

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

under

THE FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO THE MOST DEPRIVED 2014 - 2020

1. IDENTIFICATION *(max. 200 characters)*

The purpose of this section is to identify only the programme concerned. It shall clearly state the following:

- Member State - Bulgaria

- Name of the Operational Programme CCI – Operational Programme for food and/or basic material assistance under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

2. PROGRAMME FORMULATION

2.1. Situation

An identification and a justification of the material deprivation(s) to be addressed (max. 4000 characters). Indication of the type of material deprivation(s) retained for the OP (max. 200 characters).

In compliance with main objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy Bulgarian government adopted a **National Objective aimed at reducing the number of people living in poverty by 260 000 by the year 2020**, with four specific sub-tasks: reducing the number of **children in the age interval 0-18**, living in poverty, by 78 thousand; reducing the number of **people aged 65 and above**, living in poverty, by 52 thousand; reducing the number of **unemployed in the age interval 18-64**, living in poverty, by 78 thousand; reducing the number of **the employed in the age period 18-64**, living in poverty, by 52 thousand.

The risk of poverty or social exclusion puts Bulgaria at a top place among the EU Member States. According to 2012 statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC), **the level of poverty in Bulgaria is 21.2%, or about 1.544 million people are poor**. Taking into account the composite indicator which includes risk of poverty, material deprivation and households with low intensity of economic activity, in 2012, **49.3% of the country's population**¹ lived at risk of poverty or social exclusion. According to EU-SILC data of 2012, 44.1 % of the population of Bulgaria suffers from **severe material deprivation**, and EU-SILC estimates for 2013 show an increased risk - **45.9 %**.

Based on EU-SILC data, in its 2014 annual report focusing on “Inequality and Poverty - Dynamics and Policies for Their Restriction”, elaborated by the Institute of Economics with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), there is a conclusion that Bulgaria is an EU country with an **extremely high level of material deprivation**. In 2011, 4 out of 10 people lived in material deprivation. In the European Union (EU-27), only 1 out of 10 people live in such conditions. Because of the economic crisis, since 2008 the scope of people suffering from material deprivation in Bulgaria has increased from 41% in 2008 to 44% in 2011 and 2012, whereas in the EU-27, that number has increased from 8.2% to 9.9% by the end of the same period.

According to 2013 NSI statistical data concerning annual expenses of households and persons, it is evident that the expenses per household member in the “Food and soft drinks”

¹ Source: EU-SILC 2012, NSI

category amount to one-third of such person's average income in Bulgaria, i.e. **33.2% of the income per household member is used for buying foodstuffs (this is equivalent to BGN 1 480)**. This percentage is extremely high, and it exceeds many times the second most significant indicator - "Dwellings, water, electric power and fuels for domestic consumption", which accounts for an average of 14.2% of the income per household member.

According to EU-SILC statistics for 2012, 51.8% **cannot afford to have a proper meal**; they cannot afford to have meat, fish or an equivalent amount of proteins every second day, and according to preliminary data about 2013, they are **53.5%** of the population or 3 895 892 people.

Granting of food products to persons in high risk of poverty will widen the effective scope of the social assistance programmes. In order to reduce poverty by supporting the extending and upgrading of the activities of public soup kitchens, will be further improved the access to social services to deprived persons. Widening the effective scope of social assistance and the improved access to social services will contribute to alleviating poverty in Bulgaria, poverty being one of the important issues raised in the context of the EU Country Specific Recommendations for Bulgaria in 2014.

The above analysis of the poverty level and the groups at risk of poverty justifies Bulgaria's proposal **to use the funds from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived in order to assist these people with food products as a basic material deprivation.**

2.2. Material deprivation addressed

One section (and the corresponding sub-sections) shall be provided for each type of material deprivation to be addressed)

Food deprivation.

2.2.1. Description

Description of the main characteristics of the distribution of food or basic material assistance to be provided and the corresponding accompanying measures (max. 4 000 characters)

The programme shall be implemented on the entire territory of the country with providing foods, **as follows:**

2.2.1.1 Distribution of individual packages with food products.

The content of individual packages with food products shall be defined by the MA.

To ensure a balanced diet, the content of the packages will be consulted with the Ministry of Health. In the course of the programme feedback from the target group will be taken into account, which will be carried out with the assistance of PO and will reflect people's preferences without prejudice to the recommendations for a balanced diet.

a/ Purchasing and supply of the defined food products shall be carried out by the MA.

The director of the MA will delegate by order to its structure to carry out the public procurement/s in compliance with the national legislation. A contract will be signed with the selected contractor/s. Food products will be delivered by the contractor to MA's storerooms, or PO's storeroom when the PO delivers them directly, or to the storerooms of his partners, if it is applicable. The characteristics of storerooms should be tailored to the specifics of food packages for their safe storage.

b/Distribution of the food products and offering of accompanying measures

The distribution of food is carried out by the selected PO. The procedure for selection of PO is implemented in compliance with the criteria, specified in section 3.3. of the OP. PO will distribute food products annually. For people having difficulties with their mobility PO will distribute food products to their homes. PO will offer accompanying measures to the final recipients directly or in partnership with other organizations. Indicatively, they will consist of individual counseling for balanced diet, management of the family budget and orientation for granting of social assistance and provision of social services. PO will distribute information about available services funded by the ESF.

2.2.1.2. Providing of warm meal by the soup kitchens

a/ Purchase of food

PO for providing of warm meals to persons from the target group will be municipalities or districts of municipalities in Bulgaria. They will be selected annually on the basis of expressed interest followed by evaluation of the applications by MA. The type of food products to be purchased will be defined by PO. The products shall be purchased by tenders in accordance with the national legislation. PO will ensure that the weekly menu is varied, provides a balanced diet of the target group and meets the requirements for food safety and national standards and nutrition regulations.

b/ Providing of warm meal for the persons of the target group

PO shall own or use adequate facilities and equipment for preparing food and for the process of feeding the people of the target group. For people having difficulties with their mobility PO will deliver the food to their homes or on the street for wandering and homeless people.

c/ offering of accompanying measures to persons from the target group

PO shall offer directly or in cooperation with NGOs accompanying indicative measures for counseling and assistance such as:

- The opportunities to use other social services in the municipality, including those funded by ESF.
- The use of administrative municipal services and provided temporary shelter to the homeless persons, support the access to health and educational services, for the management of family budget, for healthy and balanced diet

2.2.2. National schemes

Description of the national schemes to be supported (max. 2 000 characters)

The OP will:

Widen the effective scope of the social assistance benefits and social services for vulnerable groups, granted under the National legislation.

Social benefits are resources which supplement or substitute own incomes up to an amount sufficient to meet the basic necessities of life or to meet incidental needs of the beneficiary persons and families. Social benefits are granted following an evaluation for each individual case. For determining the amount of the social benefits is used the guaranteed minimum income – It is a statutorily fixed amount of resources used as a base for ensuring a minimum income to meet basic necessities of life of persons.

Community based social services, and social services provided in specialized institutions aim to support the individuals for carrying out their daily activities for their social

inclusion. Social services are provided on the basis of an individual assessment of the needs. The right for receiving social benefits is subject to an individual assessment of every single case and it is carried out by the Social Assistance Directorates.

Amplify, upgrade and widen the scope of existing national programme for support of the soup kitchens

Delivering of processed food through soup kitchens is funded by The Social Protection Fund with financial resources from the National budget for autumn-winter period only, which is the most difficult for the poor. The support for the providers of the service “Soup Kitchen” has been implemented on a competitive basis, following project selection procedure, on the territory of the country as of now, 181 soup kitchens have been launched.

. With financial resources from the OP will become possible for the soup kitchens to be upgraded and to operate in the remaining period of the year, for which there is no provided national funding. Launching of new soup kitchens for providing of year-round service for deprived, in the municipalities where the service is not financed by Social Protection Fund, can also be financed under the OP.

2.3. Other

Any other information deemed necessary (max. 4 000 characters)

Not applicable

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Identification of most deprived persons

Description of the mechanism setting the eligible criteria of the most deprived persons, differentiated if necessary by type of material deprivation addressed (max. 2 000 characters)

The mechanism for identification of the most deprived persons – target group under the OP will be based on the principles for providing social assistance as defined by the national legislation.

The main measures relating to the provision of social benefits and social services are defined in the Social Assistance Act . Social benefits are granted following an evaluation of the income, property and health status, and is also based on age and family status as well as other established circumstances.

The target group under the operational program shall be determined with an Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy after analyzing the rate of vulnerability and the level of material deprivation of assisted individuals and families in the country. The Ordinance defines the main target group for each kind of support - for individual food packages and for provide warm meal, and additional target groups, for which can be redeployed unclaimed or undistributed food.

The Ordinance is developed in compliance with the principles of justification, transparency and consistency. Before the approval of the Ordinance, its draft version shall be coordinated with all the stakeholders and published for public discussion. After considering the comments received, the ordinance shall be submitted for approval by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

Identification of the representatives of the main and additional target groups for both types of operations will be carried out on the basis of lists submitted by the "Social Assistance" Directorates

3.2. Selection of operations

Criteria for the selection of operations and the description of the selection mechanism, differentiated if necessary by type of material deprivation addressed (max. 2 000 characters)

Under the programme will be implemented the following types of operations:

1. Purchasing of food products.
2. Distribution of individual packages with food products.
3. Providing of warm meal.
4. Technical assistance.

The operations are eligible when:

- Their duration is in the scope set in art.22 (2) and are in a compliance with the eligibility criteria described in art.22 (3), (4), art. 23 (1), (5), (6), art.26 (2) (with exception of the technical assistance), art.26 (3) (only regarding to technical assistance), art.26 (4) and 32 (3) of the Regulation
- Provide mechanisms for avoiding of food wastage with exception of the technical assistance
- Are in compliance with the principles set in art.5 (11), (12) including, where applicable, the requirements of the national legislation in the field of public procurement, (13) and (14) of the Regulation
- Provide mechanism for implementation of accompanying measures – directly or in cooperation with NGO's, in addition to providing of food, in accordance with the description in p. 2.2.1.1 "b" and 2.2.1.2. "c", with exception of the operations types 1 and 4
- Are within the available budget and have clear and realistic quantitative outcomes

Specific criteria divided for the different types of operations:

1. Purchasing of food products

- The public procurement is conducted by the administrative structure determined by order of the director of the MA.

2. Distribution of individual food products packages

- The operation is implemented by PO/POs that meet the criteria set out in p.3.3, p.1
- Ensures the territorial coverage of the entire country

3. Providing of warm meal

- The operation is implemented by PO/POs selected in compliance with the selection criteria set out in p.3.3, p.2

4. Technical assistance

- The operation complies with the scope of activities carried by management and control structures as described in section 3.7 of the OP and provides effectiveness and efficiency in the development and implementation of the programme

3.3. Selection of partner organisations

Criteria for the selection of partner organisations, differentiated if necessary by type of material deprivation addressed (max. 2 000 characters)

1.Partner organization for distribution of individual packages with food products:

- shall be a public legal body or a non-profit organisation registered under the Non-for-Profit Legal Entities Act as legal entities with non-profit activities acting in public benefit;
- shall be in operation and actively pursuing its objectives for at least 2 years and to have proven experience in the area of distribution of basic material assistance in-kind and/or proven experience in the area of food distribution to the population for at least 1 year as of the deadline for submission of applications for participation in the selection procedure for partner organizations;
- shall be registered administrator of personal data;
- Has the appropriate capacity–technical, administrative and financial capacity, organizational work processes, storage facilities secured, capacity for management of public funds. Capacity for offering of accompanying measures– directly or in cooperation with NGO.
- Have the capacity to ensure full territorial coverage of the Republic of Bulgaria, individually or in association with other partner organizations.

2. Partner organization for distribution of warm meal shall be:

- Municipality or district of municipality on the territory of Bulgaria.
- Possesses or uses accordingly the legal basis appropriate facilities and equipment for food preparation and the process of feeding.
- shall be registered administrator of personal data.
- Has the appropriate capacity–technical, administrative and financial capacity, organizational work processes, storage facilities secured. Capacity for implementation of the accompanying measures – directly or in cooperation with NGO’s in addition to the food distribution will be necessary too.
- Has the appropriate capacity for distribution of warm meal to the end users homes or to the wandering and homeless people on the territory of all settlements within the municipality.

3.4. Complementarity with ESF

Description of the mechanism to ensure complementarity with the ESF (max. 4 000 characters)

Interventions co-financed by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, as well as those co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) will directly contribute to achieving the objective of Europe 2020 Strategy to decrease the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in EU by 20 million. Measures co-financed under the two funds shall have internal consistency and a complementary effect, whereby their different nature shall ensure no overlap or double financing of operations.

FEAD provides the initial base support for the most vulnerable people affected by forms of extreme poverty that are too detached from the labor market, in order to benefit from the

measures for social inclusion, provided by ESF. To ensure complementarity between the two funds, the accompanying measures under the program, as part of the commitments of partner organizations, will consist primarily in individual consulting and providing information for their basic social rights. This is the first step for subsequently targeting to the existing support activities in the community, including other services funded by the ESF. Through accompanying measures under the program shall be created conditions for improving the mutual adaptation of the end users of the aid and the environment in which they live. The FEAD support is a base for the most deprived, so that at next stage is to take advantage of real measures for an active and fulfilling life, realized through the ESF

.Accompanying measures provided by the program will help these vulnerable groups to make their first steps towards overcoming poverty and social exclusion.

Support under FEAD for these people will be focused on the severe material deprivation, namely food deprivation, as food insufficiency is a threat to human health and life but is also a major obstacle to combating poverty and social exclusion.

The most deprived people, supported under FEAD for meet their basic vital needs, will be provided with an additional opportunity, under ESF, for future integration into the labour market and in society by participating in measures for combating poverty and social exclusion:

- For ethnic minorities and more specifically for the Roma, OP HRD envisages training and employment-related measures to overcome lack of qualification and education; raising the capacity for parenthood; motivation of children and the families to enter and remain in the educational system; direct support in the community to vulnerable families;
- For people with disabilities, support for their active inclusion in the labour market will be provided through integrated measures which will combine a set of activities targeting supply of labour market, social and health services;
- For mothers with children, measures are envisaged for provision of quality child care, including such for children with disabilities. As a result, social inclusion will be promoted, activation for employment will be facilitated, quality of life will be improved for those people preoccupied with child care or looking after other dependant family members and they will be able to use their full potential to get into employment;
- For elderly people unable to care for themselves, integrated services will be provided which will combine community-based or home-based social and health services.

In order to ensure complementarity between the two financial instruments and avoid duplication of measures and double funding, the MA will monitor on level of individual user for the accompanying measures received under the program.

3.5. Institutional set-up

The identification of the managing authority, the certifying authority where applicable, the audit authority and the body to which payments will be made by the Commission (max. 2 000 characters)

The **Managing Authority** – Functions of Managing Authority of the operational programme co – financed by FEAD will be performed by the "International Cooperation, Programmes and European Integration" Directorate in Agency for Social Assistance, to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The **Certifying Authority** - The “National Fund” Directorate, Ministry of Finance

The **Audit Authority** - Executive Agency “Audit of European Funds”, Ministry of Finance.

The Audit Authority shall ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the operational programme and on an appropriate sample of operations on the basis of the declared expenditure.

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is the “National Fund” Directorate in the Ministry of Finance.

3.6. Monitoring and evaluation

Description of how the programme implementation will be monitored (max. 4 000 characters)

In order to monitor the progress of implementation of the Operational Programme, the MA should draw up and provide to the Commission annual and final implementation reports, which should ensure the availability of essential and up-to-date information for the Operational Programme. The application of the partnership principle will ensure the involvement of all stakeholders; they shall take part in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance provided under FEAD.

For the same purpose, the Commission and the MA shall meet once a year to review the OP’s implementation progress, unless otherwise agreed. The relevant stakeholders shall be invited to participate in those review meetings, except when their participation would lead to conflicts of interest or breach of confidentiality related to audit matters.

In the implementation course of the programme MA will comply fully with EU requirements regarding monitoring and content of annual and final reports on implementation, including mechanisms to ensure collection of data corresponding to the list of common indicators relating to provisions of art.13.6 and art.62.2 the Regulation.

Reporting and monitoring of the implementation will be carried out by the structures of MA, incl. on-the spot inspections.

MA shall carry out ex-ante control on the tenders.

MA shall collect data from partner organizations that will contain specific information about their activities, nature and quantities provided food products, implemented accompanying measures.

Through the "Social Assistance" Directorates will be gathered information for the analysis and content of annual reports, which will outline the profile of the beneficiaries under the OP - number, socio-economic status, gender, age, health and etc.

The use of such mechanism would ensure effective control and possibility for a greater flexibility in implementing the measures and timely collecting data for the indicators in the OP.

In the course of implementation further studies may be carried out to provide information about the level of poverty, food habits, food consumption and other aspects relevant to the real needs of the target group. Studies will be carried out in a manner ensuring non-discrimination and the privacy of end users.

3.7. Technical assistance

The description of the planned use of technical assistance pursuant to Article 27(4), including actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of the beneficiaries in relation to sound financial management of operations (max. 4 000 characters)

In order to achieve the objectives and results of the operational programme, the technical assistance will be used for the following indicative activities:

1. Ensuring good management, monitoring and control of the OP. Investments shall ensure adequate systems, incl. IT system, working environment, and expert and motivated human resources, the ultimate goal consisting in higher effectiveness and efficiency of management and quality management of FEAD funds.
2. For strengthening the capacity of the beneficiary and partners organizations concerning management of the funding under the Fund. They should be well informed and familiar with the specifics of the new instrument in order to use in the most appropriate way the available opportunities and to invest the FEAD funds for satisfying the needs of specific target groups.
3. For technical support of the annual meetings on progress with the EC.
4. For travel and accommodation in connection with exchange of information and introduction of good practices and approaches in the programming, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation of the Operational Programme which will contribute to a better administrative management, and will have an indirect positive effect on the development of the activities included in the Programme.
5. Due to the Programme specific characteristics, will be financed activities for exercising quality control of the distributed food products, as well as activities ensuring their safety. In this connection, it will be necessary to finance training for the staff working in management and control structures; these will be necessary because of the specifics of the control that should be exercised. Strengthening the capacity of the staff will result in more effective work and will improve the performance in the implementation of all MA functions.
6. In addition to the above, for the purpose of subsequent introduction of improved systems of work and better practices support may be provided for analyses, studies and surveys, including specialised studies and evaluations. Those will measure the target group's satisfaction with the delivered food products as well as the contribution of the Operational Programme to the Union's objective to reduce by 2020 the number of people living in poverty or being at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 20 million.
7. Investments will be made in awareness raising activities for the target groups, the beneficiary and partner organisations about the Programme, as well as to diversify the possibilities for promotion of its results and impact.

4. Involvement of stakeholders

A description of the measures taken to involve all relevant stakeholders as well as, where appropriate, the competent regional, local and other public authorities in the preparation of the operational programme (max. 2 000 characters)

Invitations to take part in the development of the Operational Program were sent to the stakeholders - regional, local and other public competent bodies, as well as non-governmental organisations, pursuant to the established mechanism for selection of non-governmental organisations.

The nominal list of the participants in the thematic working group on the drafting of the new operational program was approved by Order, issued by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

It has a total of 35 members, stakeholders representatives, public bodies and representatives of the following non-governmental organisations:

- Social organisations (organisations operating in the area of minority ethnic groups and immigrants integration; organisations operating in the area of gender equality and non-discrimination; organisations operating in the area of social inclusion; organisations operating in the area of youth);
- Organisations operating in the area of human and civil rights and freedoms;
- Organisations operating in the area of social care;
- Organisations operating in the area of public health

In the working group there are also representatives of regional structures, organisations of and for people with disabilities, representative employers' and workers' organisations. The working group meets regularly to discuss and adopt working drafts of the programme that are developed in the course of the programme's preparation. Decisions are being made by consensus and in compliance with established internal rules where are laid down details on exchange of information and reflection of the proposals of the working group. There are minutes from every meeting of the working group.

After programme approval by the working group its draft is published at the website for public consultations - strategy.bg for public discussion. After considering the comments received, the programme is submitted for approval by the Council of Ministers.

5. FINANCIAL PLAN

(Text: max. 1 000 characters; Data in CSV or XLS format)

Table 5.1 Financing plan of the operational programme giving the annual commitment of the Fund and corresponding national co-financing in the operational programme (in EUR)

	Total	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fund (a)	104 815 264	14 098 906	14 380 884	14 668 502	14 961 872	15 261 109	15 566 331	15 877 660
National co-financing (b)	18 496 812	2 488 042	2 537 803	2 588 559	2 640 330	2 693 137	2 747 000	2 801 941
Public expenditure (c) = (a) + (b)	123 312 076	16 586 948	16 918 687	17 257 061	17 602 202	17 954 246	18 313 331	18 679 601
Co-financing rate (d) = (a) / (c)*	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%

** In the table, the co-financing rate may be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. The exact rate to be used for reimbursement is the ratio (d)*

Table 5.2 - Financing plan giving the amount of the total financial appropriations of the support from the operational programme for each type of material deprivation addressed (in EUR)

Intervention area	Public expenditure
Technical assistance	6 165 604
Type of material assistance 1 Food deprivation	117 146 472
Incl. Accompanying measures	5 324 839
Total	123 312 076