

# COVID-19 outbreak: Council approves measures to help the most deprived EU citizens

EU ambassadors today agreed amendments to the regulation on the fund for aid to the most deprived (FEAD). These amendments are intended to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the most deprived. They will make it easier for member states, partner organisations and other parties involved to access the fund and protect their staff involved in distributing the aid. Around 13 million EU citizens benefit from the fund each year.

The COVID-19 outbreak is a major challenge for our efforts to help our most vulnerable citizens. The changes agreed today will give member states access to an increased co-financing rate from the EU budget and will make it possible to finance the provision of protective equipment to the most deprived, as well as to those involved in distributing the aid.

*Vesna Bedeković, Minister for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy of Croatia*

The proposal introduces the following new elements:

- temporary possibility of 100% co-financing from the EU budget
- expenditure for crisis response operations to be eligible as of 1 February 2020
- the cost of purchasing personal protective materials and equipment for partner organisations to be considered an eligible cost
- certain elements of the operational programme in response to the outbreak will not require approval by the European Commission

The amendments also provide for costs to be eligible in cases where the delivery of food or basic material assistance is delayed, or where operations are suspended or not fully implemented.

Compared to the Commission proposal, the Council position provides for the possibility of delivering food aid and basic material assistance not only through electronic vouchers, but through vouchers in any form.

## **Background**

The FEAD regulation was adopted in 2014 and established a new instrument to deal with the worst forms of poverty and food deprivation, as well as homelessness and the material deprivation of children. The criteria for identifying those most deprived persons requiring assistance are set by member states or partner organisations, taking into account local needs. The

resources available for the fund for the period 2014-2020 amount to EUR 2.5 billion at 2011 prices. The proposal to amend the regulation was adopted by the Commission on 2 April 2020.

## **Next steps:**

The presidency of the Council will now inform the European Parliament that should it adopt its position in the form set out in the text agreed by the Council, the Council will approve the European Parliament's position and the act shall be adopted in the wording which corresponds to the European Parliament's position. The presidency will also ask the European Parliament to use the urgent procedure.