 17% of Member States (BG, GR, LV), social service institutions assume the role of material support distribution. Licensed social service providers in **Bulgaria** are responsible for distributing food and material support. They must be registered and operational for at least two years, with the capability to provide national coverage for the prompt delivery of assistance. In **Latvia** and **Greece**, material support is distributed by various institutions, including social service providers, NGOs, and municipalities.

Similarly, private entities are involved in approximately 11% (EE, PT) of Member States. The remaining 22% of Member States mentioned other mechanisms; in most of them (LT, FI, ES) food or material support distribution is not integrated into the ESF+ programme and instead, vouchers are used. In **Cyprus**, the national government is responsible for distribution.

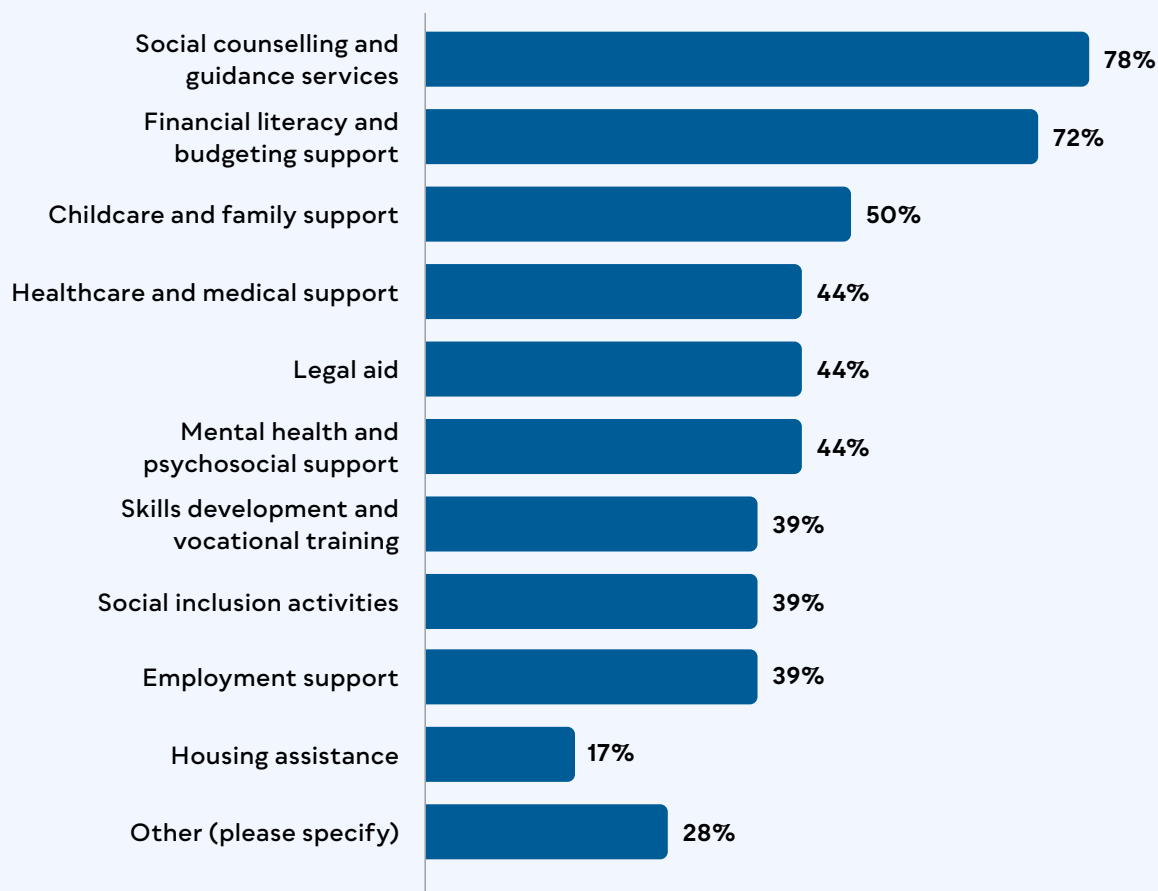
This diversity in distribution mechanisms highlights the flexibility and adaptability of material support programmes, enabling them to accommodate the unique circumstances and needs of each Member State. It is worth noting that many Member States employ multiple methods of distributing material support.

ACCOMPANYING MEASURES

Material support programmes within the ESF+ framework include accompanying measures to foster comprehensive well-being and long-term empowerment among beneficiaries. These measures are mandatory in every participating Member State, reflecting a commitment to addressing multifaceted challenges beyond material deprivation.

The analysis reveals that each Member State has tailored its accompanying measures to align with specific societal and individual needs. Social counselling and guidance services are a prominent measure, implemented by 78% of surveyed Member States (AT, BE, BG, EE, FI, GR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, SI), highlighting the importance of personalised guidance when addressing socio-economic challenges.

Figure 6. Accompanying measures implemented across the countries



Enhancing beneficiaries' financial independence is crucial, with 72% of Member States (BE, BG, EE, FI, GR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SI) providing financial literacy and budgeting support to equip recipients with skills necessary to manage their resources and make informed decisions.

Childcare and family support (50%: BE, BG, CY, EE, GR, HR, IE, LT, LV) create an inclusive and nurturing environment for families facing difficulties. Moreover, these services can also help parents to enter the labour market by providing them with the necessary support and resources to balance their work and family responsibilities.

Access to healthcare plays a significant role in overall well-being, and 44% of Member States (BE, BG, FI, GR, IE, IT, LT, LV) prioritise healthcare and medical support to address both the immediate and long-term health needs of beneficiaries.

Legal aid provides legal advice and assistance (44%: BG, EE, HR, IE, IT, LV, PL) to help recipients deal with legal challenges such as housing, immigration, or debt. This ensures that recipients are aware of their rights and can seek appropriate legal help.

Mental health and psychosocial support (44%: BG, FI, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, SI) emphasise the importance of a holistic approach. Access to services can reduce the psychological impacts of trauma, stress, anxiety, depression, while promoting resilience.

Employment support (39%: BG, EE, FI, HR, IE, IT, LV) and skills development, along with vocational training (39%: BE, EE, FI, GR, HR, IE, LV) aim to enable recipients of material support, provide opportunities for employment, and ensure long-term self-sufficiency. Social inclusion activities (39%: EE, FI, HR, IE, IT, LV, PL) emphasise the significance of belonging and community engagement.

Housing assistance (17%: IE, IT, LV) is aimed at ensuring safe, stable, and adequate living conditions for individuals and families. It encompasses various measures to address housing-related challenges, including homelessness and inadequate housing.

28% of Member States (ES, FI, IE, LU, PT) are implementing other specific measures tailored to their unique contexts, underscoring the flexibility and adaptability of accompanying measures within the ESF+ framework.

KEY FINDINGS

The ESF+ mapping report reveals diverse approaches among Member States regarding material support programmes, highlighting tailored initiatives aimed at addressing material deprivation to promote social inclusion. Additionally:

1. The implementation of material support programmes varies across Member States depending on the local context, socio-economic conditions, and the needs of vulnerable groups. These programmes require collaborative efforts among managing authorities, local entities, NGOs, and other stakeholders to enhance programme efficiency and effectiveness.
2. The analysis revealed a wide range of material support types, including food distribution, hot meals, newborn kits, hygiene products, school supplies, technical assistance, vouchers, and other forms of aid. These can also be combined to effectively respond to the needs of end recipients.
3. The report emphasises the important roles of national governments, municipalities, NGOs, and other entities in identifying and verifying eligible beneficiaries. Eligibility criteria, which often vary across Member States, are based on income thresholds, family composition, or vulnerability criteria.
4. Distribution strategies involve the engagement of NGOs, municipalities, and other entities to ensure efficient and targeted distribution through diverse channels.
5. The inclusion of accompanying measures is mandatory in all programmes to provide comprehensive support for end recipients. Prominent accompanying measures encompass social counselling, financial literacy, healthcare, and vocational training.

This mapping report highlights Member States' efforts to reduce material deprivation and improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations. The diverse strategies and measures demonstrate a collective commitment to achieving the goals of the ESF+ framework and promoting a more inclusive society.

COUNTRY FICHES

AUSTRIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: 2022.

Types of provided material support: School supplies and vouchers.

Frequency of food provision: Food packages are not provided.

Implementation of the programme: The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection is responsible for implementing the ESF+ programme, named 'Schulstartklar!' (meaning 'ready for school'). In this capacity, it collaborates with federal states, social service providers, and retailers.

Identifying the recipients: The programme is targeted at students living in households receiving the Means Tested Minimum Income. The nine federal states hold the data and distribute an information letter drafted by the federal ministry. Beneficiaries can visit distribution points once they have received this information letter.

Distribution: The distribution points are operated by designated social service providers (NGOs), where accompanying measures, such as referrals to social and public services, are also offered. Once a letter and identification have been provided, vouchers are issued for each eligible child. The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for maintaining a database with this information. These vouchers can be used to purchase school supplies from designated retailers. Specific product categories have been created for this purpose. Retailers keep records of redeemed vouchers and the purchased products, which are then reported to the federal ministry.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services.

BELGIUM

Beginning of ESF+ programme: October 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, hot meals, hygiene products, and technical assistance.

Frequency of food provision: The distribution frequency varies from one organisation to another. Some distribute daily, while others only do so weekly or every two weeks.

Implementation of the programme: The managing authority (MA) purchases food products annually for distribution to Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The process is as follows: a list of products is established annually, and the PCSW and NGOs are invited to place their orders. The MA purchases these products through public calls for tender. The available products are distributed depending on the orders and various geographical parameters, such as the number of RIS beneficiaries.

Identifying the recipients: The eligibility for food or material aid is determined by living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Each PCSW and partner organisation (PO) must establish a verification mechanism to ensure the beneficiaries meet the criteria. Three types of verification mechanisms are available: beneficiaries of the partner organisation can obtain a certificate issued by the PCSW, the list of beneficiaries can be approved by the PCSW, or the PCSW and a partner organisation can agree that the partner organisation can check if a person meets the criteria. In such cases, the partner organisation must establish its own mechanism for identifying the most deprived, and a 'standard' social survey will be provided to these partner organisations.

Distribution: Suppliers deliver the products to Relay Organisations (ROs), which store the goods in their central storage points (PCS) and ensure redistribution of products to PCSW and NGOs. The final beneficiaries receive goods in the form of food parcels or meals, either at the premises of the PCSW or NGO or at street locations. The PCSW and NGOs themselves determine the distribution process for the products. The programme will follow the same system established under the FEAD to ensure continuous aid provision. Products will be provided free of charge to the PCSW and other approved partner organisations for distribution to individuals at risk of poverty.

Accompanying measures: Each beneficiary must, at a minimum, guide the final beneficiaries to the services of the PCSW in their municipality, which offers a wide range of services: social, financial, debt mediation, etc.

BULGARIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: August 2022.

Types of provided material support: Food, hot meals, new-born kits, hygiene products, vouchers for children meal, and technical assistance.

Frequency of food provision: Hot meals are provided on every working day. Food packages will be distributed at least once a year. Basic food items suitable for preparing meals for the entire family should be included in the packages. Vouchers will be provided for children aged 10 months to 3 years, entitling them to a lunch meal, including soup, a main course, and a dessert. The allocation of these vouchers will be based on daily requests submitted by parents.

Implementation of the programme: The managing authority is a directorate within the Agency for Social Assistance. The managing authority is responsible for the comprehensive execution of the programme, including preparation, selection process, and evaluation of project proposals, as well as contracting and project monitoring. The main beneficiaries are municipalities, municipal districts, state institutions performing certain social functions related to social inclusion, social protection and child protection, and licensed social service providers, including NGOs licensed as social service providers.

Identifying the end recipients: Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy defines the main target groups, as well as additional target groups for support. Municipalities are responsible for identifying the end recipients. The affiliation of the persons with the target group is confirmed by the respective Social Assistance Directorate. Support is predominantly directed towards persons who qualify for social assistance. Access to the social assistance system is determined by a set of criteria, with the two main criteria being the Guaranteed Minimum Income and a rating system that determines the minimum income required to support an individual, family, or household. Along with the income test, other factors, such as health status, age, marital status, employment status, the availability of income-generating assets, and support from extended family members, are also considered when granting social assistance and access to the programme.

Distribution: Partnerships with municipalities ensure a wide and even scope of activities, national coverage, and better coordination between all supporting activities and services at the local level with a focus on early childhood development. Licensed social service providers listed in the register of social service providers under the Social Services Act are responsible for distributing food and material support. To be selected for this role, an institution must be registered and authorised to operate on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, in accordance with the Bulgarian legislation in force, and must have actively pursued its objectives for at least two years. The institution must prove technical, operational, and administrative capacity to provide national coverage, either independently or through partnerships, to ensure prompt delivery of assistance in each location within the country where target groups are identified. Additionally, the organisation must have proven experience of at least one year in providing assistance in-kind or distributing food to the population.

Accompanying measures: The aim is to support and direct end recipients towards poverty eradication and overcoming social isolation, wherever possible. This includes providing social counselling and guidance services, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, childcare and family support, measures to prevent child abandonment, family counselling, referrals to social services, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

CROATIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: September 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, hot meals, newborn kits, hygiene products, school supplies, technical assistance, and food donations.

Frequency of food provision: Packages containing food and basic supplies are distributed several times per year. Additionally, partner organisations provide hot meals at their social kitchens during the week. Primary school children receive daily school meals.

Implementation of the programme:

The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, as the managing authority, is responsible for launching and conducting calls for two types of projects:

1. Food distribution and/or basic material support. Funds are allocated to partner organisations-beneficiaries, which are recognised as non-profit organisations with a permit for permanent collection and provision of humanitarian aid. They are responsible for public procurement, collection, transport, storage, and distribution of food and material support. Criteria for food and material support packages are defined, as is the consolidation of beneficiaries through rationalised and unified procurement procedures.
2. School meals. Due to legislation enacted in January 2023, all children in primary schools are entitled to receive free school meals. Local and regional self-government units, as the founders of primary schools in their region, are responsible for the organisation of school meals and public procurement. During a transitional period, free school meals for children at risk of poverty based on pre-defined criteria are covered by ESF+, while other meals are financed from the State budget. The direct allocation of funds is planned to be managed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, which should distribute funds to the local and regional self-government units for children at risk of poverty.

Identifying the end recipients: For the distribution of food and/or basic material support, the target group is planned to include the most vulnerable groups at the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion. This includes individuals identified as severely materially deprived in the National Plan for combating poverty and social exclusion for 2021–2027, such as: beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum benefit; children and young people with behavioural problems; the elderly and pensioners; homeless people; the unemployed, in particular the long-term unemployed; single households, single-parent families, children without parental care, and families with more than two children. In addition, other individuals at risk of poverty due to factors such as unfavourable economic status, family structure, education, health, disability, etc., may also be considered in the selection process.

Implementing organisations/partners select target beneficiaries, recipients of food aid and basic material aid based on their own records or on practice and local needs.

The criterion for school meals is the amount of child allowance according to the household income census.

Distribution: For the distribution of food and/or basic material support, partner organisations (either public bodies or non-profit organisations) have the option of delivering food directly or through other partner organisations. The aid can be distributed with the help of partners in their own premises, shelters, distribution centres, or delivered to the recipients' doorsteps. In the case of school meals, distribution takes place in primary schools.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, childcare and family support, legal aid, social inclusion activities, and employment support.

CYPRUS

Beginning of ESF+ programme: 2021.

Types of provided material support: Food and newborn kits.

Frequency of food provision: Food (breakfast) for vulnerable students is provided daily.

Implementation of the programme: There are currently two projects under the ESF+ that aim to address material deprivation. The first project, managed by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, provides free breakfast to vulnerable public school students. The second project, overseen by the Social Welfare Services, provides eligible families with essential items for infants, such as baby-care products, bedding, diapers, and baby equipment like prams, cots, and baby chairs.

Identifying the end recipients: The Free Breakfast for Vulnerable Students in Public Schools' project follows a specific procedure for selecting eligible students. The Advisory Committee of each school unit is responsible for this task, including representatives from parents' associations, teaching staff, and other relevant parties. Selection criteria are based on five categories: families receiving Guaranteed Minimum Income or public benefits, unemployed parents, orphaned children, single-parent families, and large families.

Responsibility for selecting eligible families for the 'Baby's Dowry' project lies with the Social Welfare Services. Selection criteria include families receiving Guaranteed Minimum Income or public benefits, as well as families facing severe material deprivation, as assessed by the Social Welfare Services.

Distribution: Regarding the project 'Free Breakfast for Vulnerable Students in Public Schools,' students receive their breakfast from the school canteen, and the school is responsible for making the necessary payments. As for the 'Baby's Dowry' project, the package is delivered directly to the beneficiaries' homes.

Accompanying measures: Childcare and family support.

ESTONIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, technical assistance, vouchers, and food donations.

Frequency of food provided: Once a week or more often.

Implementation of the programme: The procurement process for vouchers has already been completed, with a selected shop chain designated for distribution.

Identifying the recipients: The distribution of subsistence benefits is directly tied to municipalities. Therefore, social workers in municipalities are responsible for identifying the beneficiaries. Lists of eligible recipients are compiled based on collected data systems. Eligibility criteria include applicants receiving subsistence benefits and those entitled to support based on their income but not provided by the local government (LG) as per the Social Services Act. Additionally, applicants whose income is above 15% of the established subsistence level and individuals in homeless shelters may also qualify for subsistence benefits.

Distribution: Private entities are responsible for distributing vouchers in the form of electronic cards. Shops send the cards in envelopes to the final beneficiary (FB). The FB can then use the card to purchase food or material assistance of their choice at any shop within the chain. The aid amount is added to the card quarterly and must be used within the same quarter, as it cannot be accumulated.

Additionally, for food donations, the MA has partnered with Estonian Foodbank through a public procurement process. The Estonian Foodbank will be compensated based on the amount of food donated, measured in kilograms.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, childcare and family support, legal aid, social inclusion activities, and employment support.

FINLAND

Beginning of ESF+ programme: May 2022. First ESF+ projects providing e-vouchers to address material deprivation started in August 2023.

Types of provided material support: Vouchers.

Frequency of food provision: Food packages are not provided.

Implementation of the programme: The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland is the managing authority, with the Finnish Food Authority acting as the intermediate body responsible for funding projects. Projects funded with ESF+ funding allocate a specific monetary value to e-vouchers provided by service providers and distribute e-vouchers to people in need of assistance. To qualify as a validated e-voucher service provider, interested parties must respond to an open call to participate in the Public Permit Arrangement. Once approved, these providers will offer an e-voucher system for organisations implementing the projects.

Identification of the end recipients: Individuals in need of support can visit one of the implementing organisations providing help through ESF+ projects. If an e-voucher can address their specific needs, it will be provided to the individual or family. Each case is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and individuals can remain anonymous without any need for proof of material deprivation.

Distribution: Implementing organisations/projects have the authority to distribute the vouchers to people in need. The Finnish Food Authority will publish open calls for proposals to eligible organisations. With the support of ESF+ projects, implementing organisations will load e-vouchers received from the service providers. Recipients can use vouchers to purchase food and necessities from grocery stores throughout the country. Service providers will report e-voucher usage to implementing organisations, who can then claim payment from the Finnish Food Authority for any vouchers redeemed.

Accompanying measures: Each project will tailor accompanying measures to the specific needs of the target group the project is addressing. Accompanying measures may include social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, social inclusion activities, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

FRANCE

Beginning of ESF+ programme: January 2022

Types of provided material support: For the food aid initiative: food and vouchers.

For the material assistance initiative: hygiene products, personal care items and clothing.

Frequency of material support: As the provision of food is managed by multiple project sponsors, for which agreements are currently being finalised, it is not possible at this stage to specify the frequency of food provision. This information will be available once the initial reports are submitted and the results of the structured survey are collected after June 2025.

Implementation of the programme: In France, two programmes provide food and material support:

- The Ministry of Social Cohesion is the managing authority of the national ESF+ programme 'European Support for Food Aid' (ESFA). It supports food aid initiatives for the most disadvantaged. It relies on the intermediary organisation 'France Agri Mer', which coordinates the purchase of food supplies for the benefit of four major associative networks.
- The Ministry of Labour is the other managing authority, it manages, controls, and monitors the programme 'Employment, Inclusion, Youth, and Skills' (EIYS). It oversees the programme and supports food aid initiatives for the most disadvantaged in the Overseas Territories, complementing the programme led by the Ministry of Social Cohesion. It also supports basic material assistance initiatives for the most disadvantaged in France (Overseas Territories included), supplying and distributing essential items such as hygiene products, personal care items, and clothing.

At this stage, 25 projects for the Ministry of Social Cohesion for the ESFA programme and 6 projects for the Ministry of Labour for the EIYS programme have been formalised through agreements.

Identifying the recipients: The programmes target individuals who are affected by poverty, including those who receive minimum social benefits, as well as those facing exclusion, discrimination, or challenges in accessing their rights. Additionally, the programme extends to any individuals without housing, including those living in unauthorised camps, slums, or squats, those residing in substandard or precarious housing, and any other identified priority individuals.

Distribution: Associations, social service organisations and non-governmental organisations may be involved in the distribution of food and basic material assistance. These distributions will take place at specific points across the country.

Accompanying measures: Accompanying measures may include social counselling and guidance services, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, housing assistance, legal aid, social inclusion activities, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

GREECE

Beginning of ESF+ programme: October 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, hot meals, hygiene products, and school supplies.

Frequency of material support: 3–6 times per year.

Implementation of the programme: The procurement contracts will be implemented at the regional level with the involvement of the regional government and municipalities. This ensures that the entire country is covered geographically, and that food and material support is distributed, along with accompanying measures.

Identifying the recipients: The programme will be closely linked to the Guaranteed Minimum Income (Social Solidarity Income). Individuals who receive the GMI will also benefit from the SO(m) through the cooperation of various national schemes. The main actors involved will be municipalities and regional bodies working in collaboration with the national schemes for GMI. Other organisations, such as the Church and NGOs, may also be involved.

Distribution: Social service organisations, non-governmental organisations, and municipalities will be involved in distributing food and basic material assistance. This distribution will continue to take place at specific points within each municipality across the country.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, as well as childcare and family support.

IRELAND

Beginning of ESF+ programme: August 2022.

Types of provided material support: Food and school supplies.

Frequency of food provision: Varies per community-based charity, with some weekly, fortnightly, and monthly distributions, etc.

Implementation of the programme: The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is the managing authority responsible for implementing the programme. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) manages the Specific Objective (m) under ESF+ on behalf of the MA, including procuring the Primary Partner for Food and Basic Materials. The Primary Partner organisation for food is FoodCloud, which is responsible for procuring, storing, and coordinating the collection of ESF+ food products in collaboration with approximately 150 other partner organisations.

Identifying the end recipients: The programme is targeted at homeless persons, including long-term rough sleepers, children from low-income or low-work intensity households, victims of domestic violence staying in shelters, individuals suffering or recovering from addictions, disadvantaged members of the Roma and Traveller communities, and those who are vulnerable and transitioning to independent living from emergency accommodation, institutionalised care settings, or places of detention. Additionally, it includes any individuals without income, accommodation or means not otherwise defined above. Charity partners are selected based on their capacity to support these specific cohorts of people, and it is through these charity partners that end recipients are identified.

Distribution: Approximately 150 partner organisations, mostly community-based charities, distribute food and basic materials to end beneficiaries. Recipients access food banks as needed. School stationery kits are distributed once a year.

Accompanying measures: Charity partner organisations are offering a range of accompanying measures. These measures include social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, housing assistance, childcare and family support, legal aid, social inclusion activities, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support. The DSP will be providing nutritional/recipe advice and information signposting all support services available regionally to end recipients.

ITALY

Beginning of ESF+ programme: December 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, hot meals, hygiene products, vouchers, and small furniture items for Housing First projects.

Frequency of material support: 2–3 times per month.

Implementation of the programme: The managing authority and intermediate body are responsible for managing, controlling, and monitoring the programme.

Identifying the recipients: Social services institutions and non-governmental organisations are responsible for identifying support recipients. Eligibility income threshold aligns with minimum income benefit requirements.

Multiple eligibility criteria may apply, including 1) meeting the income threshold, 2) being referred by social services, and 3) having urgent and unavoidable needs assessed by NGOs. Support will be provided to first-time applicants, irrespective of whether they meet the eligibility criteria.

Distribution: There are approximately 10,000 NGOs that distribute food, with both regions and some municipalities also distributing material aid. Municipalities have the option to distribute food or material support through vouchers.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, housing assistance, legal aid, social inclusion activities, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

LATVIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food, baby food, hot meals, hygiene products, hygiene products for babies, and school supplies.

Frequency of food provision: Food packages are available at all times. Most deprived persons can choose when to collect these packages. Each person is eligible to receive two food packages per quarter.

Implementation of the programme: The Ministry of Welfare acts as the managing authority, while the Society Integration Foundation is an intermediate body that is responsible for selecting partner organisations, procuring items, and selecting suppliers for delivering aid packages.

Identifying the end recipients: The national government is responsible for identifying end recipients. The main criteria for receiving material support in 2023 are specific income thresholds. For single-person households or the first person in a household, the threshold is 376 euros, and for the second and each subsequent person, or a household in a crisis situation, it is 264 euros. Every year the income threshold is reviewed in accordance with national legislation.

Distribution: Suppliers deliver aid packages to the designated distribution points of partner organisations. The aid packages are distributed at over 450 locations across Latvia, covering the entire territory. Partner organisations (NGOs, religious organisations, and social services institutions) distribute food packages to the most deprived.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, skills development and vocational training, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, housing assistance, childcare and family support, legal aid, social inclusion activities, employment support, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

LITHUANIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: 2024.

Types of provided material support: E-vouchers (i.e., social or equivalent cards) (hereinafter, 'cards') and food donations.

Frequency of food provision: The cards will be topped up quarterly. End recipients will purchase food or basic material assistance goods from shops.

Implementation of the programme: This project is being carried out across the entire territory of Lithuania and is being implemented by the European Social Fund Agency (ESFA). ESFA is responsible for managing and finalising cooperation agreements with various suppliers, such as supermarkets and trade networks, which will be responsible for issuing cards that end recipients can use to purchase food products and basic material assistance goods. ESFA also collaborates with project partners (i.e., all municipal administrations and selected NGOs) on all implementation aspects, including cards, accompanying measures, and food donations.

Identification of the end recipients: Municipal administrations are responsible for identifying the end recipients. They evaluate the submitted application forms and add eligible recipients to the end recipient lists. The main criterion used to determine eligibility is the average monthly income. Those who receive monetary support from the state budget or whose children receive free meals at school may also be eligible for cards or food donations.

Distribution: End recipients can select from a list of retail chains to receive cards at no cost. The trade networks will deliver the necessary number of cards to the addresses provided by project partners. The project partners will then

distribute the cards to individuals and link the unique card number to a specific end recipient on the IT system. The IT system will keep records of the funds to be transferred to the card, and the retail chains will set the fund limits on the cards.

In the case of food donations, the project implementer will select specific NGOs to provide support. These NGOs will gather donated products from retail chains, logistics locations, and other sources. They will guarantee that donated food reaches the intended end recipients, providing at least 5kg per person once every quarter. In addition, they will ensure that the delivery premises meet the established hygiene requirements.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, financial literacy and budgeting support, healthcare and medical support, childcare and family support, legal aid, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

LUXEMBOURG

Beginning of ESF+ programme: January 2024.

Types of provided material support: Food, hygiene products, and technical assistance.

Frequency of food provision: Once a month or more frequently.

Implementation of the programme: The government of Luxembourg supports the development of social grocery stores. Since 2014, organisations that work in food assistance have taken steps to adapt their operations to the EFMD programme for 2014–2020 and have provided free food and essential items. These actions are being coordinated as an auxiliary activity alongside the organisations' regular operations. An electronic system has been created to coordinate existing systems and ensure transparency in their actions. For 2021–2027, operations will primarily involve purchasing food and necessities by a central operator through public contracts and delivering them to distribution points set up by the organisations involved.

Identifying the end recipients: Access to food aid in Luxembourg is determined by Social Office professionals in accordance with the law regulating social assistance since 2009, or through a state-approved social service. A social anamnesis of the applicant's situation is conducted, and access is granted for a maximum of three months with the possibility of renewal. Meetings with a Social Office professional are required to ensure that the end recipient's situation is tracked and reviewed on a regular basis.

Distribution: The Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region has the lead over the organisational structure providing free products. This ministry delegates the identification of end recipients to the social offices and oversees the programme as part of its social inclusion and poverty reduction policy. The intermediate body (Spëndchen) is bound to the ministry through an annual convention. In the framework of the ESF+ programme, the mission of Spëndchen is to purchase products at the national level, distribute them, and manage the computerised database for product distribution to partner organisations.

The ministry has established an annual collaboration agreement with partner organisations (PO) such as the Red Cross, Caritas, Banque Alimentaire, De Cent Buttek, and Eis Epicerie Zolwer. Their mission is to distribute products based on the applicant's household size and access duration, as identified in a relevant document.

Accompanying measures: Meetings with a Social Office professional are required to ensure that the end recipient's situation is tracked and reviewed on a regular basis.

Other measures have not been defined yet.

POLAND

Beginning of ESF+ programme: January 2024.

Types of provided material support: Food packages, hot meals, and food donations.

Frequency of food provision: 3–6 times per year.

Implementation of the programme: The Ministry of Family and Social Policy is the managing authority and selects national partner organisations (NPOs) through an open call. The National Support Centre for Agriculture serves as an intermediate body and is responsible for procuring food for the public and contracting with NPOs.

Identifying the end recipients: Social Assistance Centres are responsible for the identification of end recipients. Those who meet the requirements are directed to partner organisations that provide food packages or meals. Two criteria must be met: an income threshold (which varies for single and family households) and at least one difficult circumstance that entitles the individual to social assistance benefits (as outlined in the National Social Assistance Act). Eligible individuals can request a referral letter from a partnering organisation. Homeless individuals can receive food directly from partnering organisations without a referral letter.

Distribution: Food items are transported from manufacturers to regional partner organisations, who then distribute them to local NGOs. These NGOs directly provide food packages or meals to those in need. To be eligible, national partner organisations must have a network of regional partner organisations (warehouses) in at least five out of Poland's 16 regions, along with local partner organisations that distribute food directly to the end recipients.

Currently, there are five national partner organisations: the Polish Federation of Food Banks, Caritas Poland, the Polish Committee of Social Assistance, the Polish Red Cross, and the Old Catholic Church. Additionally, there are 93 regional partner organisations and 2,542 local partner organisations, amounting to a total of 2,635 organisations overall. However, in some remote areas where NGOs are absent, social assistance centres assume the role of local partner organisations and distribute food aid. With 2,494 municipalities in Poland, this practice is essential in specific regions.

Accompanying measures: Social counselling and guidance services, financial literacy and budgeting support, legal aid, social inclusion activities, mental health and psychosocial support, inter alia.

PORTUGAL

Beginning of ESF+ programme: November 2023.

Types of provided material support: Food and vouchers.

Frequency of food provision: Monthly.

Implementation of the programme: The managing authority is responsible for implementing the programme. The Social Security Institute plays an important role in managing the support provided under the material deprivation programme. It can act as a Beneficiary Body during the acquisition process or as an Intermediate Body during the distribution process for both types of support. As the Beneficiary Body, the Social Security Institute purchases food, ensuring compliance with all public procurement requirements, and stores the food in the warehouses of the entities coordinating the distribution operations. Partner organisations can act as reception hubs, coordinating entities to receive and store food and coordinate the process, or as partner organisations to distribute goods directly to the end recipients and confirm their prior eligibility.

Identifying the end recipients: To determine eligibility for the end recipients, an interoperability system was established between IS FEAD and the Social Security Information System (SSIS). The main criteria for eligibility are based on calculating the household's monthly income, taking into account the number of people in the household, their income, and fixed monthly expenses. In Portugal, the criterion for determining 'economic need' is the same as the Social Assistance System's criterion used for potential benefits, which is part of the Social Protection System.

To determine eligibility for social assistance, the Social Protection System Services employ a tool called 'active family process'. This tool is designed to monitor and support individuals and families in need. Its main role is to inform, guide, and support individuals and families. By using social protection eligibility mechanism, Operational Programme to Assist the Most Deprived People (POAPMC) ensures that those seeking food support are integrated into a social framework and receive continuous follow-up.

Distribution: The distribution operations are carried out by more than 650 partner organisations in Portugal. They confirm the eligibility of the end recipients, distribute food, and carry out accompanying measures. The voucher system is yet to be implemented.

Accompanying measures: Financial literacy and budgeting support, waste prevention, and food selection.

SLOVENIA

Beginning of ESF+ programme: November 2022.

Types of provided material support: Food.

Frequency of food provision: Once per month.

Implementation of the programme: The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is the managing authority. It is also responsible for the purchase of food and the selection of NGOs and humanitarian organisations responsible for the distribution of food and the implementation of accompanying measures. It also provides technical assistance, including administrative support, capacity building, IT system management, evaluations, quality control of food, and communication activities. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the accounting function.

Identifying the end recipients: The Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is responsible for identifying the end recipients by employing national statistical data of the most deprived groups.

Distribution: The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has selected specific food suppliers to deliver food to designated warehouses owned by selected NGOs and humanitarian organisations. These organisations are responsible for the food distribution to various distribution points. At each distribution point, a responsible volunteer will prepare food packages and assess whether an individual is eligible to receive food.

Accompanying measures: Provision of information on available national funds aiming at social protection and social inclusion, encouragement to participate in other national and local programmes for social inclusion and activation, organisation of various workshops, psychosocial counselling, and referral to competent services.

SPAIN

Beginning of ESF+ programme: Programme approved in 2022. Execution started in 2024.

Types of provided material support: Vouchers and accompanying measures. The programme specifies which products of material assistance can be purchased (detailing those established in Article 2.1 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057) and which are excluded (i.e. alcoholic beverages).

Frequency of material support: The vouchers can be replenished up to three months.

Implementation of the programme: The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy will be responsible for the implementation and management of a unified programme. The work will be coordinated with the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda. The direct management of the programme will be delegated to all Autonomous Communities and Cities (CCAA), which will act as intermediate bodies (19), except for 2024, when the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda will serve as an intermediate body.

Identifying the recipients: The CCAA will be responsible for the identification of the end beneficiaries. The target group are families with dependent minors living below severe poverty (family income per consumption unit below 40% of the national median income, although this threshold may be adjusted by the CCAA based on their unique circumstances).

Distribution: In 2024, following a Royal Decree, the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda will act as an intermediate body and the distribution will be conducted by the Spanish Red Cross.

After January 2025, each of the 19 CCAA will have their own public processes for the distribution of the vouchers.

The designated supermarket(s) where the vouchers can be used must have an IT system capable of differentiating between products that can be purchased under the programme and those that cannot.

The support for a family with at least one dependent minor will be of €130 per month (€1,560 per year), and this amount will increase based on the number of family members up to €220 per month (€2,640) for a family of five or more members.

The support is granted for 12 months and can be renewed for periods of the same duration.

Accompanying measures: These measures will be implemented by the CCAA throughout the programme and may therefore vary across the 19 different regions. The implementation of these measures will be reviewed at least six months after the voucher recipient has received the support.

