



fresh start

Using the full potential of the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived to support transitions out of homelessness through **starter packs**

starter pack items

can include:

COOKING

PLATES, BOWLS
KNIVES, FORKS, SPOONS
GLASSES, MUGS
SAUCEPANS
TIN OPENERS
ELECTRIC KETTLE

SLEEPING

BLANKETS
DUVETS
DUVET COVERS
SHEETS
PILLOWS
ALARM CLOCK

CLEANING

WASHINGUP LIQUID
MOP&BUCKET
DUSTPAN&BRUSH
BROOM
DISHCLOTHS
CLEANING SPRAY
BLEACH
TOILET BRUSH

HYGIENE

TOWELS
TOOTHBRUSH
TOOTHPASTE
SOAP
SHAMPOO
TOILET ROLLS

OTHER

LIGHT BULBS
MIRROR
CURTAINS
NON-PERISHABLE FOOD
CLOTHING
FURNITURE



Under the proposed new Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (3,5 billion from 2014-2020), all EU Member States will have access to funds to support the most deprived in their communities, including people experiencing homelessness, through schemes providing food and material assistance. This goes beyond the previous EU food distribution fund since it also now provides for material assistance and accompanying support measures with a view to developing sustainable pathways out of deprivation. The reality in Europe is that poverty is on the increase, so that this small but important fund should be put to effective use as soon as possible to address the social impact of the crisis. FEANTSA organisations use a variety of approaches to support people out of homelessness but, for the purpose of the national FEAD programmes, would like to highlight a specific model which can contribute to rapid resettlement: the use of **starter packs of goods**. Starter packs can of course include non-perishable food types (in line with the previous EU programme) but go beyond basic food assistance to include household items such as cutlery, bedding, curtains, light-bulbs, cleaning products - any items which can help turn empty accommodation into a **home**. Starter packs are already used in different EU countries, and the idea of this brief paper is to draw from these practices to create a first checklist to set up a starter pack scheme. The nature of the starter packs will vary according to established services, traditions, and communities, but the general outcome in every case is to supply deprived people with a selection of tailored goods free of charge which can help kick-start change in lives and show that their community cares. Starter Packs are **Inclusive, Sustainable and Smart**.

inclusive

Starter packs are important in the framework of programmes addressing homelessness and different forms of housing crisis. In many cities across the EU, there are people sleeping rough and even where there is not visible homelessness, the hidden forms of homelessness will also shock the community: people sleeping on floors, or on friends' couches, overcrowded flats, and more situations which affect single parents with children, people leaving the armed forces and re-adapting, older people with very basic pensions, young people moving out for the first time without a decent income, etc. Many tenancies can fail in the initial stages because of a lack of financial resources to provide basic household items. By providing these essentials, starter packs can help increase the sense of "home".

sustainable

Starter packs can be made up of recycled goods donated by the community including: crockery and cutlery, glassware, pots&pans, kitchen utensils, mops&buckets, curtains and rugs, clocks and mirrors, bathmats, bed linen and bedding, dustpans&brushes... Moreover, old cardboard boxes and other re-usable containers can be used to pack and distribute the goods. Diverting all this material from landfill to people in need means that starter packs have an important environmental dimension. Starter packs can also contribute to building more sustainable communities, raising awareness of citizens, businesses and policy-makers of homelessness in their communities.

smart

Starter packs can be adapted and tailored to the immediate needs of a household. The aim is to go beyond food assistance by providing pathways out of deprivation and avoid the repeat use of emergency services. The cost implications are clear: helping people move out of deprivation and into stable housing conditions will allow them to rebuild their lives and become active citizens in their community. Stations where the starter packs are assembled can be used to build community links or even to help provide employability skills (confidence building, working in a team, etc) to people who struggle to find and sustain work.



starter pack toolkit



Understand Your Community

• GET IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL/HEALTH/HOUSING DEPARTMENTS

In most countries, starter packs are given to people based on referrals from local authorities and organisations which should know the needs in the local community, and will help focus the distribution of starter packs to people most in need of them. Having good contact points in these organisations is a key step.

• SEEK OUT VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Networks of voluntary and community organisations are important from the beginning to the end of the packing process, and will have the know-how to provide appropriate accompanying support to complement the starter packs (e.g. support workers, budget management advice) and ensure real transitions out of homelessness.

• TAKE STOCK OF NEEDS AND RESOURCES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Exchange information within your community on the kind of needs which are out there, as well as the kind of goods which can be recycled and those which need to be new; look out for existing local networks and community groups, potential funding sources, geographical location of potential packing stations, transport facilities for the goods, etc.

• MAKE UP A LIST OF GOODS TO INCLUDE IN THE PACKS

Distinguish between second-hand goods which can be recycled (crockery, pans, broom, bucket, tin opener, alarm clock, etc) and new goods (light bulbs, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet brush, etc). These should ideally be goods which can be physically stocked on a shelf or in boxes. Take into account any certification requirements (e.g. for electrical goods). Consider assigning approximate value to each item as this can be useful for fund-raising and showing the impact of the scheme.

• HIGHLIGHT KEY PEOPLE FOR THE STARTER PACK CHAIN

Key people include: collection coordinators, sorters, packers, distribution coordinators, extra volunteers, paid staff in voluntary organisations and local authorities, as well as contact points in donor organisations. You will need to build a team based on the nature of the items collected (e.g. have a technician to check small electrical devices donated). Keep databases or mailing lists of people involved in the project.

• ORGANISE THE DONATION SYSTEM

Build networks of donor organisations, including schools, religious organisations, environmental NGOs, businesses, etc. Establish collection points such as specific cabins in the streets or specific locations in the community, or have goods delivered at the packing station (to avoid transport issues). Communicate the donation system to the wider community (leaflets, videos) but also to new people joining the starter pack project itself (e.g. with raining sessions).

Collect the goods

• PACKING STATION AS THE HUB OF A STARTER PACK PROJECT

Locate strategic places in the community where all the collected goods can be stocked and sorted easily, and organise them in such a way that they allow for effective and rapid packing (since they are for emergencies). Space is a key challenge, but also ensuring amenities are nearby for packers (toilets, kitchen, office).

• DEVELOP A METHOD FOR ASSEMBLING THE PACKS

Referrals for starter packs will come from different organisations and authorities - while giving some information about the household (size, age of children, etc), ensure data confidentiality of the people receiving the starter pack by giving packers a referral *number* and list of goods. Or alternatively, consider the possibility of packing the goods with the person in order to promote autonomy and ownership. Keep track of the items handed out where possible in order to fill gaps in stock where necessary.

• BUILDING COMMUNITIES AND EMPLOYABILITY

Include a welcome note in the pack describing the project and dates for various community group meetings so that pack recipients may also have the opportunity to connect with people. Consider inviting people from employment training programmes to get involved in packing stations, hence allowing them to develop employability skills and local networks which can potentially lead to employment opportunities.

Pack the goods

• DISTRIBUTION FREE OF CHARGE

Most projects provide starter packs free to those in need. Whereas starter pack recipients will not be in a position to provide a financial contribution, it may be useful to include short feedback forms to collect their opinion about the service; or to provide volunteering opportunities for recipients keen to give something back to the community once they are settled.

• GETTING THE PACK TO THE RECIPIENT

Where referral agencies such as local authorities or other organisations are linked to the community starter pack project, it will be important to coordinate closely with existing housing support workers. Consider whether to invite recipients to pick up their goods at the packing station directly, or to offer a transport delivery service (with or without fee depending on community or local authority resources).

• RECORDING INFORMATION ON STARTER PACK DELIVERY

Train volunteers to fill out forms with key information about each starter pack such as the referral number, household size, the date the pack was made up, the location of the pack, number of items in the pack. This can help calculate indicators to show the value of the scheme such as number of starter packs, number of people, the approximate value of the starter packs.

Deliver the starter packs

REFERENCES

- EU Regulation on a Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived 2014-2020 (2014)
- European Parliament Resolution calling for an EU homelessness strategy (2014)
- Eurostat 2012 data on people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (2013)
- Pleace et al, *The costs of homelessness in Europe, An Assessment of the current evidence base.EOH Comparative studies on homelessness* (2013)
- Scottish Council for Single Homeless and Scottish Churches Housing Action, *Start Me Up! A handbook on starter packs for homeless people* (2005)