

# 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<sup>1</sup>** 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”

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

As a consequence of the crisis in Ukraine, the Republic of Bulgaria is facing major challenges. An organization was established in the country to provide temporary protection to people fleeing the war. Almost 85,000 remaining in the country.

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**.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bulgaria proposes that the additional funds for the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived to be directed for the provision of a warm meal for the most affected and vulnerable citizens in the country and for food and necessities for displaced people from Ukraine through vouchers.

## **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.**

#### **Provision of food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine through indirect assistance with vouchers**

##### **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

**2.2.1.2.1 Hot lunch in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

POs for the provision of warm meal to the target groups will be municipalities or districts of municipalities who either directly or in cooperation with NGOs, will implement accompanying measures as indicatively referred to in item 2.3 Others of the programme.

**2.2.1.3. Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine**

PO is Agency for social assistance. The operation will provide vouchers for the provision of essential products and goods to displaced persons from Ukraine together with accompanying measures.

In addition to the provision of vouchers, individuals will be counselled on their eligibility for social benefits and use of social services, etc. in accordance with identified needs.

### 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 up-graded 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.

- **A continuation of the targeted programme “Warm Meal at Home in an Emergency Situation 2020”, financed by the national budget allocated for dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic situation and the unprecedented refugee pressure in the country**
- **Additional national measures to support displaced persons in response to the crisis in Ukraine that do not overlap others measures**

### **2.3. Other**

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

The “Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic” Operation complements the comprehensive national measures taken in response to the crisis, focusing on those for whom the provision of food is difficult or impossible in the current unprecedented situation. In addition to the selection criteria, the partner organizations should also meet the following criteria:

- Shall possess or use, on appropriate legal grounds, a proper facilities and equipment for the preparation of food and implementation of the feeding process, subject to all anti-epidemic measures;
- Shall have adequate capacity, where such is necessary, for the delivery of the prepared food to the end users’ homes within the municipality, subject to all sanitary and hygienic requirements and the requirements for food transportation, pursuant to the Food Act, where the anti-epidemic measures require it;
- Shall have adequate capacity - technical, financial and administrative, organizational work processes, an ensured warehouse base, capacity to implement accompanying measures – either directly or in cooperation with NGOs, in addition to food provision
- shall ensure the provision of a varied, healthy and quality weekly menu, in compliance with all sanitary and hygienic requirements
- Provide for and apply a mechanism to prevent food waste
- Provide for a mechanism for feedback from end-users
- Comply and apply, as appropriate, the principles set out in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) (223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- Provide for the promotion of support from the Fund for European Aid to Most Deprived, in a way that does not stigmatize the final recipients of the aid and while respecting their personal dignity

In addition to the provision of food, the partner organizations - municipalities and districts of municipalities - will offer directly or in cooperation with NGOs accompanying measures - referral to various social services, assistance in the use of municipal administrative services, counseling, including on issues related to the pandemic and the rights of displaced persons from Ukraine who have received temporary protection and other forms of support, based on the specifically identified needs of the representatives of the target groups. Accompanying support will also consist of individual or group measures aimed at raising people's awareness of the unprecedented changes in the global climate and how they are adversely affecting nature and people's quality of life. The aim of these measures is to raise people's awareness that their actions can change the course of events and limit climate change by using resources more efficiently and protecting nature. Accompanying measures will also include targeting various initiatives to replace solid fuel stoves with alternative energy-saving heat sources where possible, as well as involving representatives of the target groups in green initiatives in the municipality and the city.

In order to reduce the administrative burden on the partner organizations under the operation, the Methodology approved by the Managing Authority for application of simplified rules for reimbursement based on cost per unit of product - lunch for public soup kitchens for type 3 operations “Provision of Warm Meal” dated 18.04.2017 and the cost of a hot lunch will be applied in accordance with the approved value under the National Program for Support of Public soup kitchens, financed by the Social Protection Fund through the national budget.

The operation “**Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine**” is implementing in urgent conditions

**The operation “Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine”** is implemented in the context of urgency.. The wide range of material deprivations experienced by those fleeing the war in Ukraine further justifies the choice to provide indirect support through vouchers, which ensures timeliness, effectiveness and preserves the dignity of people. The voucher cannot be used to pay utility bills, to purchase medicines, tobacco products, spirits, wine and beer.

A one-off voucher is granted. In justified cases, additional voucher(s) may be provided on the basis of individual need assessment carried out by the Social Assistance Agency and if there are undistributed vouchers.

Reimbursement of vouchers redeemed will be based on invoices issued. The value of the voucher shall be determined by order of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy on the basis of real market prices for basic foodstuffs and commodities.

Accompanying support will also be implemented for the persons from the target groups, e.g. indicatively in the form of guidance and counselling on their basic rights, as well as assistance in obtaining necessary services, etc.

### **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.

In line with the objectives of the “**Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**” Operation, the target groups are:

1. Persons with no source of income or with low income below the poverty line - people in difficulty due to the deteriorated economic situation in the country, people who due to their age or disability are at higher risk of infection and adverse infection development process.

2. Persons, who have been granted temporary protection due to the mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine

3. Persons placed in quarantine – with no source of income or with low income below the poverty line and having no relatives to assist them.

4. Persons that are subject to social assistance, in respect of whom the need for additional support has been identified and, in the conditions of an emergency epidemic situation, are unable to satisfy their basic living needs.

The mechanism for identifying the most deprived under the “Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic” Operation is in line with the requirements and prescriptions of the competent authorities in the context of a pandemic situation and allows for the quick identification and coverage of those who are most vulnerable. For this purpose, an established mechanism will be applied, regulating the communication between the authorities involved. POs will identify the most deprived within the respective territory by using all possible sources of information – alerts by citizens, open telephone line, information from the Regional Health Inspectorate about persons placed under mandatory quarantine, information from social service providers, etc. The affiliation of the identified persons to the eligible target groups specifically referred to in item 2.3 of this programme will be confirmed by the relevant Social Assistance Directorate on the basis of the registers of assisted persons, inquiry, collection of additional information, individual assessment, etc. on a case-by-case basis. It is estimated that during the implementation of the operation 74 000 persons in total will be covered.

**Target groups under operation 2.1.3. are persons granted temporary protection status who entered the country after 24.02.2022, including children.** Priority will be given to children and persons who are their parents, guardians or persons with whom children are placed under the Child Protection Act. They are identified by the Social Assistance Directorate. At least 40 000 persons are expected to be covered.

### **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.
  - 3.1. Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic
4. Technical assistance.
5. Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine

**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 if it is applicable

- 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
- Comply with the principle of respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of those most in need and respect for the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

**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

**3.1.Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- the operation follows the approach of type 3 operations "Providing a warm meal" and is carried out by partner organization(s) selected in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the programme

**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

**5. Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine**

- is consistent with the objectives and is implemented by an eligible PO – administrative structure within ASA, designated by order
- Criteria for PO for O5:
  - Has adequate capacity - technical, financial and administrative, organizational work processes, and capacity to implement the accompanying measures, in addition to voucher delivery;
  - Has experience in delivering voucher support and ensures national coverage of the measures.

**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.
- **2.1 The PO for the provision of warm meal in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic shall be** a municipality or district of a municipality on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, which provides warm meal as a local activity, based on a Decision of the Municipal Council. In item 2.3 Others the additional criteria for eligibility of the partner organizations under the operation are indicated.

### **3. Partner organization for operation „Provision of vouchers for food and basic necessities to displaced persons from Ukraine” see point 3.2**

#### **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 childcare, 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 dependent 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.

The accompanying assistance in the context of a pandemic will be fully tailored to the specifics of the situation. The leading line will be the provision of assistance in overcoming the negative consequences of the current unprecedented situation, and support for social integration, depending on the individual needs of each individual person. There will be follow-up to ensure that there is no overlapping of support with the same purpose for the same target group representatives from different sources at the same time.

### **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.

In order to monitor the implementation of the “Warm Meal in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic” Operation, the framework for reporting on the technical and financial performance of contracts for similar operations under this programme will be used. For this purpose, a

Methodology for the application of simplified rules for reimbursement based on cost per unit of product - lunch for public soup kitchens under Type 3 Operations “Provision of warm meal” will be applied. The application of simplified cost reporting rules is particularly important in the performance of contracts in the context of the current unprecedented crisis. The reduction of the administrative burden will provide the opportunity for greater flexibility and rapid response to dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic situation that has arisen.

### **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, including strengthening the crisis response capacity, dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak and the unprecedented migrant pressure and in order to ensure the continuation of the support provided so far, 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, including for the preparation of the next programming period.
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 including in a time of pandemic.
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 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)

*\* 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)*

year	fund (A)	National co-financing (B)	Public expenditures (B) = (A) + (B)	Co-financing rate (Г) = (A)/(B)	100 % rate co-financing for accounting year 2020—2021 Г.*
2014	14 098 906,00	2 488 042,00	16 586 948,00	85	

2015	14 380 884,00	2 537 803,00	16 918 687,00	85	
2016	14 668 502,00	2 588 559,00	17 257 061,00	85	
2017	14 961 872,00	2 640 330,00	17 602 202,00	85	
2018	15 261 109,00	2 693 137,00	17 954 246,00	85	
2019	15 566 331,00	2 747 000,00	18 313 331,00	85	
2020	15 877 660,00	2 801 941,00	18 679 601,00	85	
2021	19 940 383,00	0,00	19 940 383,00	100	
2022	18 624 211,00	0,00	18 624 211,00	100	
<b>Общо</b>	<b>143 379 858,00</b>	<b>18 496 812,00</b>	<b>161 876 670 , 00</b>		

**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)**

Type of material deprivation	Public expenditures
Technical assistance	8 093 834,00
Type of material assistance 1 Food deprivation	153 782 836,00
Incl. Accompanying measures	7 322 992,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>161 876 670,00</b>