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Abstract

Food aid has become an integral part of welfare states across Europe, which was particularly striking during the socio-economic COVID-19 crisis. So far, however, there has been little cross-national research on how food aid is organised and embedded in European welfare arrangements. The international project "Food aid in Europe in times of the COVID-19 crisis" therefore addressed this research gap by conducting a cross-sectional survey and collecting quantitative data on food aid in different European countries at the same time (Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain).
Our findings show that food aid has diverse links to the welfare state arrangement despite different country contexts, indicating that food aid is becoming institutionalised across Europe. During the COVID-19 crisis, these links seem to have strengthened. Our findings also point to a significant role of the Fund for European Aid to the Deprived (FEAD) in food aid.

Keywords: Food aid, international survey research, COVID-19 crisis, FEAD

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1 Introduction

In recent years, new kinds of food aid systems have emerged in a number of European countries. Whereas food aid was a common feature found in most European countries during the post-war years, its importance declined as social security programmes took hold and expanded within the various European countries. While soup kitchens and similar organisations continued to offer some form of assistance, this support was directed primarily towards particularly vulnerable groups outside the social protection system (like homeless people) and was not a prominent feature in Europe (Lambie-Mumford and Silvasti, 2020).

Early reports from the 1980s and -90s showed that new forms of charity food aid had been established in high income countries like Canada (Riches, 1986) and the United States (Poppendieck, 1998). Within the last thirty years, similar forms of charity food aid systems have been established in a number of European countries as well. Food aid organisations have become more important not only in terms of quantity but also in a qualitative sense: they became a key source of food supplies for many people in need.

In the meantime, food aid has evolved into a complex system including a broad range of actors and resources with many different suppliers and numerous volunteers (Caraher and Cavicchi, 2014). While food aid organisations and distribution points can largely be understood as entities providing support in the form of charity, food aid is connected to different informal and formal layers encompassing civil society, businesses and governmental actors. Moreover, the European level plays a significant role here by means of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). Even though FEAD – especially in richer countries – is only a marginal funding instrument in relation to national GDPs (Greiss et al., 2021), it has evolved to be one of the main food aid providers in many Member States (Commission, 2019).[1]

Food aid is often associated with charity organisations, donations and social commitment on the part of volunteers. While this is largely the case, support is also often realised in liaison with dominant welfare actors and sometimes even with state actors. However, also in these cases, the support is not based on social rights but remains a form of charity. The emergence and establishment of charity food aid has therefore been described as part of a 'new charity economy' (Kessl, 2020; Kessl and Schoneville, 2021). Within this 'new charity economy', surplus or expired goods from the primary economy are transferred to a secondary system, where goods are distributed for free or sold at discount prices through volunteers or low-paid workers. FEAD adds a further economic dimension to the system, as the programme relies on public procurement and the free market to acquire food from European private companies which produce the goods for the purpose of the programme. Finally, the new charity economy provides non-monetary support in the form of basic goods for those in need, alongside other support, such as statutory social security, utility or welfare structures. But the decision as to whether or not support is granted is not based on entitlement but on charity. The establishment of the 'new

1 The only European Member States not using FEAD funds for food aid and/or basic material assistance in the 2014-2020 funding period are Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

charity economy' has therefore been described as a symbol of the transformation of the welfare arrangements themselves (Schoneville, 2018).

Noteworthy is that the emergence and establishment of such new forms of charity food aid took place against the background of many European societies witnessing an increase in income inequality and poverty, especially among the working age population (Cantillon et al., 2018). This can be seen as an indication that minimum income protection is inadequate in almost all European welfare states. Especially in poorer countries, the rates of minimum incomes are too low to allow adequate social participation (Goedemé et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 crisis has increased social hardship and poverty. According to the European Food Bank Federation, there were significantly more people in need of food aid due to the social and economic consequences of the pandemic.[2] At the same time, however, food aid organisations in various countries experienced difficulties in keeping their facilities open. They either did not have enough goods to distribute or the volunteers themselves belonged to a COVID-19 risk group and were therefore not able to work at the organisation. Against the backdrop of these developments, some national and regional governments, cities and municipalities additionally supported the organisation of charity food aid.[3] These governmental initiatives not only indicate how much social needs have increased within European societies, especially in times of crisis, but also how deeply charity food aid is embedded in European welfare state arrangements.

However, there have been few studies to date that deal with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the various food aid systems. Recent studies have looked at the resilience of a particular country's food aid system during the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. Power et al., 2020; Barker and Russell, 2020; Simmet and Stroebele-Benschop, 2021; Dekkinga et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is hardly any quantitative data collection enabling a better understanding of the bigger picture of the impact of the crisis on charity food aid and the degree of its embeddedness in different European welfare state arrangements. Besides, this lack of data and analysis is not a recent phenomenon, but characterizes the development of the sector in general over the last 30 years.

Therefore, with our project, we wanted to address this shortcoming by collecting quantitative data on food aid systems in different European countries. We wanted to make the developments more visible by studying the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the user profiles and the demand for food aid as well as on the operability of the food aid system. But at the same time,

2 https://lp.eurofoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FEBA_Social_Forum_Report_2020_1712_final.pdf

3 For example, many cities in France supported food aid or distributed additional food vouchers (https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-and-recovery-across-levels-of-government-a2c6abaf/). Also, the national government in France initiated a broad food voucher programme (https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=132_132643-m91j2scsyh&title=Combatting-COVID-19-s-effect-on-children. Similarly, in Italy, the national, regional and local levels of government supported food aid measures (https://epha.org/addressing-food-insecurity-during-the-covid-19-national-lockdowns-the-case-of-italy/). In Belgium, the federal government subsidised the organisation of food aid (https://www.mi-is.be/nl/pers-multimedia/7-miljoen-euro-aan-extra-middelen-ter-ondersteuning-van-de-voedselhulp).

our project can also be understood in a more general sense as an investigation of the development in the field of charity food aid in different European welfare state arrangements. We aim to provide key information on the food aid providing entities in different European countries, in order to shed light on how food aid is embedded within different welfare state arrangements and to give some insight into the profiles of food aid users.

Eventually, in early summer 2020, we launched our project "Food aid in Europe in times of the COVID-19 crisis", based on the collaboration of researchers and NGO practitioners from eleven European countries. Ultimately, we succeeded in conducting a survey of food aid organisations in eight of these countries: Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain. This working paper seeks to provide a description of the survey methodology and a first analysis of the results which we present as country cases of the respective samples.

The paper is structured as follows: We will start by describing the method of the study (section 2); Subsequently, we will present the results for each country in individual country chapters (section 3); This is followed by our discussion and conclusion (section 4) and a description of the limitations of the study (section 5).

2 Method

2.1 Survey design and sampling

The survey was designed to be a cross-sectional survey using a self-administered questionnaire and the technique of computer-assisted web-interviewing (CAWI).

In order to meet the project's objectives, we specified that the survey units should be entities providing food or meals for free or at a low price to people in need. Accordingly, the survey units should be local organisations or distribution points[4] that provide food aid directly to the users, rather than pure food warehouses and transfer points with no direct contact with users. Furthermore, to identify the target population for each country participating in the survey, we conducted limited literature and document analysis as well as informal interviews with the project partners concerning their country's food aid system. We found that it is not possible in any of the countries based on the information available, to determine a country's entire scope of food aid providers, neither with respect to an overarching standardised system nor one across countries. Still, we found one common characteristic that allowed us to define comparable target populations within the different countries. For each country, at least one large umbrella organisation could be identified with which other local food aid organisations were affiliated. Consequently, in terms of both definability and comparability between countries, we set the target population as the total number of local food aid organisations affiliated with the largest national umbrella organisation(s) in 2020. We assumed that the local food aid providers registered as partners/affiliated organisations of the umbrella organisation(s) in 2020 were also

4 In the following, we will only refer to 'food aid organisation' as the comprehensive term that also encompasses 'food distribution points'.

providing food aid before the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, we emphasised in the introductory part of the survey that it should only be filled in if the organisation had already been providing food aid prior to the crisis.

We determined the sampling frame of each country as a complete list of organisations corresponding to the respective target population's units. A one-to-one correspondence was deemed appropriate considering the fact that the populations each were comprised of a limited number of units. In most of the countries, it was possible to either receive member contact lists from the umbrella organisations themselves or to compile a contact list on the basis of the information provided on the umbrella organisations' websites. In Lithuania and Portugal, the umbrella organisations also supported us in establishing contact to their member organisations, but sent the invitation email with the link to the survey themselves for privacy reasons. In three other countries, however, the survey could not be conducted in the end, primarily because access to the field proved too difficult and no suitable email list could be compiled.

There were a limited number of invalid, duplicate or missing email addresses on the lists provided, which we tried to replace with valid ones where possible.[5] Given the relatively small number of contact list units in each country, all units with a valid email address were taken into account when compiling the eligible sampling units.

2.2 Source questionnaire and translation

Following the main objectives of the project, we created survey variables on three themes:

I: Profiles of the surveyed organisations

II: Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

III: Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

The variables and associated items are described in more detail within the annex.

The final English version of the questionnaire (source questionnaire) was developed based on many feedback loops with all project partners as well as a pilot study[6] in order to create relevant, understandable and contextually appropriate questions for all countries. The questionnaire includes multiple choice questions, dichotomous questions, matrix questions and open-ended questions. The questions on the questionnaire were the same for all survey rounds and all countries, following the 'Asking the Same Questions and Translating' (ASQT technique) approach.[7]

5 Regarding the Polish Food Bank Federation's member list, however, there were considerably fewer (valid) email addresses. There, it was only possible to replace the missing or invalid email addresses with valid ones in a small number of cases.

6 The pilot study was conducted in November 2020 in Belgium. Conducting pilot studies in all participating countries was not deemed feasible nor essential in creating the questionnaire.

7 Exceptions were three (sub-)questions that either only served to better match the origin of the organisation or were considered useful in some of the countries.

For reasons of consistency, the translation process from the English source questionnaire to the target languages[8] followed the translation recommendations of the 'Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines' (CCSG)[9] as much as feasible within the context of this project. For this purpose, corresponding translation guidelines were provided to the country teams. In addition, the teams received a document with further explications and notes on challenges regarding the translation of certain terms and concepts. In order to both carry out and document the entire questionnaire translation and review process for each language version, the translators and reviewers made use of a CCSG-recommended translation and documentation template (excel file).[10]

2.3 Ethical clearance

The independent Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities, installed by the Executive Board of the University of Antwerp, Belgium, formulated a final positive clearance with regard to the project on 12 October 2020.

2.4 Data collection

Survey participants were to be recruited by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics as well as via email (in Belgium and partly in Lithuania and Portugal). In an information and invitation letter to participants, we gave clear information about the organisers, the context and the aim of the study, as well as the approximate time needed to complete the questionnaire and the deadline of the survey. Furthermore, we provided a link to the project's website. In order to reach those people in the organisations with an overall view of the food distribution processes and contact with food aid users, we noted in the introductory part of the survey that the survey best be completed by someone in the organisation familiar with the organisation's internal practices of organising food aid. Furthermore, in order to be able to relate the given answers to one certain location, we stressed that respondents active in more than one organisation should answer the questions for the location at which they were most involved.

The survey took place in Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain from 22 March to 4 August 2021 in different rounds.[11] The survey was carried out for 4-5 weeks in each country, during which we took into account the holiday periods in each country and the availability of possible support (e.g. through sending out reminders) from some of the umbrella organisations. Initially, a survey period of 2 weeks was planned. At least 3 reminders were scheduled in each country. In some countries, however, the response

8 One final language version was created for each participating country, except for Belgium, where three different language versions were created.

9 See e.g. https://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/.

10 In Poland, the translation was carried out by the (ISO-certificated) translation service of Qualtrics and reviewed by the Polish project partner.

11 The first survey round took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021 and concerned Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands and Poland. The second round took place from 12 April to 25 May 2021 in Hungary, Portugal and Spain (Portugal partly started already on 9 April). A third round from 25 May to 2 June concerned only Belgium, followed by a fourth round taking place from 28 July to 4 August in the Netherlands only. The latter survey rounds were especially attributed to the support from the respective umbrella organisations at that time.

rates remained relatively low and could not be significantly increased by sending out reminders. Therefore, we extended the survey period in all countries. Furthermore, in Belgium, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain, one of the reminders was sent directly from an umbrella organisation to the local organisations to increase the response rate. In Germany and the Netherlands, the respective umbrella organisation drew attention to our survey in a newsletter to its members. In two of the countries (Belgium, the Netherlands), the respective recruitment method delayed the start of a second survey wave by a few weeks. Generally, the respective recruitment methods had a notable effect on the response rates except for Germany, Poland and Spain. In these countries, the response rates remained low.

Given the low response rates in three of the countries surveyed, the risk of non-response bias is an issue in this study (see Section 5). We therefore decided not to conduct a comparative analysis, but to analyse the data per country.

3 Results

The results of the survey are based on a descriptive data analysis by means of SPSS Statistics Data Editor.[12] We will present the results by country case in alphabetical order. The individual cases are structured according to the three main themes of the survey: *Profiles of the surveyed organisations, Food aid within the welfare state arrangement* and *Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis*. The country results are each briefly preceded by the country-specific context of food aid as well as the respective method of sampling and response rate.

3.1 Belgium

In Belgium, nine regional food banks are united to form the National Food Bank Federation (‘Belgische Federatie van Voedselbanken’/ ‘Federation Belge des Banques Alimentaires’). The food banks act as storage and distribution centres for local food aid organisations and food distribution points. In 2020, there were 631 local food aid organisations and food distribution points affiliated with the Federation via the regional food banks.[13] The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) plays an important role in this food aid system. According to the Federation, FEAD food products represent 40% of the food banks' sources of supply.[14]

The study’s target population in Belgium was defined as the total number of local organisations and distribution points affiliated with the Federation in 2020. A corresponding complete contact list of these locations from 16/03/2020 was taken as a sampling frame of the study.[15]

The Belgian survey took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021 and from 25 May to 2 June 2021 (after a reminder was sent directly from the umbrella organisation). The questionnaire was sent out by email (accessible via link) in the three national languages, French, Dutch and German.

12 The answers to the open-ended questions (apart from numerical data) were not taken into account in this working paper.

13 https://www.foodbanks.be/

14 https://www.foodbanks.be/nl/over-ons

15 The National Food Bank Federation provided the project with a list of all connected local food aid organisations/ food distribution points.

In the end, we were able to directly contact 573 locations with a valid email address. There was a total of 347 respondents. 239 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 42%.

Table 1: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	649
Number of invites (valid emails)	573
Number of responses (surveys completed)	239
Response rate	42%

3.1.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

To describe the profiles of the surveyed organisations, we look at the types of organisations, the years in operation regarding food distribution, the size of the organisation and associations.[16]

Types of organisations

Table 2: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	71.1%
Governmental organisations	15.1%
Other	12.6%
Not for-profit organisations	98.3%
For-profit organisations	0.8%
Other	0.8%
Not faith-based organisations	54.8%
Faith-based organisations	42.3%

71.1% of the respondents indicated that their organisation is non-governmental. 15.1% of the respondents indicated that their organisation is governmental. Almost all organisations surveyed are not for-profit (98.3%). Finally, the organisations are slightly more likely to be not faith-based than faith-based.[17]

Age of the food distribution

Table 3: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[18]	Average	Median	Min	Max

16 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

17 Table 2 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

18 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis. In the case of Belgium, this is one respondent.

How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	186	32	25	0	167

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 186 organisations. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation was 32 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from the beginning of 2020, while the two oldest have been operating for 167 years. What is striking about the organisations surveyed in Belgium is that there are a number of organisations that have been providing food aid for a very long time. For 16 organisations, the distribution began in 1950 or earlier. In 10 organisations, food aid has been distributed for more than 100 years.

Size of the organisation

We determine the size of the organisation through two variables: ‘work force (at the beginning of 2020)’ and ‘supported households (in 2019)’.[19][20]

Table 4: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	222	25	20	1	600
Full-time employees	53	5	3	1	20
Part-time employees	54	3	2	1	26

Table 5: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min	Max
Supported households receiving food aid	220	367	133	5	11058

With respect to work force, almost all organisations (93.0%) worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 25 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 600. The maximum figure is a single figure, the others are figures from 5 up to 81. More than 20% of the organisations also reported having had full-time or part-time employees. On average, these organisations employed 5 full-time and 3 part-time employees each. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 20 full-time and 26 part-time employees worked at the organisations. 59% of the organisations with part-time employees also employed one or more full-time employees, meaning that the majority of the organisations with employees had both part-time and full-time employees.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 220 organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 367 households were supported, a minimum of 5 and a maximum of reportedly over 11000. There are 11 more entries with more than 1000 supported households, however, the majority of organisations (95%) reported a number of ≤800 supported households.

19 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

20 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

Associations

We asked the respondents about their organisation's associations with other entities.[21] Over 30% of the respondents indicated that they were associated with a welfare organisation (e.g. Caritas, Red Cross). Over 20% indicated that they were associated with a public agency. Respondents also indicated being associated with other organisations not mentioned here (13.4%), with a private charity or foundation (7.9%), a church/mosque/synagogue or other religious institutions (6.7%). Only 2.9% of the respondents indicated not being associated with any other organisation.

3.1.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

To examine the relationship between food aid and the welfare state arrangement, we address the kinds of support and how to access them, sources of support and links to welfare state actors, how potential users become aware of the food aid services and the levels of demand as well as user profiles.[22]

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

To determine the types of support provided by the organisations before the pandemic we use the variables 'Food (before the COVID-19 crisis)', 'Non-food support (before the COVID-19 crisis)'[23] and 'Importance of food distribution within the organisation (before the COVID-19 crisis)'.[24]

Most of the organisations (95.4%) reported having offered **food products/groceries** (for free or at a low price) before the crisis. 22.6% offered **home delivery service**. 17.6% gave out **prepared meals** (cold or warm dishes for free or at a low price). 7.9% also gave out **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets or social shops/restaurants, electronic cheque cards for food, or similar). Significantly more than half of the organisations (57.7%) also provided other types of support than food aid.

Most of the organisations that indicated having provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid offered clothing (79.0%) and referred food aid users to competent services providing advice on social rights (76.8%). Many organisations also acted as a social meeting place/coffee corner for food aid recipients (47.8%). Furthermore, organisations provided advice on social rights themselves (45.7%), furniture (37.0%), advice on food preparation and storage (31.2%), advice on managing a household budget/ debt counselling (26.1%), psychological/ therapeutic

21 The question was a multiple response question. In our analysis, we refer to the percentages per case, which means that each of the respective percentages is related to the total number of respondents. In the following, we proceeded in this way for all multiple response questions on the questionnaire.

22 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

23 The variables 'Food' and 'Non-food support' are related to multiple response questions.

24 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

support (21.0%), cooking classes (21.0%), language classes (10.9%), advice regarding nutrition (8.7%), and shelter (8.0%). One third of the respondents (25.4%) also stated that they offered other forms of non-food support not mentioned above.

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/meals (for free or at a low price) was the main or a side activity of the organisation before the crisis, 73.2% of the organisations offering non-food support stated that food distribution had been their main activity. 15.9% said it had been their side activity and 10.9% said it had been neither their main nor their side activity. This means that for most of these organisations, food distribution was the most important form of support overall.

Accessibility of food aid

To determine the accessibility of food aid before the COVID-19 crisis we use the variables 'Allowed frequency (in 2019)', 'Necessity of proof of need (in 2019)' and 'Types of proof of need (in 2019)'[25].[26]

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, the vast majority of the respondents (95.0%) indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. Only a small percentage of organisations (4.6%) explicitly stated that they had no restrictions in place concerning the allowed frequency of support. Most organisations (25.1%) indicated that supported households had generally been allowed to receive food aid once a month. Others (24.7%) indicated that the allowed frequency of support had been once every two weeks. The third most frequently selected option by organisations was once a week (23.4%). Still 14.2% of the organisations reported that they had allowed food aid to households several times a week. Some respondents (5.0%) indicated having different numbers of times for different user groups.

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**', most of the respondents, around two-thirds (75.3%), reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also some organisations (16.7%) indicating that new users did not have to prove their need. A small number of organisations (6.3%) indicated that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

Regarding the organisations that required proof of need from all or some users, we can state in terms of possible "**types of proof of need**", that most organisations (80.5%) accepted a referral from a public agency. Furthermore, 42.6% of the respondents allowed a referral by a frontline professional, 36.4% accepted proof of social assistance benefits, 33.8% allowed proof of unemployment benefits, 31.3% acknowledged proof of inadequate income and 12.3% accepted proof of student or apprentice aid. Some organisations (15.4%) indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof.

25 The variable 'Types of proof of need (in 2019)' is related to a multiple response question.

26 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

We distinguish between two means in which the organisations were supported before the pandemic by using the variables 'Non-governmental sources of support (before the COVID-19 crisis)' and 'Governmental sources of support (before the COVID-19 crisis)'.[27] Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[28]

In general, all organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources prior to the COVID-19 crisis. 90% of them stated that they had also received frequent support through governmental sources.

Non-governmental sources of support

While all organisations stated that they had received some form of support through non-governmental sources, the data shows that it depends very much on the form of support as to which of the non-governmental actors are predominant.

- Most organisations (96.7%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 87.9% of the respondents), supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (68.6%) and private individuals (54.0%). Furthermore, 25.5% of the respondents indicated private charities/foundations, 16.7% indicated churches/mosques/synagogues/other religious institutions and 8.8% indicated welfare organisations.
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 39.7% of the organisations), the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 15.5%) and private charities/foundations (indicated by 14.6%) are most frequently mentioned. However, there are also many organisations (39.3%) that reported not having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, private individuals (stated by 64.9%), private charities/foundations (indicated by 38.9%), and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (indicated by 19.7%) were the most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors. There are also some organisations (17.2%) that indicated not having received financial support from any non-governmental actor.
- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most organisations (80.8%) reported not having received any support from non-

27 Both variables are related to multiple response questions.

28 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Belgium received EUR 73.8 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid (and material assistance for children), which the country co-financed with EUR 14.3 million COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report: final report. Publications Office. This does not include additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

government donors in this regard. 5.9% of the organisations reported having received food vouchers from the National Food Bank Federation, 4.2% of the organisations indicated private charities/foundations and 3.3% supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.

- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (69.0%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. Some respondents indicated private individuals (10.0%), churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (9.2%), private charities/foundations (6.3%), National Food Bank Federation (5.4%) and welfare organisations (4.2%).
- Most of the organisations (66.1%) reported not having received **support via additional staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Those organisations that did receive this kind of support mostly indicated private individuals (28.9%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. In addition, financial support and material support (other than food) were frequent forms of support indicated by many organisations. Overall, the three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors were private individuals, the National Food Bank Federation and private charities/foundations.

Governmental sources of support

A slightly different picture can be drawn in terms of governmental sources of support. Most noticeable is the general response that 90% of the organisations in our Belgium sample received some form of support by governmental actors. But the data shows also that it depended very much on the form of support as to what extent it was provided and which of the governmental actors were predominant in that area.

- Apart from non-governmental actors, governmental actors were also indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The three most frequently mentioned governmental actors were FEAD (indicated by 58.6% of the organisations), the local government level (indicated by 35.1%) and the national government level (indicated by 10.9%). A not negligible number of organisations (20.1%) stated, however, that they had not received frequent support in terms of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (64.9%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned the local government level (29.3%).
- Frequent **financial support** was mostly provided at the local government level (indicated by 45.2% of the organisations), the regional government level (indicated by 12.1%) and the national government level (indicated by only 7.5%). For 41.1% of the organisations, however, governmental actors were not frequent donors regarding financial support.

- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most of the respondents (83.7%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable. However, a small, but not negligible number of respondents (9.2%) still reported having frequently received food vouchers from the local government level.
- For most of the respondents (65.7%), governmental actors were not frequent sources regarding provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 32.2% of the organisations indicated that they had received such support through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (73.6%) indicated that this kind of support through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 23.4%, however, received support in this regard through the local government level.

In summary, 90% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors prior to the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food donations and financial support. In addition, material support (other than food), support in terms of infrastructure, and support in terms of additional staff were frequent forms of support. In general, the local government level is the government actor most often mentioned. Regarding the provision of food, however, support through FEAD is the actor mentioned most frequently.

Governmental food aid providers

Among the surveyed organisations in Belgium are also governmental entities (15.1%). This means that governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by providing financial support to non-governmental food aid organisations, but that they are also directly involved by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that this especially applies to public job centres/social assistance centres: 74.5% of the respondents reported that, in their experience, this actor had often made potential users aware of food aid services.[29] Furthermore, 36.4% of the respondents indicated social work organisations. 31.0% named municipality/city as an actor that often makes potential users aware of food aid services.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

Almost 70% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 13% of the organisations reported that demand had been higher than their possible supply and 11.3% reported that demand had been

29 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

lower than their potential supply.[30] This means that the majority of organisations had generally been able to meet the demand for food aid that they were facing in 2019. But more than 1 in 8 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid through their services.

In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[31], an average of 367 households were supported, a minimum of 5 and a maximum of reportedly over 11000 (*see Table 5:*). The maximum number is an outlier within the sample. There are 11 more entries with more than 1000 supported households, however, the majority of organisations (95%) reported a number of supported households ≤800.

Demand from specific user groups

To gain more information about the profiles of food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, we asked the respondents about their experiences regarding the demand from specific user groups (in 2019). Here we distinguished between three categories: household types, income of households and other vulnerable groups[32].[33]

Table 6: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	45,2%	33,1%	13,0%	1,3%	7,5%
Single parents with dependent children	63,2%	21,3%	6,3%	2,1%	7,1%
Couples without dependent children	19,2%	41,8%	27,2%	4,6%	7,1%
Couples with dependent children	57,7%	23,4%	8,4%	3,3%	7,1%
Other household types	16,3%	31,8%	21,3%	10,0%	20,5%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Belgium it can be said that the user group with a high demand in 2019 were particularly **single parents with dependent children** (according to 63.2% of the respondents) and **couples with dependent children** (according to 57.7% of the respondents). Furthermore, according to 45.2% of the respondents, **singles without dependent children** were also a user group with a high demand in 2019.

Table 7: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	9,2%	23,4%	47,3%	5,9%	14,2%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	37,7%	22,2%	15,9%	6,3%	18,0%
Households in which unemployment benefit is the main source of income	48,1%	24,3%	9,2%	1,7%	16,7%

30 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

31 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

32 The categories 'high demand' and 'very high demand' were grouped together as 'high demand' and the categories ‘little demand’ and ‘very little demand’ were grouped together as ‘little demand’ for all analyses.

33 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	68,6%	13,8%	1,7%	1,7%	14,2%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	23,8%	30,1%	24,3%	5,9%	15,9%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	33,9%	34,3%	13,0%	2,5%	16,3%
Households without any income	39,3%	18,8%	15,5%	7,5%	18,8%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income which was indicated by 68.6% of the respondents. Furthermore, 48.1% of the respondents stated that there had been a high demand from households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income. A high demand from households **without any income** was indicated by 39.3% of the respondents.

Table 8: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/apprentices	4,6%	13,0%	43,9%	27,2%	11,3%
People with disabilities	5,0%	26,8%	46,4%	9,6%	12,1%
Migrated people (including refugees)	46,4%	21,3%	14,6%	8,8%	8,8%
Homeless people	16,7%	18,0%	32,2%	23,4%	9,6%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) were mentioned the most (by 46.4% of the respondents). On the other hand, the demand from **people with disabilities** as well as from **students/apprentices** in 2019 was low (according to 46.4% and 43.9% of the respondents respectively). With regard to **homeless people**, 32.2% of the organisations surveyed experienced little demand, 16.7% of the organisations, however, experienced a high demand from this vulnerable group in 2019.

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[34] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems paying their running costs (63.6% of the respondents) as well as problems paying unexpected expenses (62.8% of the respondents). Furthermore, 59.4%% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had at some point experienced debt. 51.9% of the respondents said that many users had experienced problems providing food for themselves . Concerning the experience of homelessness, however, 22.2% of the respondents assumed that few of their supported households had ever experienced it and, furthermore, 23.8% of the respondents believed that none of their users had ever experienced homelessness. Still

34 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories ‘few’ and ‘very few’ were grouped together as ‘few’ for the purpose of the analysis.

18.4% of the respondents indicated that, in their assessment, many of their supported households had at some point experienced homelessness.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, 89.1% of the respondents answered that the organisation had been important with regard to users' general food supply.[35] Furthermore, 81.2% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 63.6% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users in offering a means of social contact. 41.0% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.1.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

To shed light on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on food aid, we examine crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level, additional or special support, the accessibility of food aid during the crisis and crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups.[36]

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[37]: 44.8% of the respondents stated that it was difficult to ensure **safe working conditions**. 34.7% stated that it was difficult to ensure the **overall operability of food distribution**. However, 28.5% stated that this aspect was easy to ensure. Also, 40.2% of the respondents said it had been easy to **meet the demand for food aid**, compared to 23.4% of the respondents who said it had been difficult for their organisation. A similar picture emerges concerning the food **supply based on donations and other sources**: 45.2% of the respondents said that this had been easy to meet, compared to 21.3% who said that it had been difficult for their organisation.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, a large proportion of food aid organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

35 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

36 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

37 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. Only 12.6% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

41.4% of the respondents stated that they had made changes regarding the **volume of food distributed**. 57.6% of these respondents stated that ‘the current volumes of food have increased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis’. Still, 19.2% of them indicated that ‘the current volumes of food have decreased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis’.

40.2% of the respondents said they had **extended opening hours**. 17.2% of the respondents indicated, however, that they had **reduced** them. 6.3% of the respondents said their organisation had been closed or still was closed due to the crisis.

25.1% spoke of a change in **home delivery**. Of these respondents, 35.0% said that their organisation had not provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, their organisation had introduced this service and offered it for a period of time and then stopped offering it. 30.0% of them said that their organisation had already provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, ‘the current service of home delivery has **increased** compared to the time before the crisis’. 6.7% of them indicated, however, that their organisation had already provided home delivery before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, ‘the current service of home delivery has decreased compared to the time before the crisis’.

Slightly more than half of the organisations surveyed (53.1%) experienced a change in terms of the **number of staff** members due to the crisis. Of these organisations, 52.0% reported that the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had decreased and, on the other hand, 29.9% reported that the number of volunteers not belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had increased.[38]

Additional or special support

To examine additional or special support of the organisations due to the crisis, we differentiate between additional or special support via non-governmental actors and additional or special support via governmental actors.[39]

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 57.3% of the respondents. Private individuals were the main donors. In particular, there was additional/special support in the form of food, materials and financial resources.

38 The categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories ‘increased’ and ‘very much increased’ were grouped together as ‘increased’ for all analyses.

39 We have proceeded in the same way in all country cases.

- Support in form of **food** was received by 54.7% of these respondents from private individuals, by 48.9% from the National Food Bank Federation, and by 39.4% from supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.
- **Material support** was not applicable to 46.0% of these respondents. When it was applicable, private individuals were reported as donors (by 30.7%).
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 57.7%), as well as from private charities/foundations (for 44.5%).
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/special support from non-governmental donors since over 80% indicated that this form was not applicable for their organisation.
- The same applies for additional/special support through provision of **infrastructure**. Here, 73.0% stated that this form was not applicable to their organisation.
- Interestingly, 31.4% reported that they had received support in the form of **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 65.0%, however, this additional form of support was not applicable.

71.5% of the respondents that received additional/special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis. 4.4% stated that, overall, their organisation had received less support.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For nearly 70% of the respondents, additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors. The local level and FEAD are particularly noteworthy in this context. In particular, there was additional/special support in the form of food and financial resources.

- Regarding **food**, 42.5% indicated the local level and 23.8% FEAD. However, 36.9% indicated that this form of additional/special support was not applicable to their organisation.
- **Material support** was not applicable for 60.0%. If it was applicable, the local level was indicated (by 33.1%).
- **Financial support** came from the local level for 48.8% and from the regional level for 21.9%.
- Support from government actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable to most (81.9%). When it was applicable, the local level was indicated (by 10.0%).
- Support in the form of **infrastructure** provision was also provided by the local level (for 26.9%). However, more than 70% indicated that this form of additional support was not applicable.

- The same applies with regard to support from **additional staff**. Here, too, the local level is relevant (for 30.6%). 66.3% stated that this additional form was not applicable.

83.8% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, about 70% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis. 21.8% said, however, that their organisation had increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid for all or some households.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 63.2% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 26.8% of the respondents said that their organisation had made proof of need requirements more flexible due to the crisis.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While almost 70% of the respondents had stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, only about 42% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. On the other hand, some 34% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 had been higher than the organisation’s possible supply.[40] In comparison, only 13% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020[41] was 11.7% higher compared to 2019.

Changes with respect to user groups

Almost half of the respondents (49.8%) said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. 31.0% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 25.5% said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 9: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	34,5%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	53,6%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	43,6%

40 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

41 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	58,2%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	22,7%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	24,5%
Households without any income	39,1%
Students/apprentices	26,4%
People with disabilities	6,4%
Migrated people (including refugees)	33,6%
Homeless people	21,8%
Other	5,5%

Many of these respondents that experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis indicated households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (58.2% of the respondents), households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (53.6% of the respondents), households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (43.6% of the respondents).[42] Furthermore, 39.1% of the respondents indicated households **without any income**, 34.5% of the respondents, however, indicated households in which **paid work** was the main source of income.

Additionally, 33.6% of the respondents recognised an increase/a new demand from **migrated people** (including refugees) and 26.4% of the respondents indicated **students/apprentices**. 21.8% of the respondents indicated **homeless people**.

3.2 Germany

In Germany, most food aid organisations operate under the term *Tafeln* – which translates as *Table* – and are organised within the National Food Bank Federation ('Tafel Deutschland e.V.'). It is the umbrella organisation most food aid organisations in Germany are affiliated with. It is made up of various non-governmental associations ('Vereine') and charity organisations. In 2020, a total of 962 local food aid organisations were affiliated with the Federation and food distribution was carried out at more than 2000 distribution points.

The study's target population in Germany was defined as the total number of local organisations and distribution points affiliated with the Federation in 2020. A corresponding contact list of these locations from 20/03/2020 was taken as a sampling frame of the study.

The German survey took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021. The questionnaire was sent out by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics.

In the end, we were able to contact 838 locations via a valid e-mail address. There was a total of 88 respondents. 73 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed

42 The question on more details about an increase in demand among specific or new user groups was a multiple response question.

questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 9%.

Table 10: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	890
Number of invites (valid emails)	838
Number of responses (surveys completed)	73
Response rate	9%

3.2.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 11: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	87.7%
Governmental organisations	2.7%
Other	6.8%
Not for-profit organisations	94.5
For-profit organisations	1.4
Other	2.7
Not faith-based organisations	87.7
Faith-based organisations	12.3

87.7% of the respondents indicated that their organisation is non-governmental. 2.7% stated that their organisation is governmental.[43] Most organisations surveyed (94.5%) are not for-profit. 87.7% of the organisations are not faith-based, whereas 12.3% are faith-based.[44]

Age of the food distribution

Table 12: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[45]	Average	Median	Min	Max
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	70	17	16	2	26

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 70 organisations. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation

43 This information has to be considered as false. The German Tafel are associations (Vereine) and charity organisations. Even in cases with links to governmental actors, they are not themselves governmental actors. It can only be speculated that respondents made a mistake while filling in the questionnaire or they actually understand themselves as governmental.

44 Table 11 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

45 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis.

was 17 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2018, The oldest one from 1994.

Size of the organisation

Table 13: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	73	79	55	6	480
Full-time employees	22	4	3	1	16
Part-time employees	32	5	2	1	70
Staff from special work programs	41	9	5	1	40

Table 14: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Supported households receiving food aid	68	1121	350	25	25000

With respect to work force, all organisations of the sample worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 79 volunteers working for the organisations, with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 480. The maximum figure is an outlier. However, there are also 8 organisations that gave numbers between 150 and 280. More than 30% of the respondents also reported having had full-time employees with an average of 4 employees. Moreover, more that 40% of the respondents indicated part-time employees with an average of 5 employees. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 16 full-time and 70 part-time employees worked at the organisations. Additionally, more than half of the sample organisations (56.2%) worked with staff from special work programs[46], with an average of 9 people. There was a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 40 people working at the organisations.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 68 organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 1121 households were supported, a minimum of 25 and a maximum of reportedly 25000. The maximum number is an outlier within the sample. There are 11 more entries with more than 1000 supported households, however, the majority (82.4%) reported a number of ≤800 supported households.

Associations

Generally, all respondents indicated that their organisation was associated with other organisation(s). Over 30% of the respondents stated that their organisation was associated with a welfare organisation (e.g. Caritas, Red Cross). Only 2.7% indicated a church/mosque/synagogue/other religious institutions and 1.4% private charity/foundation. No respondent of the sample indicated an association with a public agency.

46 As special working programs within the German context we understand jobs that are part of schemes for people that are unemployed. The jobs are often part of the charity sector. On top of the unemployment benefits people receive a very low symbolical “payment” (for example 1€/hour).

3.2.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

All respondents indicated that their organisation had provided **food products/groceries** (for free or at a low price) before the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, 16.4% of the organisations also distributed **prepared meals** and 13.7% offered **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets or social shops/restaurants, electronic cheque cards for food, or similar). 38.4% of the respondents also stated that they had offered **home delivery** services for food aid.

Interestingly, 30.1% of the sample organisations also provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid. In the following, we present the results for N>5. The majority (77.3%) of the organisations offered clothing. Additionally, half of the organisations used their facilities also as a social meeting place/coffee corner for the food aid users. Furthermore, 40.9% referred food aid users to competent services providing advice on social rights and 36.4% offered advice on social rights themselves. 31.8% gave food aid users advice on food preparation and storage, 27.3% offered advice on managing a household budget/debt counselling and 27.3% gave cooking classes to food aid users.

For the majority (77.3%) of the organisations that indicated having also offered non-food support, however, food aid distribution remained the organisation's main activity.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, 93.2% of the respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. More than half of these organisations (56.2%) indicated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid once a week. Another 30% indicated that the allowed frequency of support was several times a week.

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need'**, most of the respondents (82.2%) reported that, generally, all new users in 2019 had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also some organisations (11.0%) indicating that new users did not have to prove their need. A small proportion of organisations (6.8%) indicated that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

Regarding the organisations that required proof of need from all or some users, we can state in terms of possible "**types of proof of need**", that most organisations (92.3%) accepted proof of social assistance benefits. Furthermore, 78.5% of the respondents allowed a referral from a public agency, 76.9% accepted a receipt of unemployment benefits as proof, 63.1% allowed proof of inadequate income, 44.6% acknowledged student or apprentice aid and 32.3% accepted a referral from a frontline professional as proof of need. Some organisations (16.9%) indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, all organisations within the German sample frequently received some form of support from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. 72.6% of the respondents stated that they had also received frequent support through governmental actors. Support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is not relevant for the German sample, as FEAD is only used for non-food social inclusion measures in Germany.

Non-governmental sources of support

While all organisations stated that they had received some form of support through non-governmental actors, the data shows that it depends on the form of support as to which non-governmental actors are predominant.

- Almost all organisations (98.6%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (indicated by 91.8% of the respondents), private individuals (76.7%) and the National Food Bank Federation (71.2%). Furthermore, 28.8% of the respondents indicated churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. and 17.8% indicated private charities/foundations.
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 65.8% of the organisations), the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 45.2%) and private charities/foundations (indicated by 26.0%) are most frequently mentioned. However, 19.2% reported having received no form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, private individuals (stated by 87.7%), private charities/foundations (indicated by 50.7%), and the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 41.1%) were the most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors.
- 63% of the organisations frequently received **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar) from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. 37.0% of the organisations indicated the National Food Bank Federation as a frequent donor. 20.5% of the respondents reported having received food vouchers from supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses and 17.8% of the organisations indicated private individuals.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), more than half of the organisations (53.4%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. In cases in which organisations received this kind of support from non-governmental actors, the most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors were private charities/foundations (by 17.8%), private individuals (by 15.1%) and the National Food Bank Federation (by 15.1%).

- 63% of the organisations frequently received **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Primarily private individuals were indicated here (by 58.9% of the respondents).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. Furthermore, many organisations indicated financial support and material support (other than food) as frequent forms of support. But for many of the organisations food vouchers and support in the form of additional staff were also frequent forms of support from non-governmental actors. Overall, private individuals were most frequently indicated as a source of non-governmental support. Thereafter, the most frequently mentioned actors are the National Food Bank Federation and supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.

Governmental sources of support

- Generally, 32.9% of the sample organisations frequently received **food donations** from a governmental actor before the COVID-19 crisis. The most frequently mentioned governmental actor was the local government level (indicated by 13.7% of the organisations). Some organisations (8.2%) indicated the regional level, a few (4.1%) mentioned the national level.
- Concerning frequent **material support** (other than food), 52.3%, indicated one or more governmental actors. The most frequently mentioned governmental actor was the local government level (indicated by 30.1% of the organisations). 15.1% of the organisations indicated the regional level, 8.2% the national level.
- Frequent **financial support** by governmental actors was indicated by 52.4% of the organisations. It was mostly provided by the local government level (indicated by 26.0% of the organisations). Furthermore, support in this respect came from the regional level (indicated by 16.4%) and for a few (6.8%) from the national level.
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most of the respondents (86.3%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable. Organisations for which this kind of support applied, primarily stated that they did not know the donor (by 9.6% of the organisations).
- For most of the respondents (75.7%), governmental actors were not frequent sources regarding any provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 19.2% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, too, governmental actors were not frequent sources of support for most of the organisations (90.4%).

In summary, 72.6% of the German sample organisations frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of financial support and material support. In general, the local government level is the most often mentioned governmental actor.

Governmental food aid providers

According to 2.7% (N=2) of the respondents, there are also state actors among the organisations surveyed. However, it can rather be assumed that all the organisations surveyed are members of the same umbrella organisation and should therefore be considered exclusively as non-governmental entities. Even in cases with links to governmental actors, they are not themselves governmental actors.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users became aware of the organisations' food aid services before the COVID-19 crisis, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that their users were often made aware of food aid services through social work organisations (indicated by 52.1% of the respondents), the municipality/city (indicated by 53.4%) and, furthermore, public job centres/social assistance centres (indicated by 52.1%).[47]

Demand and user profiles

General demand

78.1% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. However, 15.1% of the organisations reported that the demand had been higher than their possible supply.[48] Only 4.1% of the organisations reported that the demand had been lower than their potential supply. This means that the majority of organisations were generally able to meet the demand for food aid that they were facing in 2019. But more than 1 in 6 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid through their services.

In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[49], an average of 1121 households were supported, a minimum of 25 and a maximum of reportedly over 25000 (*see Table 14:*). The maximum number is an outlier within the sample. There are 11 more entries with more than 1000 supported households, however, the majority (82.4%) reported a number of ≤800 supported households.

Demand from specific user groups

To gain more information about the profiles of food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, we asked respondents about their experiences regarding the demand from specific user groups (in 2019). Here we distinguished between three categories: household types, income of households and other vulnerable groups.[50]

Table 15: Demand by household types in 2019

47 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.
48 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' for all analyses.
49 Selected cases: Only values from 1.
50 The categories 'high demand' and 'very high demand' were grouped together as 'high demand' and the categories 'little demand' and 'very little demand' were grouped together as 'little demand' for all analyses.

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	46.6%	37.0%	5.5%	1.4%	9.6%
Single parents with dependent children	50.7%	32.9%	5.5%	0.0%	11.0%
Couples without dependent children	20.5%	50.7%	15.1%	1.4%	12.3%
Couples with dependent children	43.8%	38.4%	5.5%	0.0%	12.3%
Other household types	13.7%	31.5%	27.4%	2.7%	24.7%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Germany, it can be said that the user group with a high demand in 2019 were particularly **single parents with dependent children** (according to 50.7% of the respondents), **singles without dependent children** (according to 46.6% of the respondents) and **couples with dependent children** (according to 43.8% of the respondents).

Table 16: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	8.2%	21.9%	39.7%	9.6%	20.5%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	9.6%	24.7%	26.0%	17.8%	21.9%
Households in which unemployment benefit is the main source of income	30.1%	26.0%	21.9%	5.5%	16.4%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	76.7%	13.7%	0.0%	0.0%	9.6%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	54.8%	28.8%	4.1%	0.0%	12.3%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	23.3%	31.5%	23.3%	2.7%	19.2%
Households without any income	32.9%	20.5%	16.4%	5.5%	24.7%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance was** the main source of income (indicated by 76.7% of the respondents). Furthermore, 54.8% of the respondents stated that there had been a high demand from households in which **pension** was the main source of income.

Table 17: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/apprentices	4.1%	16.4%	42.5%	26.0%	11.0%
People with disabilities	19.2%	27.4%	32.9%	8.2%	12.3%
Migrated people (including refugees)	78.1%	8.2%	5.5%	0.0%	8.2%
Homeless people	16.4%	24.7%	30.1%	19.2%	9.6%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) were mentioned the most (by 78.1% of the respondents).

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[51] Many respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems paying their running costs (42.5% of the respondents) as well as problems paying unexpected expenses (37.0% of the respondents). Furthermore, 41.1% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had experienced problems supplying themselves with food. 34.2% of the respondents said that many users had experienced debt. Concerning the experience of homelessness, however, 26.0% of the respondents assumed that few of their supported households had ever been homeless. Still 9.6% of the respondents indicated that, in their assessment, many of their supported households had at some point experienced homelessness.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, almost all organisations (98.6% of the respondents answered that the organisation had been important with regard to users' general food supply.[52] Furthermore, most of the respondents (93.2%) indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 74.0% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users in offering a means of social contact. 31.5% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.2.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[53]: 64.4% of the respondents stated that it was difficult to ensure **safe working conditions**. 60.3% stated that it had been difficult for their organisation with respect to the **overall operability of food distribution**. Furthermore, 38.4% stated that it had been difficult for their organisation **to meet the demand for food aid**. However, for 24.7% of the respondents this aspect was rather easy to ensure. For 24.7% of the organisations, it had been

51 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

52 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

53 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses.

difficult with respect to the food supply based on donations and other resources. In contrast, for 35.6% of the organisations, this aspect had been rather easy to meet.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, a large proportion of the food aid organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. Only 12.3% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

42.5% of the respondents stated that they had made changes concerning the **volume of food distributed**. Of these respondents (N=31), more than half (54.8%) stated that 'the current volumes of food have decreased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis'. For 12.9% of these organisations, in contrast, 'the current volumes of food have increased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis'.

37.0% of the respondents said they had made changes with regard to **home delivery** of food aid due to the crisis. Of these organisations (N=27), the most (59.3%) stated that their organisation had already provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis, but that, due to the crisis, the current service of home delivery had **increased** compared to the time before the crisis. Furthermore, still 22.2% of these organisations indicated that their organisation had not provided home delivery before the crisis, but that , due to the crisis, they had **introduced** this service (and that it was still being continued).

31.5% of the respondents indicated that their food distribution had been **closed** due to the crisis. Of these organisations (N=22), most (59.1%) had to close their food distribution up to 4 weeks. Furthermore, almost 1 in 7 organisations had to close its food distribution for six weeks. When asked if food aid users were able to access food aid elsewhere during the closure of food distribution, 36.0% of the respondents answered the question with "no". 24.0% confirmed, indicating other non-governmental actors (e.g. other food aid organisations/distribution points, welfare organisations, private charities, church).

30.1% of the organisations surveyed indicated that they had **extended opening hours**, while 23.3% of the organisations had **reduced them**.

63.0% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced a change concerning the **number of staff members**. Of these organisations (N=46), 71.8% reported that the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had decreased, and, on the other hand, 36.9% stated that the number of volunteers not belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had increased.[54]

54 The categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories 'increased' and 'very much increased' were grouped together as 'increased' for all analyses.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 78.1% of the respondents. Private individuals were the main donors. In particular, there was additional/special support in the form of financial support.

- Support in form of **food** was received by 63.2% of these respondents (N=57) from private individuals, by 43.9% from supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses, and by 33.3% from the National Food Bank Federation.
- **Material support** (other than food) came primarily from private individuals (for 52.6% of the respondents), the National Food Bank Federation (for 47.4% of the respondents) and private charities/ foundations (for 24.6% of the respondents).
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 77.2% of the respondents), as well as from private charities (for 56.1% of the respondents) and the National Food Bank Federation (for 42.1% of the respondents).
- Overall, **food vouchers** were a frequent form of additional/special support for 63.2% of the respondents (N=57). 26.3% of the respondents mentioned the National Food Bank Federation as donor, 21.3% of the respondents indicated private individuals and 17.5% supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.
- For most respondents (61.4%), additional/special support through provision of **infrastructure** by non-governmental actors was not applicable. Still, 14.0% indicated private individuals and private charities/foundations respectively.
- Interestingly, 57.9% of the respondents reported that they had received support by **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 35.1%, however, this additional form of support from non-governmental actors was not applicable.

78.9% of the respondents that had received additional/special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis. Only 3.5% of the organisations received less. 17.5% stated that, overall, their organisation had received neither more nor less support than before the crisis.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 28.8% of the respondents, additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.

- Regarding **food**, however, 61.9% indicated that this form of additional/special support from governmental actors was not applicable. 19.0% of the respondents indicated the local government level and the regional government level respectively.

- **Material support** was also not applicable for 61.9%. 23.8% of the respondents mentioned the local government level, 14.3% indicated the regional government level.
- **Financial support** came from the regional level (for 38.1% of the respondents) as well as from the local level (for 33.3% of the respondents) and the national level (for 23.8%).
- Support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable for most respondents (85.7%).
- Support in the form of **infrastructure** provision was provided by the local government level (for 33.3% of the respondents). However, 66.7% of the respondents indicated that this form of additional support from governmental actors was not applicable.
- Concerning **additional staff**, too, this form of support from governmental actors was not applicable for most of the organisations (90.5%).

To sum up, financial support was the most frequent form of additional/special support from governmental sources to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. The supportive actor most frequently mentioned was the local government level.

Furthermore, 90.5% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 91.8% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 69.9% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 21.9% of the respondents said that their organisation had made proof of need requirements more flexible.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 78.1% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, only 47.9% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. 42.2% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 had been higher than the possible supply of the organisation.[55] In comparison, 15.1% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. Despite a higher demand in 2020 compared to the time before the crisis, the average number of households supported in 2020[56] remained more or less the same compared to 2019.

55 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' for all analyses.

56 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Changes with respect to user groups

34.2% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. 30.1% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 19.2% said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 18: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	17.2%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	55.2%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	41.4%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	41.4%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	37.9%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	6.9%
Households without any income	24.1%
Students/apprentices	17.2%
People with disabilities	3.4%
Migrated people (including refugees)	41.4%
Homeless people	20.7%
Other	10.3%

Many of these respondents (N=29) that experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis indicated households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (55.2% of the respondents), households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (41.4% of the respondents), households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (41.4% of the respondents) and households in which **pension** was the main source of income (37.9% of the respondents).

Additionally, 41.4% of the respondents recognised an increase/a new demand from **migrated people** (including refugees), 20.7% mentioned **homeless people** and 17.2% **students/apprentices**.

3.3 Hungary

In Hungary, there are more than 400 local food aid organisations/food distribution points (non-governmental entities and municipalities) that are partners of the National Food Bank Federation ('Magyar Élelmiszerbank Egyesület').[57] Also municipalities, partly associated with the Fed-

57 https://www.elelmiszerbank.hu/?Lang=en

eration, are important providers of food aid. Municipalities, the Federation and other non-governmental organisations, e.g. Caritas, are also responsible for implementing the food aid programme by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in Hungary[58].

While obtaining a complete list of Federation partner organisations was possible, obtaining a complete list of municipalities providing food aid was not. However, we had access to the complete list of FEAD partner organisations, also including municipalities not on the Federation's list. Therefore, the sampling frame in Hungary was defined as the full list of Federation partner organisations, complemented by the list of FEAD partner organisations not on the Federation's list.[59] The final list from 7 April 2021 contained contact data from 416 non-governmental organisations and municipalities. In the end, 315 of these units could be reached by means of a valid email address. In total, 180 of these organisations responded to the survey, 129 completed the questionnaire in full. Only completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 41%.

The Hungarian survey took place from 12 April to 25 May 2021. The questionnaire was sent out by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics.

Table 19: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	416
Number of invites (valid emails)	315
Number of responses (surveys completed)	129
Response rate	41%

3.3.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 20: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	52.7%
Governmental organisations	31.8%
Other	15.5%
Not for-profit organisations	84.5%
For-profit organisations	1.6%
Other	11.6%
Not faith-based organisations	72.9%
Faith-based organisations	25.6%

58 FEAD products are provided under the umbrella of 'RSZTOP' (Rászoruló Személyeket Támogató Operatív Program = Operational Program for Persons in Need).

59 Missing email addresses were gathered by the Hungarian project partner through web research.

In the Hungarian sample, there are both non-governmental (52.7%) and governmental organisations (31.8%). Most organisations (84.5%) are not for-profit. Furthermore, there are more not faith-based organisations (72.9%) than faith-based organisations (25.6%).[60]

Age of the food distribution

Table 21: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[61]	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	117	9	6	0	34

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 117 organisations. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation was 9 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2020, while the two oldest have been operating for 34 years.

Size of the organisation

Table 22: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	71	69	12	1	1500
Full-time employees	90	45	11	1	900
Part-time employees	51	15	3	1	300
Staff from special work programs	31	25	5	1	300

Table 23: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Supported households receiving food aid	98	344	200	9	4180

With respect to work force, 55.0% organisations worked with volunteers[62] at the beginning of 2020. Of these organisations, less than 3.0% are governmental entities. On average, there were 69 volunteers working for the organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 1500. The maximum figure was indicated by two of the organisations. More than 90% of the respondents, however, filled in numbers ranging from 1 to 80. Overall, 69.8% of the organisations had full-time employees. Almost half of these organisations are non-governmental. Overall, 40% of the organisations had part-time employees. More than half of these organisations

60 Table 20 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

61 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis. This applied to two organisations within the Hungarian sample.

62 The group of volunteers could also include pupils who are obliged to do community service, because in Hungary it is compulsory for secondary school pupils to do 50 hours of community service ('Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education', https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_isn=106832&p_lang=en).

are non-governmental. With the exception of 2 respondents, organisations with part-time employees also employed full-time employees. On average, the organisations employed 90 full-time and 51 part-time employees. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 900 full-time and 300 part-time employees worked within the organisations. Additionally, 24% of the respondents indicated having employed staff from special work programs.[63] On average, these organisations employed 25 people.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 76.0% of the organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 344 households were supported, a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 4180.[64]

Associations

41.1% of the organisations were associated with a public agency. Half of these organisations are non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, 37.2% of the respondents mentioned an association with a welfare organisation, 26.4% of the respondents mentioned private charity/foundation and 17.8% of the respondents mentioned church/mosque/synagogue/other religious institutions.

3.3.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

Most organisations (89.9%) offered **food products/groceries** (for free or at a low price). Furthermore, the organisations offered **prepared meals** (cold or warm dishes for free or at a low price) (indicated by 26.4%), **home delivery** of food products (indicated by 7.8%) and **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets or social shops/restaurants, electronic cheque cards for food, or similar) (indicated by 4.7% of the respondents).

More than half of the organisations (53.5%) indicated having provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid. These organisations offered most frequently clothing (91.3%). Further types of non-food support were furniture (79.7%), referral to competent services providing advice on social rights (68.1%), advice on social rights (53.6%), psychological/therapeutic support (52.2%), advice on managing a household budget/debt counselling (43.5%), advice on food preparation and storage (30.4%), social meeting place/coffee corner (23.2%), advice regarding nutrition (21.7%), shelter (18.8%), cooking classes (11.6%) and language courses (7.2%).

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/meals was the main or side activity of the organisation before the crisis, 76.8% of the organisations offering non-food support said

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63 For example, the so called general public work scheme aiming "to activate long term unemployed people and to prevent permanent job seekers from getting out of the working life." These people might be also employed by municipalities or NGOs under the "public work scheme" (https://kozfoglalkoztatas.kormany.hu/information-on-the-current-status-of-public-work-scheme-pws-in-hungary).

64 We took outliers out of the calculation.

that food distribution had been the side activity of their organisation. Only 8.7% said food distribution had been their main activity, and 14.5% stated it had been neither their main nor their side activity. This means that for most of these organisations, food distribution was not their main form of support overall.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, 94.5% of the respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. 40.3% of the organisations indicated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid several times a week. Others (17.1%) indicated that the allowed frequency of support was once a week. The third most frequently selected option by organisations was 'a limited number of times' (11.6%).

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**', 39.5% of the respondents reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. 9.3% of the respondents stated that only some of the new users had to prove their need. Many organisations (44.2%) stated, however, that new users did not have to prove their need.

In terms of the possible '**types of proof of need'** which users had to provide, we can see that most of these organisations (54.0%) accepted social assistance benefits as proof of need. Furthermore, 49.2% of the respondents allowed proof of unemployment benefits, 47.6% accepted a referral from a frontline professional, 42.9% agreed with submitting proof of inadequate income, 30.2% acknowledged a referral from a public agency, 6.3% accepted student or apprentice aid as proof of need. Some organisations (14.3%) indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof of need not mentioned above.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, 98.4% of the organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. 47.0% of the respondents stated that they had also received frequent support through governmental sources. Regarding non-governmental organisations within the sample, 25% of the respondents indicated support through governmental sources. Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[65]

Non-governmental sources of support

- Most organisations (96.1%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors

65 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Hungary received EUR 93.8 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid (and material assistance), which the country co-financed with EUR 16.6 million COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report : final report. Publications Office. This does not include additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 89.9% of the respondents), private individuals (38.0%) and supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (27.9%).

- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 34.9% of the organisations) and private charities/foundations (indicated by 10.1%) are most frequently mentioned. However, more than half of the organisations (51.9%) reported not having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, most organisations (64.3%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors. Others mentioned mainly private individuals (24.8%).
- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most organisations 82.2% reported having received no support from non-government donors in this regard. 9.3% of the organisations reported having received food vouchers from private individuals as well as from the National Food Bank Federation.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (76.0%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. Some respondents indicated churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (6.2%) and private individuals (5.4%).
- Most of the organisations (73.6%) reported not having received **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Those organisations that did receive support in this regard mostly indicated private individuals (17.1%) and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (7.8%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. In addition, material support was a frequent form of support indicated by many organisations. Overall, most frequently mentioned as a non-governmental source of support before the crisis are private individuals.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, governmental actors were also indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The most frequently mentioned governmental actor was at the local level (indicated by 20.2% of the organisations). FEAD as a frequent source of support was mentioned by only 2.3% of the respondents. Most organisations (72.1%) stated that they had not received frequent support in the form of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (82.0%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned the local government level (13.2%).

- Concerning **financial support**, too, most of the organisations (79.8%) indicated that governmental actors were not frequent donors in this regard. Others (12.4%) indicated the local government level as a frequent source of support.
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), almost all of the respondents (94.6%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable.
- For most of the respondents (72.9%), governmental actors were also not a frequent source regarding provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 22.5% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (84.5%) indicated that support in this regard through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 12.4%, however, received this kind of support through the local level.

In summary, 47.0% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food. In general, the local government level was the most frequent governmental source of support.

Governmental food aid providers

Among the surveyed organisations in Hungary governmental entities are also active in food aid (31.8%). According to the sampling frame, these are mainly municipal facilities. Consequently, governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by providing financial support to non-governmental food aid organisations, but are also directly part of it by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that this especially applies to social work organisations: 62.0% of the organisations reported that, in their experience, this actor had often made potential users aware of food aid services. Furthermore, municipalities/cities were indicated by 35.7% of the organisations, of which half are non-governmental. Schools were mentioned by 26.4% and public job/social assistance centres by 17.1%, of which more than half are non-governmental organisations.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

40.4% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was higher than their possible supply.[66] However, almost as many (39.5%) stated that the demand had been neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 14.7% of the organisations reported that the demand had been lower than their potential supply. This means that the majority of organisations were generally able to meet the demand for food aid they were facing in 2019. But still more than 1 in 3 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid through their services in 2019.

In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[67], an average of 344 households were supported, a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 4180 (*see Table 23:*).[68]

Demand from specific user groups

Table 24: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	52.7%	20.2%	15.5%	0.0%	11.6%
Single parents with dependent children	72.1%	14.0%	1.6%	0.0%	12.4%
Couples without dependent children	28.7%	32.6%	18.6%	3.1%	17.1%
Couples with dependent children	65.9%	17.1%	3.9%	0.0%	13.2%
Other household types	45.7%	29.5%	7.8%	0.0%	17.1%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Hungary it can be said that the user groups with a high demand in 2019 were in particular **single parents with dependent children** (according to 72.1% of the respondents) and **couples with dependent children** (according to 65.9% of the respondents). Furthermore, according to 52.7% of the respondents, **singles without dependent children** were a user group with a high demand in 2019, too.

Table 25: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	40.3%	25.6%	24.8%	1.6%	7.8%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	74.4%	9.3%	3.9%	0.8%	11.6%
Households in which unemployment benefit is the main source of income	82.9%	5.4%	0.0%	0.8%	10.9%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	85.3%	3.9%	0.8%	0.0%	10.1%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	68.2%	16.3%	3.9%	0.8%	10.9%

66 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

67 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

68 We took outliers out of the calculation.

Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	79.1%	7.8%	3.9%	0.0%	9.3%
Households without any income	83.7%	3.9%	1.6%	0.0%	10.9%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand from all listed household types. In particular, the demand was high from households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (indicated by 85.3% of the respondents), households **without any income** (83.7% of the respondents) and households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (82.9% of the respondents).

Table 26: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/apprentices	17.1%	31.0%	20.9%	7.8%	23.3%
People with disabilities	50.4%	25.6%	9.3%	2.3%	12.4%
Migrated people (including refugees)	9.3%	7.0%	8.5%	31.0%	44.2%
Homeless people	51.2%	7.0%	10.1%	9.3%	22.5%
Roma	69.0%	11.6%	3.9%	3.1%	12.4%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, most frequently mentioned were **Roma people** (by 69.0% of the respondents), **homeless people** (by 51.2% of the respondents) and **people with disabilities** (by 50.4% of the respondents).

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[69] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems supplying themselves with food (66.7% of the respondents) as well as concerning debt (65.1% of the respondents). Furthermore, respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had experienced problems paying unexpected expenses (61.2% of the respondents) and even paying their running costs (60.5%). Homelessness was also mentioned by many respondents (45.0%).

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, 90.7% of the respondents answered that the organisation had been important with regard to users' general food supply.[70] Furthermore, 64.3% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects point to the importance that organisations have (according to their assessment) in terms of supporting users' basic needs.

69 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

70 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 64.3% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance), and 41.9% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in offering a means of social contact. Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other important social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.3.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[71]: More than half of the respondents (54.3%) stated that it had been difficult to **meet the demand for food aid**. 38.8% stated that it had been difficult to deal with the crisis concerning the food **supply based on donations and other sources**. However, 20.9% stated that this aspect was easy to ensure. Also, 36.4% of the respondents said it had been difficult for their organisation to ensure **safe working conditions**, compared to 34.1% of the respondents who said it had been easy.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, a large proportion of the food aid organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. Only 16.3% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

44.2% of the respondents stated that they had made changes with regard to the **volume of distributed food**. Of these respondents, 40.4% stated that the volumes of food had decreased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis. However, almost as many (38.6%) said that the volumes of food had increased for most or all supported households.

31.0% of the respondents said they had changed the service of **home delivery**. Of these respondents, 52.5% stated that their organisation had already provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, the service of home delivery had increased compared to the time before the crisis. On the contrary, 47.5% of the organisations had introduced this service in order to deal with the crisis situation. However, half of them only offered this service for a period of time and then stopped offering it.

71 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses. Furthermore, the categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories ‘increased’ and ‘very much increased’ were grouped together as ‘increased’ for all analyses.

17.8% of the organisations had **extended opening hours**. On the other hand, 13.2% of the organisations had **reduced opening hours**. Only 4.7% of the organisations were **closed** due to the crisis.

21.7% of the organisations surveyed experienced a change in terms of the **number of staff** members due to the crisis. Half of these organisations reported that, in particular, the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had decreased. Furthermore, the number of full-time employees had decreased for 53.6% of these organisations.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by only 17.1% of the organisations. These organisations are more or less equally non-governmental and governmental entities.

- Support in form of **food** was primarily received from private individuals and the National Food Bank Federation (by 59.1% of the respondents respectively) as well as from supermarket/restaurants/other businesses and welfare organisations (by 36.4% of the respondents respectively).
- **Material support** was particularly received by private individuals (by 45.5% of the respondents) and private charities/foundations (by 22.7% of the respondents). 27.3% of the respondents indicated that this form of additional/special support from non-governmental sources was not applicable for their organisation.
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 40.9% of the respondents) and private charities/foundations (for 13.6% of the respondents). However, 40.9% of the respondents indicated that this form of additional/special support by non-governmental sources was not applicable for their organisation.
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/special support from non-governmental donors since 63.6% indicated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. In the case that it was applicable, respondents primarily mentioned private individuals (by 22.7%).
- The same applies to additional/special support through provision of **infrastructure**. Here, 68.2% stated that this form was not applicable to their organisation. Others primarily mentioned private individuals (by 18.2%).
- 27.3% of the respondents reported that they had received support in terms of **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 72.7%, however, this additional/special form of support was not applicable for their organisation.

Overall, those organisations that received additional/special support from non-governmental donors to deal with the crisis primarily indicated private individuals as a source of support. This is similar to the pre-crisis indications of non-governmental support. Material support and food aid were particularly mentioned as crisis support forms.

68.2% of the respondents that received additional/special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis. 27.3% stated that, overall, their organisation had received neither more nor less support.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 16.3% of the organisations, additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors. About one third of these organisations are non-governmental entities.

- Regarding **food**, 52.4% of the respondents indicated the local government level. However, 42.9% of the respondents indicated that this form of additional/special support from governmental actors did not occur.
- **Material support** was also primarily received by the local government level (by 52.4% of the respondents). For 42.9% of the respondents, however, it was not applicable.
- **Financial support** came mainly from the local government level, too (for 47.6% of the respondents). 42.9% of the respondents, however, did not receive this type of support.
- Support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable for most respondents (81.0%). Others primarily mentioned the local government level (by 19.0% of the respondents).
- Support in the form of **infrastructure** provision was provided by the local government level (for 61.9% of the respondents). This was the only source of support mentioned by the respondents. For others (38.1%), this kind of support was not applicable.
- With regard to support in the form of **additional staff**, again, the only mentioned governmental source of support was the local government level (by 38.1%). 61.9% of the respondents stated, however, that this additional/ special kind of support was not applicable.

In summary, additional/special governmental support came almost exclusively from the local government level, especially in the form of infrastructure, food and material support. But many respondents also mentioned financial support.

57.1% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis. 38.1% stated that, overall, their organisation had received less support.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 45.0% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis. However, 44.2% also said that their organisation had increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid for all or some users. 7.0% mentioned having decreased the allowed frequency.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of its users, 60.5% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, other respondents particularly indicated that their organisation had made requirements concerning proof of need more flexible (by 24.0% of the respondents).

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 40.4% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been higher than the possible supply of the organisation, 79.1% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. [72] The average number of households supported in 2020[73] was 43.0% higher compared to 2019.

Changes with respect to user groups

59.7% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. 16.1% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 12.8% said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 27: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	22.2%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	55.6%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	50.0%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	66.7%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	50.0%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	38.9%
Households without any income	66.7%
Students/apprentices	17.4%
People with disabilities	43.5%
Migrated people (including refugees)	13.0%
Homeless people	65.2%
Roma	69.6%

72 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

73 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Other	4.3%

Many of those respondents that experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis mostly indicated households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (66.7% of the respondents), households **without any income** (66.7% of the respondents), households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (55.6% of the respondents).[74]

Additionally, an increase/a new demand was especially mentioned with regard to **Roma people** (indicated by 69.9% of the respondents) and **homeless people** (mentioned by 65.2% of the respondents).

Overall, in terms of increased/new demand due to the crisis, particularly those user groups were mentioned that had already been mentioned as user groups with high demand before the crisis.

3.4 Lithuania

In Lithuania, around 600 local food distribution points are affiliated with the National Food Bank Federation ('Maisto bankas').[75] The affiliated organisations are mainly non-governmental. In addition, other local non-governmental organisations not affiliated with the National Food Bank Federation, e.g. the Red Cross and Caritas, are also important for the distribution of charitable food aid. As far as food aid from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is concerned, this form of support is organised by the National Food Bank Federation, the Lithuanian Red Cross and municipalities.

Against this background, the sampling frame in Lithuania was defined as a complete list with food distribution points affiliated with the National Food Bank Federation (600), supplemented by a list with other relevant food aid distributing non-governmental organisations (102) and municipalities (130) not associated with the Federation. For data protection reasons, the Federation's list could not be made available to us, but the Federation agreed to send out our invitation email with the link to the survey itself.

In the end, we were able to contact 747 locations via a valid e-mail address. There was a total of 211 respondents. 142 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 20%.

The Lithuanian survey took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021. The questionnaire was sent out by email (National Food Bank Federation) and by means of an online panel through the provider Qualtrics.

Table 28: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	832

74 The question on more details about an increase in demand among specific or new user groups was a multiple response question.

75 https://www.maistobankas.lt

Number of invites (valid emails)	747
Number of responses (surveys completed)	142
Response rate	20%

3.4.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 29: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	72.5%
Governmental organisations	19.7%
Other	7.0%
Not for-profit organisations	98.6%
For-profit organisations	0.0%
Other	0.7%
Not faith-based organisations	74.6%
Faith-based organisations	21.1%

Most organisations are non-governmental (72.5%), but there also governmental organisations included in the Lithuanian sample (19.7%). Furthermore, almost all organisations are not for-profit (98.6%). There are more not faith-based organisations (74.6%) than faith-based organisations.[76]

Age of the food distribution

Table 30: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[77]	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	114	9	7.5	0	31

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 114 organisations. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation was 9 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2020, while the oldest have been operating for 31 years.

Size of the organisation

Table 31: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.

76 Table 29 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

77 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis. In Lithuania, this was the case for four organisations.

Volunteers	113	37	6	1	1400
Full-time employees	67	11	3	1	103
Part-time employees	71	5	4	1	24
Staff from special work programs[78]	26	9	4.5	1	46

Table 32: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Supported households receiving food aid	102	271	48	7	4700

With respect to work force, 80% of the organisations worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 37 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 1400. There are 2 entries with numbers over 1000. The other entries range from 1 to 200. 47.2% of the organisations also reported having had full-time employees, 50.0% had part-time employees. On average, these organisations employed 11 full-time and 5 part-time employees each. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 103 full-time and 24 part-time employees worked at the organisations. Most organisations with part-time employees were also organisations with full-time employees, meaning that the majority of the organisations with employees had both part-time and full-time employees. Interestingly, more than 70% of these organisations are non-governmental. There were also organisations with staff from special work programs (18.3%). On average, 9 people worked for these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 46.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 102 organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 271 households were supported, a minimum of 7 and a maximum of reportedly 4700. In total, there are 8 entries with figures higher than 800. The others (92.2%) range from 7 to 800.

Associations

There are associations with welfare organisations (e.g. Red Cross, Caritas) (26.1% of the organisations), public agencies (26.1% of the organisations, of which half are non-governmental), churches/ mosques/ synagogues/ other religious institutions (12.7%) and private charities/foundations (5.6%). 7.7% of the organisations are not associated with any other organisation.

3.4.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

Most organisations (83.8%) offered **food products/groceries** (for free or at a low price) before the crisis. Furthermore, 23.2% of the organisations offered **prepared meals** (warm or cold dishes, for free or at a low price) and 9.9% offered **home delivery** of food products.

[78] Special work programs in Lithuania are programs financed by a public authority, mainly employment (activation) programs implemented by municipalities.

Half of all organisations (50.7%) indicated having provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid. Of these organisations, most offered clothing (72.2% of the organisations) and a social meeting place/coffee corner (65.3% of the organisations). Other kinds of non-food support were advice on social rights (55.6% of the organisations), referral to competent services providing advice on social rights (55.6% of the organisations), psychological/therapeutic support (44.4% of the organisations), furniture (29.2% of the organisations), advice on managing a household budget/debt counselling (27.8% of the organisations), advice regarding nutrition (23.6%), advice on food preparation and storage (22.2% of the organisations), shelter (12.5% of the organisations), language courses (12.5% of the organisations) and cooking classes (8.3% of the organisations).

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/meals was the main or side activity of the organisation offering non-food support before the crisis, 44.4% of these organisations said that food distribution had been their side activity. However, as many organisations (44.4%) said it had been neither their side nor their main activity. Only 8.3% of these organisations indicated that food distribution was the main activity of their organisation.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, 93.0% of the respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. Organisations most frequently indicated that supported households had generally been allowed to receive food aid once a week (29.6% of the respondents) and several times a week (23.9% of the respondents).

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**', 27.5% of the respondents indicated that new users did not have to prove their need. However, 39.4% of the respondents reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. Furthermore, 23.2% of the organisations indicated that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

In terms of the possible '**types of proof of need'** which users had to provide, we can see that these organisations (N=89) accepted proof of receiving of social assistance benefits (55.1% of the organisations), proof of inadequate income (48.3%), proof of receiving unemployment benefits (41.6%), a referral from a frontline professional (23.6% of the organisations), a referral from a public agency (21.3% of the organisations) and proof of student or apprentice aid (10.1%). Furthermore, 20.2% of the organisations indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, 96.4% of the organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. Overall, 51.0% of the organisations (37.0% of non-governmental organisations respectively) also received frequent support through governmental sources. Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[79]

Non-governmental sources of support

- Most organisations (94.4%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 88.7% of the respondents), supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (27.5%) and private individuals (23.2%).
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 37.3% of the organisations), supermarkets/restaurant/other businesses (indicated by 12.0%) and the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 9.9%) are most frequently mentioned. However, there are also many organisations (42.3%) that reported not having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, private individuals (stated by 32.4%) were the most frequently mentioned actors, followed by supermarkets/restaurant/other businesses (indicated by 7.0%), and private charities/ foundations (indicated by 7.0%). However, half of the organisations (50.0%) did not receive financial support from any non-governmental actor prior to the crisis.
- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most organisations (90.1%) reported not having received any support from non-government donors in this regard. Few organisations reported having received food vouchers from the National Food Bank Federation (4.9% of the organisations) and supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (3.5%).
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (79.6%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. Those organisations that did receive such support mostly indicated churches/mosques/synagogues/ etc. as donors (6.3%).
- Most of the organisations (68.3%) reported not having received **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Those organisations that did receive support in this regard mostly indicated private individuals (20.4%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. In addition, both material and financial support were frequent forms of support

79 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Lithuania received EUR 77.0 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid (and basic material assistance), which the country co-financed with EUR 13.0 million COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report: final report. Publications Office. This does not include possible additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

indicated by many organisations. Overall, the three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are private individuals, the National Food Bank Federation and supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, governmental actors were also indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The most frequently mentioned governmental actors were the local government level (indicated by 19.7% of the organisations) and the FEAD (indicated by 14.1%). 63.4% of the organisations stated, however, that they had not received frequent support in terms of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (77.5%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned the local government level (15.5%).
- Frequent **financial support** from governmental sources was not applicable for most organisations (72.5%). In cases in which it was applicable, respondents most frequently mentioned the local government level (16.9%).
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), almost all respondents (95.1%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable.
- For most of the respondents (87.3%), governmental actors were not frequent sources regarding provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 9.9% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (87.3%) indicated that support in this regard through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 9.9%, however, received this kind of support through the local government level, too.

In summary, 51.0% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food. In addition, financial support was a frequent form of support for as many as one in four organisations. In general, the local government level is the governmental actor mentioned most often. In terms of the provision of food, FEAD was also a frequent source of support.

Governmental food aid providers

Among the surveyed organisations in Lithuania are also governmental entities (19.7%). These are mainly municipalities. This means that governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by giving financial support to non-governmental food aid organisations, but are also directly part of it by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that this is especially the case for social work organisations: 51.4% of the respondents reported that, in their experience, this actor had often made users aware of food aid.[80] Furthermore, 31.7% of the organisations (of which one third are non-governmental) indicated municipalities/cities, 28.2% of the organisations (of which almost all are non-governmental) named public job centres/social assistance centres.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

50.0% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 24.0% reported that the demand had been lower than their potential supply, while 22.5% of the organisations reported that the demand had been higher than their possible supply.[81] This means that the majority of organisations were generally able to meet the demand for food aid they were facing in 2019. But still over 1 in 5 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid through their services.

In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[82], an average of 271 households were supported, a minimum of 7 and a maximum of reportedly 4700 (*see Table 32:*). In total, there are 8 entries with figures higher than 800. The others (92.2%) range from 7 to 800.

Demand from specific user groups

Table 33: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	42.2%	26.1%	6.3%	4.9%	15.5%
Single parents with dependent children	54.9%	21.1%	7.7%	4.2%	12.0%
Couples without dependent children	19.0%	26.1%	21.1%	11.3%	22.5%
Couples with dependent children	50.0%	26.8%	8.5%	3.5%	11.3%
Other household types	28.9%	30.3%	12.7%	6.3%	21.8%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Lithuania it can be said that the user groups with high demand in 2019 were in particular **single parents with dependent children** (according to 54.9% of the respondents) and **couples with dependent children** (according to 50.0% of the respondents). Furthermore, according to 42.2% of the respondents, **singles without dependent children** were a user group with high demand in 2019, too.

80 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

81 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

82 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Table 34: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	17.6%	38.7%	21.1%	6.3%	16.2%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	43.7%	29.6%	7.7%	2.8%	16.2%
Households in which unemployment benefits is the main source of income	62.0%	19.0%	2.1%	1.4%	15.5%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	68.3%	16.2%	0.0%	2.1%	13.4%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	50.7%	22.5%	3.5%	4.9%	18.3%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	54.2%	21.1%	4.9%	2.1%	17.6%
Households without any income	59.2%	12.7%	7.7%	2.8%	17.6%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (indicated by 68.6% of the respondents), followed by households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (indicated by 62.0%) and households **without any income** (indicated by 59.2%).

Table 35: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/apprentices	19.0%	19.0%	21.1%	19.0%	21.8%
People with disabilities	51.4%	19.7%	9.2%	4.2%	15.5%
Migrated people (including refugees)	10.6%	9.2%	14.1%	33.1%	33.1%
Homeless people	31.7%	9.9%	12.7%	16.9%	28.9%
Roma	6.3%	9.2%	10.6%	33.1%	40.8%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **people with disabilities** were mentioned most frequently (by 51.4% of the respondents), followed by **homeless people** (mentioned by 31.7% of the respondents).

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services had experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[83] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems supplying themselves with food (indicated by 57.7% of the respondents), problems paying their running costs (indicated by 53.5% of the respondents) as well as problems paying unexpected expenses (indicated by 50.7% of the respondents). Furthermore, according to the respondents, debt (indicated by 40.1% of the respondents) and homelessness

83 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories ‘few’ and ‘very few’ were grouped together as ‘few’ for the purpose of the analysis.

(indicated by 18.3% of the respondents) were experiences that many users had made before the crisis.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 95.8% of the respondents answered that the organisation was important with regard to users' general food supply.[84] Furthermore, 83.8% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 64.8% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for users in offering a means of social contact. 64.1% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights. Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.4.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[85]: 19.0% of the respondents stated that it was difficult to ensure **safe working conditions**. However, 43.7% of the respondents stated that this aspect was rather easy to ensure for their organisation. Regarding the organisations' ability to **meet the demand for food aid**, the picture is mixed, too, as 18.3% of the respondents stated that it was difficult for their organisation, while 28.2% stated that it was rather easy. Furthermore, 12.0% of the respondents said the crisis situation had been difficult with respect to the overall food **supply coming from donations and other sources**, compared to 28.2% of the respondents who said it had been easy for their organisation.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, many food aid organisations faced difficulties keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. 28.2% of the respondents, however, stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

30.3% of the respondents stated that their organisation had made changes concerning the **volume of food distributed**. Of these organisations, 39.5% of the respondents said the

84 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

85 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses. Furthermore, the categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories 'increased' and 'very much increased' were grouped together as 'increased' for all analyses.

amount of food had decreased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis. In contrast, 16.3% of the respondents said the amount of food had increased for most or all supported households. However, 23.3% of the respondents said the amount of food had increased, but only for some supported households. On the other hand, 20.9% of the respondents stated that the amount of food had decreased only for some supported households.

16.9% of the respondents said their organisation had **extended opening hours**, whereas 14.1% of the respondents said their organisation had **reduced opening hours**. 7.0% of the organisations **had to close** due to the crisis.

14.1% spoke of a change in **home delivery** of food products. Of these respondents, most (70.0%) stated that their organisation had not provided home delivery before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, their organisation had introduced this service. Furthermore, 30.0% of these respondents said that their organisation had already provided home delivery and that they, due to the crisis, had increased the service compared to the time before the crisis.

24.6% of the organisations surveyed experienced a change in terms of the size **of staff** due to the crisis. 74.3% of these organisations reported that the number of volunteers had decreased. 34.3% reported a decrease of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group in particular. On the other hand, 25.7% reported an increase in volunteers not belonging to a COVID-risk group.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 24.6% of the respondents.

- Support in the form of **food** was most frequently received from the National Food Bank Federation (by 68.6% of these respondents) and from private individuals (by 28.6%).
- **Material support** was most frequently received from private individuals (by 22.9%) and the National Food Bank Federation (14.3%). However, for 48.6% of the organisations with additional/special support from non-governmental sources, this kind of support was not applicable.
- **Financial support** also came most frequently from private individuals (for 37.1% of the respondents), while for most organisations (51.4%) this kind of support from non-governmental sources was not applicable.
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/special support from non-governmental donors since 88.6% indicated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. Where it was applicable, supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses were mentioned most frequently (5.7%).

- The same applies to additional/special support through provision of **infrastructure**. Here, 74.3% stated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. Where it was applicable, churches/mosques/synagogues/ etc. were mentioned most frequently (11.4%).
- 22.9% reported that they had received support in terms of **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 65.7%, however, this additional form of support was not applicable.

Overall, private individuals and the National Food Bank Federation were the main non-governmental donors of additional/special support to deal with the crisis. In particular, there was additional/special support in the form of food.

Furthermore, 51.4% of the respondents that received additional/special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis. 22.9% stated that, overall, their organisation had received less support.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 11.3% of the organisations (of which most are non-governmental), additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.

- Regarding **food**, 50.0% indicated the local government level, 31.3% the national level and 18.8% FEAD.
- With respect to **material support**, the actors mentioned were also the local level (by 43.8%), the national level (by 18.8%) and FEAD (by 12.5%). For 43.8% of the organisations this kind of support was not applicable.
- **Financial support** came most frequently from the national government level (for 43.8%) and from the local level (for 43.8%).
- Support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable for most organisations (93.8%).
- Also support in the form of **infrastructure** provision was not applicable for most (93.8%).
- Regarding **additional staff**, 18.8% of the organisations received support from the local government level. For all others (81.3%) this kind of support from governmental sources was not applicable.

In summary, most frequently, there was additional/special support from the local and the national government level, mainly in the form of food and financial support.

56.6% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis. 18.8% stated that, overall, their organisation had received neither more nor less support.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 63.4% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis. 23.9% said, however, that their organisation had increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid for all or some households.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 44.4% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 36.6% of the respondents said that their organisation had made the requirements with respect to proof of need more flexible.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 50.0% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, only 35.9% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. Furthermore, 48.6% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 was higher than the possible supply of the organisation.[86] In comparison, 22.5% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020 was 9.5% higher compared to 2019.

Changes in user groups

42.3% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. Furthermore, 26.8% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 14.1% said that there was demand from new user groups. However, 26.8% of the respondents indicated no change regarding demand.

Table 36: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	35.2%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	38.9%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	61.1%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	75.9%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	44.4%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	35.2%
Households without any income	50.0%
Students/apprentices	14.8%
People with disabilities	59.3%
Migrated people (including refugees)	14.8%
Homeless people	37.0%

86 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

Other	3.7%

Most of those respondents that experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis indicated households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (75.9% of the respondents), households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (61.1% of the respondents) and households **without any income** (50.0% of the respondents).[87] Additionally, respondents recognised an increase/a new demand from **people with disabilities** (59.3% of the respondents) and **homeless people** (37.0% of the respondents) in particular.

Overall, in terms of increased/new demand due to the crisis, particularly those user groups were mentioned that had already been mentioned as user groups with high demand before the crisis.

3.5 The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there were 171 food banks with a total of 528 distribution points associated with the National Food Bank Federation ('Voedselbanken Nederland') in 2020. The food banks and distribution points are exclusively non-governmental.[88]

It was not possible to compile a complete contact list of all distribution points, mainly because they do not have an independent e-mail address but are linked to the e-mail address of a food bank. However, a complete contact list of all food banks was available to us. We considered this list as suitable for the purpose of our study, since food banks have an overview of the organisation of food aid, although they do not necessarily distribute the products themselves. Furthermore, they are the first point of contact for people seeking food aid. This means that the food banks also have an overview of the food aid users.

Therefore, the complete contact list of food banks (from 25/01/2021) was taken as a sampling frame of the study. In the end, we were able to contact 169 locations via a valid e-mail address. There was a total of 128 respondents. 87 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analyses below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 51%.

The survey took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021 and again from 28 July to 4 August 2021 (after the survey was mentioned in the Federation's newsletter). The questionnaire was sent out by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics and via email.

Table 37: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	171
Number of invites (valid emails)	169
Number of responses (surveys completed)	87
Response rate	51%

87 The question on more details about an increase in demand among specific or new user groups was a multiple response question.

88 https://voedselbankennederland.nl/

3.5.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 38: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	88.5%
Governmental organisations	0%
Other	11.5%
Not for-profit organisations	98.9%
For-profit organisations	0%
Other	1.1%
Not faith-based organisations	98.9%
Faith-based organisations	1.1%

88.5% of the respondents stated that their organisation is non-governmental.[89] There is no record of governmental organisations. This result reflects the situation in the Netherlands, where food banks and distribution points are exclusively non-governmental. 98.9% of the respondents describe their organisation as not for-profit. There is no record of for-profit organisations. Furthermore, almost all organisations in the Dutch sample (98.9%) are not faith-based.[90]

Age of the food distribution

Table 39: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[91]	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	82	13	14	1	25

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution began for 82 organisations. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation was 13 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2019, while the oldest one has been operating for 25 years.

Size of the organisation

Table 40: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	86	66	50	15	500
Full-time employees	5	46	28	2	160

89 Note: In principle, all food banks surveyed are part of the same umbrella organisation and should be considered non-profit organisations.

90 Table 38 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

91 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis.

Part-time employees	16	81	54	1	500

Table 41: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Supported households receiving food aid	83	470	120	30	19560

With respect to work force, almost all organisations (98.9%) indicated working with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 66 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 500. 5.7% of the organisations also reported having had full-time employees. 18.4% worked with part-time employees. On average, these organisations employed 46 full-time and 81 part-time employees each. 4 of the 5 organisations with full-time employees also employed one or more part-time employees.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 95.4% of the organisations. These organisations on average supported 470 households, with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of reportedly 19560. The maximum is a single figure. There are no further entries in the five-digit range, but there are still 2 entries in the four-digit range.

Associations

All organisations surveyed are associated with the National Food Bank Federation. There is only one organisation that is additionally associated with another organisation (indicated as 'other').

3.5.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

All organisations surveyed distributed **food products/ groceries** (for free or at a low price) before the crisis. 6.9% of the organisations also provided **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets or social shops/restaurants, electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), 5.7% of the organisations also distributed **prepared meals** (cold or warm dishes, for free or at a low price) and 2.3% of the organisations offered **home delivery** of food aid.

17.2% of the organisations indicated having provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid. The most frequently offered non-food support of these organisations was referring food aid users to competent services providing advice on social rights (by 93.3% of N=15). Furthermore, organisations offered clothing (by 53.3%), a social meeting place/coffee corner (by 26.7%), advice on food preparation and storage (by 26.7%), advice on social rights themselves (by 20.0%), advice on managing a household budget/ debt counselling (by 20.0%) and advice regarding nutrition (by 20.0%).

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/meals was the main or side activity of those organisations offering non-food support, too, 86.7% said that food distribution was still the main activity of their organisation.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, all respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. 87.4% of the organisations stated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid once a week. The second most frequently selected option was once every two weeks (by 9.2%).

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need'**, most of the respondents (96.6%) reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also two organisations indicating that new users did not have to prove their need.

In terms of the possible '**types of proof of need'** which users had to provide (for N=85), we can see that 54.1% of the organisations accepted a referral from a front line professional. Furthermore, 38.8% of the organisations allowed proof of inadequate income, 24.7% accepted a referral by a public agency, 21.2% allowed proof of receipt of social assistance benefits, 16.5% acknowledged proof of receipt of unemployment benefits and 8.2% accepted student or apprentice aid as proof of need. 34.1% of the organisations indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, all organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. 68.9% of the respondents stated that they had also received frequent support through governmental sources. Support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is not relevant in the case of the Dutch sample, as FEAD is only used for non-food social inclusion measures in the Netherlands.

Non-governmental sources of support

- All sample organisations regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (indicated by 95.4% of the respondents), private individuals (by 85.1% of the respondents) and the National Food Bank Federation (by 75.9%). Furthermore, 69.0% of the respondents also indicated churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. and 57.5% of the respondents indicated private charities/foundations as well.
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 46.0% of the organisations), private charities/foundations (indicated by 32.2%) and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. and (indicated by 25.3%) are most frequently mentioned. However, there are also 35.6% of the organisations that indicated not frequently having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, most organisations (90.8%) indicated private individuals. Furthermore, private charities/foundations and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. were

both indicated by two thirds of the organisations. Additionally, the National Food Bank Federation was mentioned by 40.2%.

- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), 36.8% of the organisations indicated supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses. However, for 57.5% of the organisations, food vouchers were not applicable as a frequent form of non-governmental support.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (71.3%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. Some respondents indicated private individuals (10.3%), supermarkets/restaurant/other businesses (10.3%) and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (9.2%).
- Most of the organisations (69.0%) reported not having received any **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Those organisations that did receive support in this regard mostly indicated private individuals (27.6%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors, primarily in terms of food. In addition, financial and material support were frequent forms of support indicated by many organisations. Overall, the three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are private individuals, supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, 13.8% of the organisations also indicated governmental actors as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The most frequently mentioned governmental actor was the local government level (by 11.5%). Most organisations (86.2%) stated, however, that they did not receive frequent support in the form of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (80.5%) also marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that this form of support was applicable, primarily mentioned the local government level (14.9%).
- More than half of the organisations (54.0%) frequently received **financial support** by governmental actors, mostly provided by the local government level (indicated by 50.6% of the organisations).
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), almost all respondents (95.4%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable.

- Regarding provision of **infrastructure**, too, most respondents (89.7%) marked governmental actors as not applicable as a source. However, still 10.3% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Almost all organisations (97.7%) indicated that support in this regard through governmental actors was not applicable.

In summary, 68.9% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of financial support. In general, the local government level is the governmental actor mentioned most often.

Governmental food aid providers

There are no governmental entities among the surveyed organisations in the Netherlands.

Raising awareness of food aid servicey public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their service. The results show that this is especially the case for social work organisations: 71.3% of the respondents reported that, in their experience, this actor had often made potential users aware of the food aid services.[92] Furthermore, 58.6% of the respondents indicated public job centres/social assistance centres. 32.2% of the respondents indicated municipalities/cities.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

More than half of the organisations (57.5%) experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 21.8% reported that demand had even been lower than their potential supply.[93] Some of the organisations (5.7%) reported, however, that the demand had been higher than their possible supply.

In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[94], an average of 470 households were supported, a minimum of 30 and a maximum of reportedly 19560 (*see Table 41:*). The maximum is a single figure. There are no further entries in the five-digit range, but there are still 2 entries in the four-digit range.

Demand from specific user groups

Table 42: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	39.1%	43.7%	9.2%	0.0%	8.0%

92 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

93 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

94 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Single parents with dependent children	50.6%	35.6%	5.7%	0.0%	8.0%
Couples without dependent children	11.5%	59.8%	17.2%	1.1%	10.3%
Couples with dependent children	34.5%	48.3%	9.2%	0.0%	8.0%
Other household types	5.7%	41.4%	20.7%	4.6%	27.6%

In terms of household types, for the sample in the Netherlands, it can be said that the user groups with a high demand in 2019 were in particular **single parents with dependent children** (according to 50.6% of the respondents) and **singles without dependent children** (according to 39.1% of the respondents).

Table 43: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	2.3%	26.4%	42.5%	1.1%	27.6%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	11.5%	24.1%	23.0%	4.6%	36.8%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	28.7%	25.3%	14.9%	1.1%	29.9%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	59.8%	12.6%	2.3%	0.0%	25.3%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	10.3%	21.8%	40.2%	3.4%	24.1%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	21.8%	27.6%	18.4%	1.1%	31.0%
Households without any income	26.4%	21.8%	14.9%	4.6%	32.2%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance** is the main source of income, which was indicated by 59.8% of the respondents. Furthermore, 28.7% of the respondents stated that there had been a high demand from households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income. A high demand from households **without any income** was indicated by 26.4% of the respondents.

Table 44: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/ apprentices	0.0%	11.5%	40.2%	31.0%	17.2%
People with disabilities	6.9%	29.9%	36.8%	4.6%	21.8%
Migrated people (including refugees)	48.3%	31.0%	4.6%	1.1%	14.9%
Homeless people	4.6%	16.1%	42.5%	21.8%	14.9%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) were mentioned the most (by 48.3% of the respondents). On the other hand, according to 42.5% of the respondents, there was only little demand by **homeless people** and, according to 40.2%, there was little demand from **students/ apprentices**. However, still 4.6% of the respondents indicated a high demand by homeless people at their organisation.

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[95] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced debt and problems paying their running costs (71.3% of the respondents respectively). Furthermore, 66.7% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had experienced problems supplying themselves with food. 55.2% of the respondents said that many users had problems paying unexpected expenses. Concerning the experience of homelessness, however, 31.0% of the respondents assumed that few of their supported households had ever had this experience and, furthermore, 28.7% of the respondents believed that none of them had ever had this experience. Still 6.9% of the respondents indicated that, in their assessment, many of their supported households had at some point experienced homelessness.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, almost all respondents (98.9%) answered that the organisation was important with regard to users' general food supply.[96] Furthermore, 90.8% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 27.6% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users in offering a means of social contact. 23.0% of the respondents believed that their organisation was important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). Thus, according to the organisations themselves, they also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.5.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[97]: 29.9% of the respondents stated that it was difficult to ensure **safe working conditions**. However, for 42.5% of the respondents, this aspect was rather easy to ensure. Also, 66.7% of the respondents said it had been rather easy with regard to the **food supply coming from donations and other sources**, however, still 11.5% of the respondents

95 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

96 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

97 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses. Furthermore, the categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories 'increased' and 'very much increased' were grouped together as 'increased' for all analyses.

indicated that this aspect had been difficult. Furthermore, 66.7% of the respondents said it had been rather easy to **meet the demand for food aid**, while this was difficult for 10.3%.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, some of the organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. Only 14.9% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

35.6% of the respondents stated that their organisation had **extended opening hours**. In contrast, 6.9% of the respondents stated that their organisation had **reduced opening hours**. 4.6% of the organisations even had to close.

18.4% of the organisations had changed their service regarding **home delivery**. Most of these organisations (62.5%) stated that they had not provided home delivery before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, they had introduced this service. 31.3% of the organisations had already provided home delivery before the crisis and, due to the crisis, had increased this service compared to the time before the crisis.

Whereas for 8.0% of the organisations the **volume of food distributed** had increased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis, for 5.0% the volume of food had rather decreased.

6.9% of the organisations surveyed introduced the distribution of **food vouchers** due to the crisis.

Half of the organisations surveyed (49.4%) experienced a change in terms of the **number of staff members** due to the crisis. 65.1% of these organisations reported that the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group had decreased in particular. On the other hand, 32.6% reported an increase of volunteers not belonging to a COVID-risk group.

Furthermore, 47.1% of the organisations experienced (also) other changes.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 60.9% of the respondents.

- Support in form of **food** was received by 77.4% of these respondents from private individuals, by 52.8% from supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses, by 50.9% from churches/mosques/synagogues/etc., by 39.6% from private charities/foundations and by 32.1% from the National Food Bank Federation.

- **Material support** was not applicable for 45.3% of these respondents. When it was applicable, private individuals were reported most frequently as donors (for 34.0%), followed by the National Food Bank Federation (for 26.4%).
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 86.8%), followed by churches/mosques/synagogues/etc. (for 66.0%) and private charities/foundations (for 62.3%).
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/special support from non-governmental donors for most organisations (64.2%). However, 30.2% received food vouchers from supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses.
- The same applies to additional/special support through provision of **infrastructure**. Here, 75.5% stated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. Still 13.2% indicated supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses as donors.
- **Additional staff** from non-governmental actors was not applicable for 64.2% of the respondents. However, 28.3% of the organisations were supported by private individuals in this regard.

In summary, additional/special support from non-governmental actors to deal with the crisis was most frequently received by the organisations in form of food and material support. The main donors were private individuals, supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses and churches/mosques/synagogues/etc.

92.5% of the organisations that received additional/special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 35.6% of the respondents, additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.

- Regarding **food**, 71.0% of these respondents indicated that this form of governmental additional/special support was not applicable. When it was applicable, the local government level was indicated most frequently (by 22.6%).
- **Material support** was not applicable for 67.7% of the respondents. However, 32.3% indicated support in this regard by the local government level.
- **Financial support** most frequently came from the local government level, too, (for 54.8%). It was not applicable for 29.0%.
- Support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable for most (87.1%). When it was applicable, the local government level was indicated (by 12.9%).

- The same applies to support in the form of **infrastructure** provision. This form of support was not applicable for most (87.1%). When it was applicable, the local government level was indicated (by 12.9%).
- Regarding **additional staff**, almost all organisations (93.5%) did not receive additional/special support from governmental actors.

To sum up, governmental support in dealing with the crisis was primarily in the form of financial support. Generally, the local government level was the main donor.

83.9% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis. 16.1% stated that, overall, their organisation had received less support.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, almost all respondents (92.0%) said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis.

Also, regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, most of the respondents (74.7%) indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 24.1% of the respondents said that their organisation had made requirements concerning proof of need more flexible.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 57.5% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 was neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, 49.4% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. Furthermore, 10.3% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 had been higher than the possible supply of the organisation.[98] In comparison, 5.7% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020[99] was similar to the average number of supported households in 2019.

Changes with respect to user groups

34.4% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased compared to the time before the crisis. Half of these respondents indicated that the current demand had increased regarding only some user groups. 11.5% of the respondents said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 45: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

98 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

99 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	13.6%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	40.9%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	13.6%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	36.4%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	4.5%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	9.1%
Households without any income	31.8%
Students/ apprentices	0%
People with disabilities	9.1%
Migrated people (including refugees)	45.5%
Homeless people	4.5%
Other	27.3%

Many of the respondents that experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis indicated households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (40.9% of these respondents), households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (36.4%) and **households without any income** (31.8%).[100] Additionally, 45.5% of these respondents experienced an increase/a new demand from **migrated people** (including refugees) in particular.

3.6 Poland

In Poland, in 2020, there were 32 food banks associated with the National Food Bank Federation ('Federacji Polskich Banków Żywności'), donating food products to 3200 local organisations, such as soup kitchens, community centres, shelters for the homeless and orphanages.[101] Additionally, as one of the partner organisations in the framework of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Federation also distributes, via food banks, FEAD food products to many of these local organisations.[102]

The target population for the Polish survey was defined as the total number of local organisations supported by the Federation in 2020. Federation provided us with a full list of these local organisations. However, for privacy reasons, they had removed most of the private email addresses from the list. For us, it was only possible in a small number of cases to replace the missing (or invalid) email addresses by valid ones. Thus, for the survey in Poland, we only had an incomplete list and therefore no sampling frame that provides a one-to-one reflection of the target population.

100 The question on more details about an increase in demand among specific or new user groups was a multiple response question.

101 https://bankizywnosci.pl/

102 https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/program-operacyjny-pomoc-ywnosciowa-2014-2020

The survey took place from 22 March to 19 April 2021. The questionnaire was sent out by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics.

In the end, we were able to contact 663 locations via a valid email address. There was a total of 60 respondents. 36 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 5%.

Due to the very low number of the respondents, it was not possible to analyse some of the questions in the questionnaire, especially the follow-up questions, which were not to be answered by all respondents, due to the low or even non-existent number of responses.

Table 46: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	916
Number of invites (valid emails)	663
Number of responses (surveys completed)	36
Response rate	5%

3.6.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 47: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	52.8%
Governmental organisations	30.6%
Other	16.7%
Not for-profit organisations	94.4%
For-profit organisations	0%
Other	5.6%
Not faith-based organisations	80.6%
Faith-based organisations	16.7%

In the Polish survey sample, 52.8% of the organisations are non-governmental and 30.6% are governmental. None of the organisations are for-profit. Furthermore, most organisations (80.6%) are not faith-based, compared to 16.7% faith-based organisations.[103]

Age of the food distribution

Table 48: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[104]	Average	Median	Min.	Max.

103 Table 47 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

104 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis.

How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	28	10	5	2	37

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 28 organisations (77.8% of the respondents). Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution had been in operation was 10 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2018, while the oldest has been operating for 37 years.

Size of the organisation

Table 49: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	19	12	10	3	50
Full-time employees	23	14	6	1	56
Part-time employees	14	4	2	1	10

Table 50: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Supported households receiving food aid	25	275	180	24	1185

With respect to work force, 53.0% of the respondents indicated that their organisation had worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 12 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 50. 64.0% of the respondents indicated that their organisations had full-time employees, 39.0% of the respondents reported having part-time employees. On average, the organisations employed 14 full-time and 4 part-time employees each. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 56 full-time and 10 part-time employees worked at the organisations. 86.0% of the organisations with part-time employees were organisations also employing one or more full-time employees.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 69.4% of the organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 275 households were supported, a minimum of 24 and a maximum of reportedly 1185.

Associations

44.4% of the organisations were not associated with any other organisations. There was one organisation associated with a welfare organisation and another one that was associated with a religious institution (e.g. church, mosques, synagogue).

3.6.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

Most organisations (88.9%) distributed **food products/groceries** (for free or at a low price). 11.1% of the organisations offered **prepared meals** (cold or warm dishes, for free or at a low price) and 11.1% of the organisations also offered **home delivery** of food aid.

16.7% of the organisations indicated having also provided **non-food support** for food aid users, most frequently in the form of clothing, shelter, advice on managing a household budget and advice on social rights. For most of these organisations, food aid was not their main activity.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, all respondents indicated that their organisation had certain rules in place in 2019. 25.0% of the organisations indicated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid once a month. Others (19.4%) indicated that the allowed frequency of support was a limited number of times or that there were varying frequencies for different user groups (by 19.4% of the organisations). once every two weeks.

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**', most respondents (66.7%) reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also some organisations (11.1%) indicating that new users did not have to prove their need. There were also organisations (16.7%) indicating that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

Regarding the organisations that required proof of need from all or some users (N=30), we can state in terms of possible "**types of proof of need**", the most frequent types were proof of inadequate income (at 53.3% of the organisations), proof of receipt of social assistance benefits (at 40.0% of the organisations), a referral from a front line professional (at 33.3% of the organisations), proof of receipt of unemployment benefits (at 30.0% of the organisations) and a referral from a public agency (at 26.7% of the organisations).

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, 94.4% of the organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. 86.1% of the respondents stated that they had also received frequent support through governmental sources. Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[105]

Non-governmental sources of support

- Most organisations (92.0%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 88.9% of the respondents), private individuals (19.4%) and supermarkets/restaurants/other businesses (19.4%).

105 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Poland received EUR 473.0 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid, which the country co-financed with EUR 83.5 million COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report : final report. Publications Office. This does not include possible additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 19.4% of the organisations) and private charities/foundations (indicated by 11.1%) are mentioned most frequently. However, 63.9% of the organisations did not receive any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, most organisations (75.0%) did not receive non-governmental support in this regard. In cases in which this type of support was applicable for organisations, private individuals were indicated most frequently as a donor (19.4% of the organisations).
- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), almost all organisations (91.7%) reported having received no support from non-government donors in this regard.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (88.9%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard either.
- Most of the organisations (77.8%) reported not having received **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Those organisations that did receive support in this regard mostly indicated private individuals (22.2%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. Overall, the most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are the National Food Bank Federation and private individuals.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, governmental actors were also indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The three most frequently mentioned governmental actors were the FEAD (indicated by 77.8% of the organisations), the local government level (indicated by 19.4%) and the national level (indicated by 11.1%). 16.7% of the organisations stated, however, that they had not received frequent support in terms of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (80.6%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned FEAD (8.3%) and the local level (8.3%).
- Frequent **financial support** was mostly provided by the local government level (indicated by 13.9% of the organisations). For 77.8% of the organisations, however, governmental actors were not frequent donors regarding financial support.

- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), almost all respondents (94.4%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable.
- Regarding provision of **infrastructure**, for most of the respondents (66.7%), governmental actors were not a frequent source. Other organisations were most frequently supported by the local level (22.2% of the organisations).
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (75.0%) indicated that support in this regard through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 16.7%, however, received support in this regard through the local level.

In summary, 86.1% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food. In general, the FEAD and the local government level are the governmental actors most often mentioned.

Governmental food aid providers

Among the surveyed organisations in Poland are also governmental entities (30.6%). This means that governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by giving financial support to non-governmental food aid organisations, but are also directly part of it by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that this is especially the case for public job centres/social assistance centres: 69.4% of the respondents reported that, in their experience, this actor had often made them aware of it.[106] Furthermore, 41.7% of the respondents indicated social work organisations. 33.3% named municipalities/cities as actors that often made potential users aware of food aid services.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

72.2% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 13.9% of the organisations reported that demand had been higher than their possible supply and 8.3% reported that demand had been lower than their potential supply.[107] This means that the majority of organisations had generally been able to meet the demand for food aid that they were facing in 2019. But almost 1 in 7 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid

106 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

107 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

through their services. In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[108], an average of 275 households were supported, a minimum of 24 and a maximum of reportedly 1185 (*see Table 50:*).

Demand from specific user groups

Table 51: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	41.7%	41.7%	5.6%	0.0%	11.1%
Single parents with dependent children	30.6%	36.1%	13.9%	0.0%	19.4%
Couples without dependent children	16.7%	30.6%	27.8%	0.0%	25.0%
Couples with dependent children	38.9%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%	19.4%
Other household types	25.0%	41.7%	11.1%	0.0%	22.2%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Poland it can be said that the user groups with a high demand in 2019 were particularly **singles without dependent children** (according to 41.7% of the respondents) and **couples with dependent children** (according to 38.9% of the respondents).

Table 52: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	13.9%	41.7%	30.6%	0.0%	13.9%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	50.0%	25.0%	5.6%	0.0%	19.4%
Households in which unemployment benefits are the main source of income	41.7%	25.0%	11.1%	0.0%	22.2%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	55.6%	19.4%	5.6%	0.0%	19.4%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	50.0%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	36.1%	30.6%	13.9%	0.0%	19.4%
Households without any income	58.3%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households **without any income** which was indicated by 58.3% of the respondents. 55.6% of the respondents stated that there was a high demand from households in which **social assistance** is the main source of income. A high demand from households in which **short-time work** is the main source of income and households in which **pension** is the main source of income was indicated by 50.0% of the respondents respectively.

Table 53: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

108 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/ apprentices	2.8%	11.1%	11.1%	52.8%	22.2%
People with disabilities	44.4%	36.1%	11.1%	0.0%	8.3%
Migrated people (including refugees)	5.6%	16.7%	8.3%	55.6%	13.9%
Homeless people	19.4%	13.9%	25.0%	30.6%	11.1%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **people with disabilities** was mentioned most frequently (by 44.4% of the respondents). On the other hand, there was no demand from **migrated people** (including refugees) in particular (55.6% of the respondents), nor from **students/apprentices** (52.8% of the respondents).

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users receiving food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[109] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems paying their running costs (58.3% of the respondents). Furthermore, 44.4% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had experienced problems paying unexpected expenses. 41.7% of the respondents said that many users had problems supplying themselves with food. Concerning the experience of homelessness, however, 36.1% of the respondents assumed that few of their supported households had ever made this experience. Still 16.7% of the respondents indicated that, in their assessment, many of their supported households had at some point experienced homelessness.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 91.7% of the respondents answered that the organisation was important with regard to users' general food supply.[110] Furthermore, 63.9% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 72.2% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users in supporting them in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). 33.3% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in offering a means of social contact. Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

109 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

110 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

3.6.3 *Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis*

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[111]: 47.2% of the respondents stated that the situation was difficult regarding the **overall operability of food distribution**. 44.4% stated that it had been difficult to guarantee **safe working conditions**. However, 25.0% stated that this aspect was rather easy to ensure. Also, 27.8% of the respondents said it had been easy **to meet the demand for food aid**, compared to 11.1% of the respondents who said it had been difficult for their organisation.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, a large number of food aid organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and food aid respectively – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that more than half of the organisations surveyed have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis.

30.6% of the organisations stated that they had made **changes in home delivery**. Of these organisations (N=11), 91.0% indicated that they did not provide home delivery before the crisis and that, due to the crisis, they had introduced this service.

19.4% of the organisations said they had **extended opening hours**. However, also 13.9% of the organisations stated that they had **reduced opening hours**. 11.1% of the organisations had to **close** due to the crisis.

In most of the organisations surveyed (75.0%) there were no changes in the **number of staff** members due to the crisis.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 13.9% of the respondents.[112]

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 22.2% of the respondents, additional/special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.[113]

111 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses.

112 N is too small for further analysis of the individual types of support.

113 N is too small for further analysis of the individual types of support.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 69.4% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis. 16.7% said, however, that their organisation had increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid (for all or some households). 8.3% decreased the allowed frequency.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 44.4% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 27.8% of the respondents said that their organisation had made the requirements concerning proof of need more flexible.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

55.6% of the respondents indicated that the demand in 2020 was neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, whereas 72.2% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. 22.2% of the respondents said that the demand for food aid in 2020 was higher than the possible supply of the organisation.[114] In comparison, 13.9% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020[115] was slightly higher than the average number of supported households in 2019, at 6.2%

Changes with respect to user groups

41.7% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had increased regarding most, all or some user groups compared to the time before the crisis. However, as many said that the demand had not changed. 16.7% of the respondents indicated that the demand for food aid at their organisation had decreased.[116]

3.7 Portugal

In Portugal, there are two main food aid systems. Firstly, the National Food Bank Federation (‘Federação Portuguesa Dos Bancos Alimentares Contra A Fome’) associates 21 regional food banks with a total of 2407 connected local food aid organisations in 2020.[117] Secondly, the implementation of the European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in Portugal resulted in another food aid system. The country was divided into 146 zones to which public and private food distribution points were assigned, totalling 637 in 2020.[118] Portugal's FEAD Operational Programme is managed by an administrative unit (‘PO.APMC’) of the Ministry of

114 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

115 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

116 N is too small for further analysis of the specific changes regarding user groups.

117 https://www.bancoalimentar.pt/homepage/

118 https://poapmc.portugal2020.pt/inicio

Social Security. A small number of local distribution points connected to the PO.APMC food aid system are also associated with the Federation.

As both food aid systems are relevant for the distribution of food aid in Portugal, we defined the sampling frame for the Portuguese survey as a complete list of local organisations affiliated with the Federation in 2020 complemented by a complete list of PO.APMC local distribution points in 2020. While it was possible to obtain a PO.APMC list, we could not be provided with a Federation's list for data protection reasons. However, the Federation agreed to send our invitation email with the link to the survey via email itself.

In the end, we and the Federation were able to directly contact 2896 locations via a valid e-mail address. There was a total of 818 respondents. 549 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account for the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 19%.

The Portuguese survey took place from 9 April to 25 May 2021. The questionnaire was sent out via email and by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics.

Table 54: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact lists	3044
Number of invites (valid emails)	2896
Number of responses (surveys completed)	549
Response rate	19%

3.7.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 55: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	64.5%
Governmental organisations	7.5%
Other	27.5%
Not for-profit organisations	95.3%
For-profit organisations	2.2%
Other	1.6%
Not faith-based organisations	45.4%
Faith-based organisations	53.9%

Most of the organisations in the Portuguese sample are non-governmental organisations (64.5%). There is also a small proportion of governmental organisations (7.5%). Furthermore, the indication 'other' by 27.5% of the respondents indicates that there is also a proportion of hybrid forms of organisation, i.e. partly state-organised and partly privately organised.

Almost all organisations are not for-profit (95.3%). Regarding the question about the faith connection of the organisations, there were slightly more faith based organisations (53.9%) than not faith-based organisations (45.4%).[119]

Age of the food distribution

Table 56: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[120]	Average	Median	Min	Max
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	397	20	14	0	241

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution began for 397 organisations of the sample. Derived from the data, the average number of years food distribution has been in operation was 20 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2020, while the oldest have been operating for 241 years. This figure is an outlier. However, there are also seven other organisations between 100 and 131 years old.

Size of the organisation

Table 57: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Volunteers	311	18	7	1	650
Full-time employees	370	13	4	1	240
Part-time employees	136	3	2	1	32
Staff from special work programs	92	3	2	1	33

Table 58: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min	Max
Supported households receiving food aid	490	183	51	1	28000

With respect to work force, more than half of the organisations (57.0%) worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 18 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 650. Most of the organisations (67.4%) also reported having had full-time employees. 25.0% of the organisations had part-time employees. On average, the organisations employed 13 full-time and 3 part-time employees each. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 240 full-time and 32 part-time employees worked at the organisations. 74.3% of the organisations with part-time employees also employed one or more full-time employees, meaning that the majority of the organisations with employees had both part-time and full-time employees. Furthermore, 17.0% of the organisations worked with

119 Table 55 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

120 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis. That was the case for one organisation of the Portuguese sample.

people from special work programs. On average, 3 people worked for these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 33.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 89.3% of the organisations. Of these organisations, an average of 183 households were supported, a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 28000.[121]

Associations

57.4% of organisations were associated with a welfare organisation.[122] 50.5% of the organisations were associated with the PO.APMC, the FEAD managing authority.[123] However, almost as many organisations (43.4%) were not associated with the PO.APMC. 20.0% of the organisations were associated with the National Food Bank Federation. 7.0% of the organisations were associated with both the National Food Bank Federation and the PO.APMC. 13.5% of the organisations were associated with a church/ mosque/ synagogue or other religious institutions. 4.0% of the organisations were associated with a public agency and 1.1% of organisation were associated with a private charity/ foundation.

3.7.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

Most organisations (83.8%) offered **food products/ groceries** (for free or at a low price). 38.6% of the organisations offered **prepared meals** (warm or cold dishes, for free or at a low price). 23.0% of the organisations also offered **home delivery** of food products and/ or prepared meals. Furthermore, 3.5% of the organisations distributed **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets or social shops/ restaurants, electronic cheque cards for food, or similar).

More than half of the organisations (53.2%) also offered **non-food support** to food aid users. Of these organisations (N=292), most offered clothing (84.6%). Other forms of indicated non-food support were the referring to competent services which provide advice on social rights (70.5%) as well as advice on social rights (64.4%), furniture (58.9%), advice on managing a household budget/ debt counselling (41.4%), advice on food preparation and storage (38.0%), Psychological/ therapeutic support (37.0%), a social meeting place/ coffee corner (28.1%), advice regarding nutrition (26.0%), cookery classes (11.6%), shelter (9.2%) and language courses (6.5%).

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/ meals was the main or side activity of the organisation offering non-food support, for 23.1% of these organisations, it was the side

121 One outlier value in the six-digit range was removed from the calculation.

122 Examples given for welfare organisations in the context of Portugal were 'Confederação Nacional das Instituições de Solidariedade; União das Misericórdias Portuguesas; União das Mutualidades Portuguesas; Rede Cáritas; Cruz Vermelha'.

123 More specifically, 12.2% of the organisations were affiliated with PO.APMC and 38.3% of organisations were affiliated with PO.APMC, but, additionally, food support was also provided through further programs/ resources.

activity. For 12.6% of the organisations, however, it was the main activity. Furthermore, for 17.1% of the organisations, it was neither the main nor the side activity.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, 97.6% of the respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. 47.9% of the organisations indicated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid once a month. Others (11.1%) indicated that the allowed frequency of support was once a weeks. The third most frequently selected option by organisations was 'different numbers of times for different user groups' (10.7% of the organisations). Still 10.2% of the organisations reported to allow food aid to households several times a week.

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**', most of the respondents (85.1%) reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also some organisations (5.8%) indicating that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

In terms of the possible '**types of proof of need'** which users had to provide, we can see that most of the organisations with rules in place (N=499) accepted proof of inadequate income (72.9%). Furthermore, 41.5% of these organisations allowed proof of receipt of social assistance benefits, 39.3% allowed proof of receipt of unemployment benefits, 25.7% accepted a referral from a front line professional, 19.0% agreed with a referral from a public agency and 10.2% acknowledged a proof of student or apprentice aid. Moreover, 20.6% indicated that they had (also) allowed other types of proof.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, 92.0% of the organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, 75.6% of the respondents stated that they had also received some form of frequent support through governmental sources. Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[124]

Non-governmental sources of support

- Most organisations (88.5%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 63.0% of the respondents), supermarkets/ restaurant/ other businesses (45.7%) and private individuals (43.4%).
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 40.8% of the organisations), supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses

124 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Portugal received EUR 176.9 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid (and basic goods packages), which the country co-financed with EUR 31.2 million. COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report : final report. Publications Office. This does not include possible additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

(indicated by 19.1%) and the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 13.7%) are most frequently mentioned. However, there are also many organisations (38.4%) that reported not having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.

- Regarding regular **financial support**, more than half of the organisations (56.1%) did not receive any support from non-governmental donors. Of those organisations that received financial support, most were supported by private individuals (31.5% of all organisations).
- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/ electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most organisations (89.6%) reported not having received any support from non-government donors in this regard. However, still 3.8% of the organisations received food vouchers from supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses and 3.5% of the organisations indicated welfare organisations.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (80.9%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. Other respondents indicated private individuals (8.6%) and churches/ mosques/ synagogues/ etc. (6.4%).
- Most of the organisations (73.6%) reported not having received any **support via staff members** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Other organisations indicated most frequently private individuals (20.4%).

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. In addition, material and financial support were frequent forms of support indicated by many organisations. Overall, the three non-governmental actors mentioned most frequently were private individuals, supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses and the National Food Bank Federation.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, also governmental actors were indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The three governmental actors mentioned most frequently were FEAD (indicated by 37.0% of the organisations), the local government level (indicated by 20.2%) and the national government level (indicated by 9.1%). 39.9% of the organisations stated, however, that they did not receive frequent support in terms of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (68.7%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned the local government level (18.9%) and FEAD (4.9%).

- Frequent **financial support** was mostly provided by the local government level (indicated by 25.0% of the organisations), the national government level (indicated by 14.6%) and FEAD (indicated by 11.3%). For 49.0% of the organisations, however, governmental actors were no frequent donors regarding financial support.
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/ electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most of the respondents (93.3%) marked support by governmental actors as not applicable. However, a small proportion of the respondents did receive food vouchers, most frequently from the local government level (2.2%).
- For most of the respondents (75.0%), governmental actors were no frequent sources regarding provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 20.2% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (84.7%) indicated that such support through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 8.0%, however, received such support through the local government level.

In summary, 75.6% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food. In addition, financial and material support were frequent forms of support. In general, the local government level is the most often mentioned governmental actor. In regards of the provision of food, however, support through FEAD is the actor mentioned most often.

Governmental food aid providers

There are also governmental entities (7.5%) among the surveyed organisations in Portugal. This means that governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by providing financial supporting to non-governmental food aid organisations, but are also directly part of it by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that especially social work organisations (indicated by 63.4%), municipalities/ cities (indicated by 61.2%) and public job centres/ social assistance centres (indicated by 49.4%) often made aware of food aid services.[125]

Demand and user profiles

General demand

59.2% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that demand for food aid had been neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 25.2% of the organisations reported

125 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

that demand had been higher than their possible supply and 9.4% reported that demand had been lower than their potential supply.[126] This means that the majority of organisations had generally been able to meet the demand for food aid that they were facing in 2019. But still 9.4% (N=52) of the organisations surveyed reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid through their services. In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[127], an average of 183 households were supported, a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 28000 see *Table 58:*).[128]

Demand from specific user groups

Table 59: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	36.1%	35.5%	19.9%	4.6%	4.0%
Single parents with dependent children	50.3%	28.8%	12.2%	4.2%	4.6%
Couples without dependent children	15.7%	34.4%	35.3%	10.2%	4.4%
Couples with dependent children	58.3%	26.0%	7.7%	3.8%	4.2%
Other household types	17.1%	35.5%	29.7%	11.5%	6.2%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Portugal, it can be said that the user groups with a high demand in 2019 were particularly **couples with dependent children** (according to 58.3% of the respondents) and **single parents with dependent children** (according to 50.3% of the respondents).

Table 60: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	22.8%	29.3%	36.6%	5.8%	5.5%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	22.4%	17.5%	28.4%	22.8%	8.9%
Households in which unemployment benefit is the main source of income	43.9%	27.9%	17.1%	4.4%	6.7%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	56.3%	17.3%	8.9%	7.1%	10.4%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	53.2%	21.3%	14.6%	3.8%	7.1%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	39.2%	29.0%	18.9%	5.6%	7.3%
Households without any income	55.7%	16.6%	13.5%	6.7%	7.5%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there was a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance** is the main source of income (indicated by 56.3% of the respondents), households **without any income** (indicated by 55.7%

126 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

127 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

128 One outlier value in the six-digit range was removed from the calculation.

of the respondents) and households in which **pension** is the main source of income (indicated by 53.2% of the respondents). It is also noteworthy that households in which **paid work** is the main source of income were indicated as households with high demand by still 22.8%.

Table 61: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/ apprentices	3.3%	8.0%	27.3%	55.6%	5.8%
People with disabilities	6.9%	16.9%	44.1%	26.4%	5.6%
Migrated people (including refugees)	27.7%	15.5%	28.2%	24.0%	4.6%
Homeless people	13.3%	14.2%	24.4%	42.8%	5.3%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) was mentioned the most (by 27.7% of the respondents). On the other hand, many organisations indicated that there was no demand at all, especially from **students/apprentices** and **homeless people** (55.6% and 42.8% respectively). However, in contrast, still 13.3 % of the respondents also indicated a high demand from homeless people.

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[129] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems paying their running costs (61.6% of the respondents) as well as problems supplying themselves with food (60.3% of the respondents). Furthermore, 45.2% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had at some point experienced problems paying suddenly occurring costs. 42.4% of the respondents said that many users had at some point experienced debt. On the other hand, 40.3% of the respondents assumed that the experience of homelessness was not applicable to their supported households and, furthermore, 27.5% of the respondents indicated that only few of their households had ever had the experience of homelessness. However, still 13.3% of the respondents assumed that many of their supported households had at some point experienced homelessness.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, 75.8% of the respondents answered that the organisation had been important with regard to users' general food supply.[130] Furthermore, 57.4% of the respondents indicated that their support had enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses. Both aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

129 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

130 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that 45.9% of the respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for the users regarding support in accessing social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). 27.0% of the respondents assumed that their organisation was important for the users in offering a means of social contact. Thus, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

3.7.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[131]: Particularly, it was difficult for them to **meet the demand for food aid** (indicated by 49.7% of the respondents). However, 22.8% of the respondents indicated that this aspect was rather easy to guarantee in spite of the crisis. 40.6% of the respondents stated that it had been difficult with regard to the **food supply coming from donations and other sources**. However, for 18.2% of the organisations this had been rather easy. Also, 48.8% of the respondents said that it had been easy to guarantee **safe working conditions**, while this had been difficult for 27.3%.

Overall, the results paint a mixed picture of the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While some organisations seemed to be less severely affected or were able to adapt, a large proportion of food aid organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. However, 23.0% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

43.0% of the respondents stated that they had made changes regarding the **volume of food distributed**. Of these organisations (N=110), 46.6% said that the volumes of food have increased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis. 16.1% said that the volumes of food have increased only for some supported households. Furthermore, 26.7% indicated that the volumes of food have decreased for most or all supported households.

30.6% of the respondents said their organisation had **extended opening hours**. In contrast, also 10.6% of the organisations had **reduced opening hours**. However, only 3.5% of the organisations had been **closed or still was closed** due to the crisis.

15.7% spoke of a change in the service of **home delivery**. Of these organisations (N=86), 53.5% said that their organisation had already provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis and that, due to the crisis the service of home delivery had increased compared to the

131 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses. Furthermore, the categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories ‘increased’ and ‘very much increased’ were grouped together as ‘increased’ for all analyses.

time before the crisis. There were also 38.4% that had not provided home delivery before the crisis but, due to the crisis, had introduced this service.

In most of the organisations surveyed (70.7%) there were no changes in the **number of staff members** due to the crisis. Those organisations that reported a change (26.2%), 38.9% experienced an increase in the number of volunteers. However, 33.3% experienced a decrease in the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group. Furthermore, 27.1% experienced an increase in the number of full-time employees and 20.1% experienced an increase in the number of people from special work programs.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 32.6% of the respondents.

- Of these organisations (N=179), support in form of **food** was received most frequently from private individuals (by 75.4%), from supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses (by 50.3%) and from the National Food Bank Federation (by 34.6%).
- With regard to **material support**, the main donors were private individuals (for 52.0%), supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses (for 16.2%) and welfare organisations (for 12.3%). This type of additional/ special support was not applicable for 37.4%.
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 49.2%), followed by welfare organisations (indicated by 8.9%) and churches/ mosques/ synagogues/ etc. (indicated by 8.9%). For 35.8%, additional/ special financial support was not applicable.
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/ special support from non-governmental donors since for 82.1% of the respondents, this form was not applicable for their organisation. Still 11.2% of the respondents indicated welfare organisations and 5.6% mentioned supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses.
- The same applies to additional/ special support through provision of **infrastructure**. Here, 80.4% stated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. 11.2% mentioned private individuals and 6.7% indicated churches/ mosques/ synagogues/ etc.
- 22.9% reported that they received support by **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 70.9%, however, this additional form of support was not applicable.

To sum up, concerning support due to the crisis, private individuals and supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses were the main donors. In particular, there was additional/ special support in the form of food, financial and material support.

Furthermore, 64.8% of the respondents that received additional/ special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation has received more support from non-governmental donors for the food distribution than before the crisis. 7.8% said, overall, their organisation has received less support from non-governmental donors.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 39.3% of the respondents, additional/ special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.

- Of these organisations (N=216), additional/ special support in forms of **food** most frequently came from the local level (for 44.4%) and from FEAD (for 34.7%). 20.4% indicated that this form of additional/special support was not applicable for their organisation.
- Additional/ special **material support** was not applicable for 59.3%. If it was applicable, the local government level (by 28.2%), FEAD (by 7.4%) as well as the region and national government level (by 6.9% each) were indicated.
- Additional/ special **financial support** came from the local government level (for 46.3%), FEAD (for 17.6%) and from the national government level (for 13.9%). For 27.8%, this form of additional/ special support was not applicable.
- Additional/ special support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable for almost all (90.7%).
- Additional/ special support in the form of **infrastructure** was not applicable for 75.9%. When it was applicable, the local government level was mentioned most frequently (by 20.8%).
- The same applies to additional/ special support by **additional staff**. 81.9% stated that this additional form was not applicable. When it was applicable, the local level was indicated most frequently (by 10.2%).

In summary, the local government level and FEAD were mentioned most frequently as additional/ special governmental sources in dealing with the crisis. In particular, there was additional/ special support in the form of food and financial support.

72.7% of the organisations that received additional/ special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis. 2.3% stated that, overall, their organisation has received less support.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 67.9% of the respondents said that their organisation had not changed anything compared to the period before the crisis. 26.4% said that their organisation increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid. 3.5% said, however, that their organisation decreased the allowed frequency.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 60.8% of the respondents indicated that there had been no changes despite the crisis. However, 28.1% of the respondents said that their organisation had made proof of need more flexible. 3.6% of the respondents stated that their organisation had suspended proof of need.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 59.2% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, only 28.4% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. Furthermore, 61.8% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 had been higher than the possible supply of the organisation.[132] In comparison, 25.2% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020[133] had been 28.4% higher compared to 2019.

Changes with respect to user groups

53.4% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. 25.1% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 23.5% said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 62: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	47.4%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	51.3%
Households in which unemployment benefits is the main source of income	38.9%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	27.8%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	25.2%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	16.2%
Households in which any income	50.9%
Students/ apprentices	2.6%
People with disabilities	4.7%
Migrated people (including refugees)	27.4%
Homeless people	12.0%
Other	5.1%

Many of the respondents that experienced an increase of demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis (N=234) indicated households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (by 51.3%), households **without any income** (by 50.9%) and households in which **paid work** was the main source of income (by 47.4%).[134]

132 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories ‘lower’ and ‘much lower’ were grouped together as ‘lower’ for all analyses.

133 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

134 The question on more details about the increased or new user groups was a multiple response question.

Furthermore, regarding other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) (by 27.4%) and **homeless people** (by 12.0%) were indicated in particular.

3.8 Spain

In Spain, more than 8000 local organisations/ food distribution points are affiliated with 54 province Food Banks, which in turn are members of the National Food Bank Federation ('Federación Española de Bancos de Alimentos').[135] The Federation is also responsible, together with the Red Cross, for distributing food products of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) through 6000 local organisations/ food distribution points.

While a complete list of Federation affiliated organisations could not be obtained, it was possible to get a complete list of FEAD distributing local organisations.[136] Therefore, we used this list from 31 March 2021 as our sampling frame. In the end, we were able to contact 3030 locations via a valid e-mail address. There was a total of 242 respondents. However, only 144 respondents completed the questionnaire in full. Only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account in the analysis below. The number of completed questionnaires corresponds to a response rate of 5%.

The Spanish survey took place from 12 April to 25 May 2021. The questionnaire was sent out by means of an online panel administered by the provider Qualtrics.

Table 63: Survey population and response rate

Number of valid items on contact list	4031
Number of invites (valid emails)	3030
Number of responses (survey completed)	144
Response rate	5%

3.8.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Types of organisations

Table 64: Types of organisations

Non-governmental organisations	75.0%
Governmental organisations	9.0%
Other	14.6%
Not for-profit organisations	96.5%
For-profit organisations	0%
Other	2.1%
Not faith-based organisations	75.7%
Faith-based organisations	23.6%

135 Bancos de Alimentos de España | Federación Española de Bancos de Alimentos (fesbal.org.es)

136 The corresponding email addresses were gathered by the Spanish project team through web research.

The majority (75.0%) of the organisations in the Spanish sample are non-governmental organisations. Almost all organisations (96.5%) are not for-profit. Furthermore, the majority (75.7%) of the organisations are not faith-based.[137]

Age of the food distribution

Table 65: Years food distribution has been in operation

	N[138]	Average	Median	Min	Max
How long food distribution has been in operation (in years)	121	15	11	0	70

We were able to determine the year in which food distribution was started for 121 organisations. Derived from the data, the average age number of years food distribution has been in operation was 15 years in 2020. The most recent food distribution dates from 2020, while the oldest has been operating for 70 years.

Size of the organisation

Table 66: Size of work force (at the beginning of 2020)

	N	Average	Median	Min	Max
Volunteers	128	106	20	1	5000
Full-time employees	68	16	5	1	200
Part-time employees	59	6	3	1	50
Staff from special work programs	17	8	2	1	83

Table 67: Number of supported households receiving food aid in 2019

	N	Average	Median	Min	Max
Supported households receiving food aid	119	570	94	1	13000

With respect to work force, almost all organisations (90.0%) worked with volunteers at the beginning of 2020. On average, there were 106 volunteers working in these organisations, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5000. The two high numbers of 5000 and 1000 are outliers, the others are figures from 1 up to 751. Therefore, the median number of entries is 20. More than half of the organisations (57.0%) also worked with full-time employees, and 53.4% worked with part-time employees. On average, these organisations employed 16 full-time and 6 part-time employees each. A minimum of 1 was employed, a maximum of 200 full-time and 50 part-time employees worked at the organisations. 73.2% of the organisations with full-time employees also employed part-time employees, meaning that the majority of the organisations with employees had both part-time and full-time employees. Furthermore, 25.7% of the organisations also worked with staff from special work programs.

137 Table 64 does not show the answer option 'I don't know'. Therefore, the sum of the individual results in the table may be slightly less than 100%.

138 Selected cases: Only valid values, that is, a year with four digits. Furthermore, we considered the entry '2021' as not valid if this respondent answered the questions about the time before the COVID-19 crisis.

The question about the number of supported households in 2019 was answered by 119 organisations (83.0%). Of these organisations, an average of 570 households were supported, a minimum of 1 and a maximum of reportedly 13000. However, 90% of the respondents indicated numbers of less than 1000.

Associations

30.6% of the respondents indicated that their organisation was associated with a welfare organisation (e.g. Red Cross, Caritas). 11.1% of the organisations were associated with a church/ mosque/ synagogue/ other religious institutions and 10.4% of the organisations were associated with a private charity/ foundation. Interestingly, 13.9% of the respondents mentioned an association with a public agency.

3.8.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Kinds of support and how to access them

Kinds of support

Most of the organisations (81.3%) distributed **food products/ groceries** (for free or at a low price). 18.1% of the respondents indicated having provided **prepared meals** (cold or warm dishes, for free or at a low price). 9.0% of the respondents stated that their organisation distributed **food vouchers**. 7.6% of the organisations also provided **home delivery** of food products. More than half of the organisations (56.3%) also offered other support than food for food aid users.

Most of the organisations that indicated having provided **non-food support** in addition to food aid (N=81) offered advice on social rights to food aid users (indicated by 71.6%), and referred food aid users to competent services which provide advice on social rights (indicated by 63.0%). Furthermore, the organisations offered a range of other support services: clothing (63.0%), psychological/ therapeutical support (43.2%), language courses (37.0%), advice regarding nutrition (28.4%), advice on managing a household budget/ debt counselling (27.2%), furniture (24.7%), advice on food preparation and storage (24.7%), shelter (22.2%), social meeting place/ coffee corner (21.0%) and cookery classes (19.8%).

In response to the question whether the distribution of food/ meals was the main or side activity of the organisation before the crisis, 38.3% of the organisations offering non-food support stated that food distribution had been their main activity. On the other hand, 35.8% stated that it had been their side activity and 24.7% stated that it had been neither their main nor their side activity. Thus, for most of the organisations in the sample, food distribution was not their main activity.

Accessibility of food aid

In terms of the **'allowed frequency'** in which users are allowed to receive food aid, 90.3% of the respondents indicated that they had certain rules in place in 2019. 34.0% of the organisations indicated that supported households were generally allowed to receive food aid once a month. Others (19.4%) indicated that the allowed frequency of support was once every two weeks. The third most frequently selected option by organisations was once a week (indicated by 17.4%).

Regarding the question whether or not users had to provide some form of **'proof of need**' most of the respondents (83.3%) reported that all new users in 2019 generally had to prove their need in order to be allowed to receive food aid. There were, however, also some organisations (5.6%) indicating that new users did not have to prove their need. Some organisations (9.0%) indicated that only some of the new users had to prove their need.

In terms of the possible '**types of proof of need'** which users had to provide, we can see that most organisations (60.9%) accepted referral from a frontline professional. Other possible types of proof of need were proof of unemployment benefits (54.9%), referral from a public agency (45.9%), proof of social assistance benefits (39.8%), proof of inadequate income (30.8%) and proof of student/ apprentice aid (5.3%). Some organisations (15.0%) allowed (also) other types of proof of need not mentioned above.

Sources of support and links to welfare state actors

In general, 96.5% of the organisations surveyed frequently received some form of support from non-governmental sources before the COVID-19 crisis. 77.8% of the respondents stated that they also received frequent support through governmental sources. Regarding governmental sources of support, we also asked about support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).[139]

Non-governmental sources of support

- Most organisations (96.5%) regularly received **food donations** from non-governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis. The three non-governmental actors mentioned most frequently are the National Food Bank Federation (indicated by 74.3% of the respondents), private individuals (indicated by 56.9% of the respondents) and supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses (indicated by 49.3% of the respondents).
- As far as regular **material support** (other than food) is concerned, donations from private individuals (stated by 39.6% of the organisations) and private charities/ foundations (indicated by 18.8% of the respondents) were mentioned most frequently. However, there are also many organisations (36.8%) that reported not having received any form of material support from non-governmental actors.
- Regarding regular **financial support**, private individuals (stated by 52.1%), private charities/ foundations (indicated by 37.5%), and churches/ mosques/ synagogues/ etc. (indicated by

139 Overall, for the 2014-2020 funding period, Spain received EUR 563.4 million in FEAD funding to support the local distribution of food aid (and social integration measures), which the country co-financed with EUR 99.4 million COMMISSION, E. 2019. FEAD mid-term evaluation report : final report. Publications Office. This does not include possible additional EU funding during the COVID-19 crisis.

11.8%) were the non-governmental actors mentioned most frequently. There are also 28.5% of the organisations not having received financial support from any non-governmental actor.

- In terms of **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/ electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most organisations (74.3%) reported having received no support from non-government donors in this regard. 9.0% of the organisations reported having received food vouchers from supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses.
- Concerning regular support via **infrastructure** (buildings, rooms, vehicles, cooling facilities), most organisations (64.6%) did not receive any support from non-governmental actors in this regard. 15.3% of the respondents indicated private individuals, 9.7% mentioned private charities/ foundations and 9.0% indicated welfare organisations (e.g. Red Cross, Caritas).
- Almost half of the organisations (48.6%) reported not having received any **support via staff** (paid or unpaid) by non-governmental actors. Still 41.7% of the respondents indicated private individuals.

In summary, organisations were frequently supported by non-governmental actors primarily in terms of food. In addition, financial support and material support were frequent forms of support indicated by many organisations. Overall, the most frequently mentioned non-governmental actors are private individuals. The second most frequently mentioned actors are private charities/ foundations. The National Food Bank Federation was primarily mentioned with respect to support through food.

Governmental sources of support

- Apart from non-governmental actors, governmental actors were also indicated by the organisations as frequent donors in terms of **food donations**. The two most frequently mentioned governmental actors were FEAD (indicated by 56.3% of the organisations) and the local government level (indicated by 27.8%). 31.9% of the organisations stated, however, that they did not receive frequent support in the form of food donations by any governmental actor.
- Concerning **material support** (other than food), most organisations (69.4%) marked support via governmental actors as not applicable. Those who indicated that they had received food donations via governmental actors primarily mentioned the local government level (22.9%).
- Frequent **financial support** was mostly provided by the local government level (indicated by 31.3% of the organisations) and the regional government level (indicated by 20.1%). For 59.0% of the organisations, however, governmental actors were no frequent donors regarding financial support.
- With respect to support via **food vouchers** (coupons for supermarkets/ electronic cheque cards for food, or similar), most of the respondents (89.6%) marked support by governmental

actors as not applicable. However, a small proportion of the respondents (6.3%) reported having frequently received food vouchers from the local government level.

- For most of the respondents (72.9%), governmental actors were no frequent sources regarding provision of **infrastructure**. However, still 18.8% of the organisations indicated having received support in this regard through the local government level.
- Regarding **support by staff**, the picture is similar. Most of the organisations (83.3%) indicated that support in this regard through governmental actors was not applicable. Still 11.8%, however, received support in this regard through the local government level.

In summary, 77.8% of the organisations surveyed frequently received support from governmental actors before the COVID-19 crisis, mainly in the form of food. In addition, financial support was a frequent form of support. In general, the local government level was the governmental actor most often mentioned. Regarding of the provision of food, however, support through FEAD was the actor mentioned most frequently.

Governmental food aid providers

Among the surveyed organisations in Spain are also governmental entities (9.0%) This means that governmental entities are not only indirectly part of food aid provided by the sample organisations, for example by providing financial support to non-governmental food aid organisations, but are also directly part of it by providing food aid themselves.

Raising awareness of food aid services through public actors

Regarding the question of how users become aware of the organisations' food aid services, we asked the organisations if they knew about any other actors informing potential users about their services. The results show that this especially applies to social work organisations as well as the municipality/ city: 64.6% and 63.2% of the respondents respectively reported that, in their experience, these actors had often made potential users aware of food aid services.[140] Furthermore, 20.1% of the respondents indicated public job centres/ social assistance centres.

Demand and user profiles

General demand

47.9% of the organisations experienced in 2019 that the demand for food aid was neither higher nor lower than their possible supply of food aid. 32.7% of the organisations reported that demand had been higher than their possible supply and 13.2% reported that demand had been lower than their potential supply.[141] This means that the majority of organisations had generally been able to meet the demand for food aid that they were facing in 2019. But almost 1 in 3 organisations reported that they had not been able to satisfy the demand for food aid

140 The categories 'often' and 'very often' were grouped together as 'often' for all analyses.

141 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

through their services. In terms of the number of households assisted in 2019[142], an average of 570 households were supported, a minimum of 1 and a maximum of reportedly 13000 (see Table 67:). However, 90% of the respondents indicated numbers of less than 1000.

Demand from specific user groups

Table 68: Demand by household types in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Singles without dependent children	27.8%	28.5%	29.2%	4.9%	9.7%
Single parents with dependent children	37.5%	22.2%	20.8%	9.0%	10.4%
Couples without dependent children	25.0%	23.6%	35.4%	6.3%	9.7%
Couples with dependent children	54.9%	18.1%	12.5%	4.2%	10.4%
Other household types	29.2%	29.9%	20.8%	6.3%	13.9%

In terms of household types, for the sample in Spain it can be said that the user groups with high demand in 2019 were particularly **couples with dependent children** (according to 54.9% of the respondents) and **single parents with dependent children** (according to 37.5% of the respondents).

Table 69: Demand by main income of households in 2019

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Households in which paid work is the main source of income	26.4%	21.5%	36.8%	6.9%	8.3%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	45.1%	13.2%	22.9%	10.4%	8.3%
Households in which unemployment benefit is the main source of income	63.2%	16.0%	9.7%	4.2%	6.9%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	72.2%	8.3%	9.7%	2.8%	6.9%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	49.3%	22.2%	17.4%	3.5%	7.6%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	34.0%	29.9%	25.0%	4.2%	6.9%
Households without any income	72.2%	8.3%	8.3%	4.2%	6.9%

Regarding household types differentiated by income source, we can see that there had been a high demand especially from households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (indicated by 72.2% of the respondents) as well as from households **without any income** (indicated by 72.2%). Furthermore, 63.2% of the respondents stated that there had been a high demand from households in which **unemployment benefits** was the main source of income.

Table 70: Other vulnerable groups in 2019

142 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

	High demand	Neither high nor little demand	Little demand	No demand at all	I don't know
Students/ apprentices	9.0%	21.5%	22.2%	29.2%	18.1%
People with disabilities	11.1%	25.0%	43.1%	9.0%	11.8%
Migrated people (including refugees)	70.1%	11.1%	4.9%	4.9%	9.0%
Homeless people	31.9%	13.9%	22.9%	22.2%	9.0%

With regard to other vulnerable groups, **migrated people** (including refugees) were mentioned most frequently (by 70.1% of the respondents). With regard to **homeless people**, 31.9% of the respondents mentioned high demand, while at the same time 22.9% of the respondents mentioned little demand and 22.2% of the respondents no demand at all from this specific user group.

Experiences of social exclusion among food aid users

We asked the organisations if, according to their knowledge, many or few users of their food aid services experienced certain forms of social exclusion before the crisis.[143] Most respondents stated that, according to their knowledge, many food aid users had at some point experienced problems paying their running costs (89.6% of the respondents) as well as problems paying suddenly occurring costs (84.0% of the respondents). Furthermore, 76.4% of the respondents indicated that, in their estimation, many users had at some point experienced debt. 70.1% of the respondents said that many users had experienced problems supplying themselves with food. Concerning homelessness, 31.9% of the respondents assumed that many food aid users had ever had this experience. However, 28.5% of the respondents assumed that only few users had ever had this experience and, furthermore, 13.9% of the respondents believed that nobody of them had ever had this experience.

Importance of food aid organisation for users

When asked about the importance of certain aspects of support for their food aid users before the COVID-19 crisis, 95.8% of the respondents answered that the organisation was important with regard to users' general food supply.[144] Most respondents mentioned also the aspect of saving money for other expenses (79.9% of the respondents). These aspects indicate the importance that the organisations themselves attribute to their support in terms of the users' basic needs.

Furthermore, many respondents stated that they consider their organisation to have been important for their users in supporting them in accessing social rights (78.5% of the respondents) and in offering a means of social contact (72.9% of the respondents). That means that, in their estimation, the organisations also fulfil other social functions that go beyond the distribution of food.

143 The categories 'many' and 'very many' were grouped together as 'many' and the categories 'few' and 'very few' were grouped together as 'few' for the purpose of the analysis.

144 The categories 'important' and 'very important' were grouped together as 'important' for all analyses.

3.8.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level

We asked the organisations about the general impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the operational level of their organisation[145]: Half of the respondents (50.7%) stated that it was difficult concerning the **overall operability of food distribution**. Furthermore, for many organisations it was difficult to **meet the demand for food aid** (for 48.6% of the respondents), to guarantee **safe working conditions** (43.1% of the respondents) and to ensure **food supply coming from donations and other resources** (42.4% of the respondents). Overall, many organisations faced difficulties in keeping their organisations – and respectively the food aid – going.

In terms of specific organisational changes, it appears that most organisations have made some kind of changes in response to the crisis. Only 8.6% of the respondents stated that they had not (yet) implemented any changes.

45.1% of the organisations surveyed indicated that they **extended** opening hours, while 15.3% of the organisations **reduced** opening hours.

37.5% of the respondents stated that they had made changes regarding the **volume of food distributed**. Of these respondents (N=54), most respondents (66.7%) stated that 'the current volumes of food have increased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis'. For 20.4% of these organisations, in contrast, 'the current volumes of food have decreased for most or all supported households compared to the time before the crisis'.

11.8% of the respondents said they made changes with regard to **home delivery** of food aid due to the crisis. Of these organisations (N=17), 35.3% stated that their organisation had not provided home delivery before the crisis, but that, due to the crisis, they had introduced this service but stopped it after a period of time. For 23.5%, the service of home delivery was introduced, too, and this service was still ongoing. 29.4% indicated that their organisation already had provided home delivery of food aid before the crisis, but, due to the crisis, that the current service of home delivery had increased compared to the time before the crisis.

Only 1.4% of the respondents indicated that their food distribution **had been closed or still was closed** due to the crisis.

Most of the respondents (58.3%) experienced no change concerning the **number of staff members**. However, 37.5% indicated a change. Of these organisations (N=54), 57.7% experienced an increase in the number of volunteers in particular. However, 18.5% experienced a decrease in the number of volunteers belonging to a COVID-19 risk group.

145 The categories 'difficult' and 'very difficult' were grouped together as 'difficult' and the categories 'easy' and 'very easy' were grouped together as 'easy' for all analyses. Furthermore, the categories 'decreased' and 'very much decreased' were grouped together as 'decreased' and the categories 'increased' and 'very much increased' were grouped together as 'increased' for all analyses.

Additional or special support

Additional or special support via non-governmental actors

Additional/special support from non-governmental donors (financial or non-financial) to deal with the crisis was received by 53.5% of the respondents.

- Support in forms of **food** was received by 92.2% of these respondents (N=77), primarily from private individuals (by 71.4%), supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses (by 49.4%), the National Food Bank Federation (by 40.3%) and private charities/ foundations (39.0%).
- **Material support** was not applicable to 50.6% of these respondents. When it was applicable, private individuals were reported as main donors (by 35.1%).
- **Financial support** also mostly came from private individuals (for 57.1%), as well as from private charities/ foundations (for 49.4%).
- Generally, it can be said that **food vouchers** were not a frequent form of additional/ special support from non-governmental donors since 67.5% indicated that this form was not applicable for their organisation. However, still 15.6% of the respondents marked supermarkets/ restaurants/ other businesses as donors for additional support due to the crisis.
- The same applies to additional/ special support through provision of **infrastructure**. 71.4% stated that this form was not applicable to their organisation. Still 13.0%, however, indicated private individuals.
- Interestingly, 49.4% reported that they had received support in the form of **additional staff** from private individuals to deal with the crisis. For 40.3%, however, this additional form of support was not applicable.

83.1% of the respondents that received additional/ special support by non-governmental actors stated that, overall, their organisation had received more support from non-governmental donors for food distribution than before the crisis. Private individuals were the main donors. In particular, there was additional/ special support in the form of food.

Additional or special support via governmental actors

For 25.7% of the respondents, additional/ special support in dealing with the crisis also came from governmental actors.

- Regarding **food**, respondents indicated most frequently the local government level (by 62.2%) and FEAD (by 40.5%).
- **Material support** was not applicable for 54.1%. If it was applicable, the local government level was most frequently indicated (by 40.5%).
- **Financial support** came mainly from the local government level (for 59.5%), too.

- Support from governmental actors in the form of **food vouchers** was not applicable to most of the organisations (75.7%).
- Support in the form of **infrastructure** provision was mainly provided by the local government level (for 40.5%). However, 51.4% indicated that this form of additional support was not applicable.
- The same applies to support from **additional staff**. 67.6% stated that this additional form was not applicable. Still 27.0% of the organisations mentioned the local government level.

86.5% of the organisations that received additional or special support from governmental actors indicated that, overall, their organisation had received more support (financial or non-financial) from governmental actors than before the crisis. The local government level (e.g. municipalities, cities) was particularly noteworthy in this regard. Additional/ special support via FEAD was particularly noteworthy with regard to food support. Overall, there was additional/ special support from governmental actors in the form of food and financial support in particular.

Accessibility of food aid during the crisis

Regarding the allowed frequency of receiving food aid, 47.2% of the respondents said that their organisation had increased the allowed frequency of receiving food aid for all or some households compared to the time before the crisis. However, 39.6% stated that they did not change anything compared to the period before the crisis.

Regarding arrangements by organisations on the proof of need of their users, 49.3% of the respondents indicated that their organisation had made proof of need requirements more flexible. 34.0% of the respondents said, however, that there had been no changes despite the crisis.

Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups

Changes in demand

While 47.9% of the respondents stated that the demand for food aid in 2019 had been neither higher nor lower than the possible supply of the organisation, only 11.1% of the respondents stated this with regard to the situation in 2020. In contrary, 79.2% said that the demand for food aid in 2020 had been higher than the organisation's possible supply.[146] In comparison, 32.7% of the respondents said this with regard to the situation in 2019. The average number of households supported in 2020[147] was 139% higher compared to 2019.

146 The categories 'higher' and 'much higher' were grouped together as 'higher' and the categories 'lower' and 'much lower' were grouped together as 'lower' for all analyses.

147 Selected cases: Only values from 1.

Changes with respect to user groups

77.1% of the respondents said that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the current demand had increased regarding most or all user groups. 19.4% stated that the current demand had increased regarding some user groups. 18.8% said that there was demand from new user groups.

Table 71: Increase in demand – compared to the pre-crisis period

Households in which paid work is the main source of income	34.7%
Households in which short-time work is the main source of income	71.4%
Households in which unemployment benefits is the main source of income	59.2%
Households in which social assistance is the main source of income	57.1%
Households in which pension is the main source of income	44.9%
Households in which sickness or invalidity benefits are the main source of income	30.6%
Households without any income	61.2%
Students/ apprentices	6.1%
People with disabilities	8.2%
Migrated people (including refugees)	44.9%
Homeless people	24.5%
Other	12.2%

Most of the respondents that had experienced an increase in demand from specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis (N=49) indicated households in which **short-time work** was the main source of income (71.4% of the respondents), households **without any income** (61.2%), households in which **unemployment benefits** were the main source of income (59.2%) and households in which **social assistance** was the main source of income (57.1%).[148]

4 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of our survey project was to shed light on how food aid is embedded in different European welfare state arrangements. Furthermore, we wanted to contribute to the understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on different European food aid systems, on the profiles of food aid users, demand and, in particular, on the welfare state embeddedness of food aid. In this section, we will discuss the findings of our descriptive analysis of eight country cases.

First of all, our findings show, on the one hand, that there is some heterogeneity in the food aid landscape both within a country sample and between country samples, in particular with

148 The question on more details about the increased or new user groups was a multiple response question.

regard to the size of the organisations, the number of households supported and the organisations' average age. On the other hand, however, our results also point to many common patterns. This indicates a certain degree of welfare state embeddedness of the food aid organisations in all countries of the survey. In the following, we therefore turn to the common patterns between the country samples and discuss the most meaningful findings regarding our research objectives. We structure our points according to our three survey themes: 4.1. '*Profiles of the surveyed organisations*', 4.2. '*Food aid within the welfare state arrangement*' and 4.3. '*Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis*'.

4.1 Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Our findings show that most organisations in all samples were non-governmental organisations. But the survey also showed that in most countries food aid was to a smaller extent provided by governmental organisations, too. Hence the findings suggest that governmental actors are not only subsidising food aid but also play an active role in the food aid systems in various European countries. Especially regarding countries where food aid is supported by FEAD, governmental actors such as municipalities and public authorities seem to play an even more active role.

With regard to the types of workforce, it is worth highlighting the finding that in addition to volunteers without employment contracts, most of the samples also included organisations operating with additional full-time and/ or part-time employees. This indicates that these are mainly organisations that are established to a certain degree and have the necessary resources and capacity to hire staff.[149] They may also be bigger and already established (civil society) organisations where food aid is only one of the services they provide. In any case, the finding indicates that contemporary food aid is also carried by established organisational structures.

With regard to associations, firstly, our findings indicate that most of the organisations surveyed are part of a wider network with other actors. This means that they are not isolated bodies that operate on the margins of the welfare state. Secondly, our findings also show that in most countries there is also associations with public agencies.

4.2 Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

In terms of regular sources of support for the organisations surveyed, our findings show that these are primarily non-governmental/ private actors such as supermarkets. However, our findings also show that in most samples there is a certain proportion of organisations that regularly receive (financial and non-financial) support from governmental actors. The most frequently mentioned actors are the local government level and the European fund 'FEAD' (in countries where FEAD is used for food aid). The fact that there is regular public support indicates that

[149] However, it must be emphasised that the fact that a food aid organisation is established is not sufficient for the phenomenon that employees are paid.

food aid organisations are being established as part of the welfare state and that (welfare) state actors are supporting the voluntary charity food aid system.

If we look at the main user groups (before the COVID-19 crisis) identified by the organisations surveyed, our results show that these are primarily households whose main income is social assistance. Furthermore, households whose main income is unemployment benefit are also frequently mentioned. In three of the country samples (Belgium, Hungary, Portugal), households whose main income comes from paid work are also frequently mentioned. These findings suggest that individuals using food aid are not groups that cannot be reached by the welfare state systems or are outside the labour market. People who use food aid are often *inside* the welfare system as recipients of minimum income protection and even as wage earners.

These findings may be related to inadequate minimum incomes (for certain household types) across Europe (Goedemé et al., 2019) and the fact that both poor and rich welfare states seem to face a persistent and almost universal inability of minimum income protection to lift workless households above the poverty line (Marx and Nelson, 2013; Cantillon et al., 2018). It has to be stressed, however, that the survey did not cover the factors ultimately motivating individuals to use food aid. So far, there have been few non-representative studies for some individual countries (e.g. for the Netherlands Desain et al., 2006) as well as qualitative studies in different countries (for example van der Horst et al., 2014; Schoneville, 2013; Selke, 2013; Garthwite, 2015). These studies show that people use food aid in order to deal with poverty, even though receiving some form of welfare benefit.

Furthermore, our findings indicate that food aid organisations try to respond to basic needs of their users. Most of the respondents stated that, in their estimation, their organisation was important with regard to users' general supply with food. Furthermore, most of the respondents indicated that their support was important since it enabled food aid users to save money for other expenses.

In terms of supply and demand, our results show, on the one hand, that a majority of organisations in all country samples were able to meet the demand for food aid before the COVID-19 crisis (in 2019).[150] But on the other hand, our results also illustrate that there are organisations in each sample that were not able to meet the demand they determined. Given that food aid organisations are supposedly trying to respond to the basic needs of users, these results are alarming.

As far as the accessibility of food aid is concerned, the findings show that, firstly, most organisations of all samples have introduced some kind of arrangements that does not allow unrestricted access for everyone but requires proof of need. Secondly, two main categories of arrangements can be distinguished here: Arrangements where proof of need (e.g. proof of insufficient income) is verified by the organisation itself or arrangements based on referrals from a

[150] However, it is important to note that organisations were asked to answer the question based on their own interpretation of 'demand' and their routines and procedures within the organisation. The answer tells us something about whether or not they are meeting their own expectations. The question of whether organisations are able to meet the real needs of food aid users would require an investigation involving the users themselves.

public body that verifies need. The latter is particularly the case for the sample in Belgium. The main referring public body there is a welfare state authority responsible for issuing social assistance and other social benefits. In the samples of the other countries, arrangements of own verification is predominate. Significantly, however, the findings also show that both categories of verifying arrangements can be found in all samples. This indicates a form of cooperation between public agencies/welfare state authorities and food aid organisations and, consequently, a certain extent of establishment of food aid as source of support for citizens in need. In this context, it should be emphasised that, despite its link to public agencies, food aid remains a form of support based on charity and not on rights. That means that people who meet certain ‘eligibility criteria’ for receiving food aid ultimately have no legal entitlement and therefore cannot claim food aid. This makes food aid fundamentally different from welfare state benefits. However, it seems that public actors regard food aid as a further form of welfare state service offered by an external provider.

In general, the involvement of civil society actors in the provision of social support within welfare state arrangements is traditionally common in different European countries, especially Southern European counties (e.g. Evers and Laville, 2004). However, indications of the broadening of this involvement to the provision of food aid seems to point to a new dimension. Especially against the backdrop of our finding that demand could not be met everywhere, it can be considered problematic if (welfare) state actors refer their clients to the additional - but unstable - assistance offered by food aid organisations.

Lastly, it is striking that in all country samples most of the organisations surveyed also offer non-food support. This is material support in addition to food (such as clothing) as well as social counselling of various kinds (such as debt counselling and referral to social services) and individual/psychological counselling. In addition, in all samples except the Lithuanian one, many respondents indicated that they also considered their organisation important for food aid users because it gave them opportunities for social contacts as well as helped them to take up social rights (e.g. social assistance, family allowance). Thus, according to the organisations, their support also fulfils other important social functions for food aid users that go beyond emergency material assistance.

4.3 Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

The pandemic and the measures taken to contain the virus have challenged the food aid sector (HLPE, 2020). Examples include challenges in the food chains in the broader food system and the loss of volunteers who, for example, belong to a COVID-19 risk group because of their age. In the context of our study, we therefore considered the COVID-19 crisis as a stress test for the operational capacity of food aid, challenging all countries in our survey at the same time.

First of all, our findings paint a mixed picture regarding the impact of the crisis on the operational level of the organisations surveyed. While most organisations seemed to be affected to a limited extent or were able to adapt to some extent, others however had difficulties in keeping their organisations, and food aid in particular, going. Secondly, in terms of organisational change due to the crisis, our findings show that most of the organisations surveyed appear to have responded in some way to the crisis and the related specific lockdown and hygiene measures. For example, a common feature is that in fact volunteers who belonged to a COVID-19 risk group dropped out and had to be replaced. However, other organisational measures taken vary within and between the samples.

To explain the relative organisational resilience of most organisations in times of crisis, it might be worth mentioning, in particular, that individual organisations are in most cases part of larger networks of different actors and different sources of support. The fact that such a network character was essential for the mutual support and ultimately resilience of food aid organisations is shown in a study by Dekkinga et al. (2022) on food aid during the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands.

Moreover, our findings show that in most countries there seems to have been increased or initial support from governmental actors in addition to support from non-governmental actors to help food aid organisations in coping with the crisis. Again, the local government level and FEAD were most frequently mentioned as supporting governmental actors. Hence the crisis situation seems to have strengthened the ties between the mainly private food aid organisations and public actors.

However, despite these indications of a general resilience in the studied food aid systems during the crisis, it must be emphasised that there was also a proportion of respondents in each sample whose organisations found it difficult (or even temporarily impossible) to ensure the distribution of food. Given the general importance of food aid organisations in providing basic services to many users, this seems highly critical in terms of guaranteeing the protection of the most vulnerable, especially in times of increased social hardship.

Moreover, our results (except for Germany and the Netherlands) show that the average number of households assisted in 2020 (during the COVID-19 crisis) was higher than the average number of households assisted in 2019 (before the COVID-19 crisis), up to 139% (Spain). Accordingly, many or even most of the respondents said that the demand increased regarding *most or all user groups* compared to the time before the COVID-19 crisis. However, many of the respondents also stated that there was demand of *specific* or *new user groups* in particular.

Respondents that experienced an increase of demand of specific or new user groups compared to the time before the crisis most frequently indicated households in which *social assistance* was the main source of income and households in which *short-time work* was the main source of income. Also, many respondents mentioned households in which *unemployment benefits* was the main source of income. With respect to the Belgian and the Portuguese sample in particular, many respondents also indicated households in which *paid work* was the main source of income.

In general, these results show that respondents of all country samples tended to see an increase in demand among user groups, most of which already belonged to the main user groups before the crisis (except short-time workers). These are groups that, as noted above, are situated *within* systems of minimum income protection and even the labour market. Hence the crisis situation seems to have increased the demand for these groups in particular, which once again indicates that food aid is not a marginal phenomenon in Europe, but is an established part of European societies and welfare state arrangements.

Against the backdrop of our findings, further research would be needed in particular to better understand a) the drivers of food aid use by recipients of social benefits and by workers in the different welfare regimes, b) the interconnectedness of food aid with the different layers of the welfare state arrangements and c) the impact this interconnectedness ultimately has on national structural social policies. The central question here seems to be whether European welfare states are increasingly relying on the food aid sector and therefore possibly investing less in structural anti-poverty policies.

Subsequently, a relevant line of research seems to be the role that the EU plays in food aid policies. Given the fact that support through FEAD was topped up due to the COVID-19 crisis[151], the question arises whether and to what extent EU funding for food aid will continue to be used by Member States to try to fill gaps in national social protection. Subsequently, it seems to us that further research is highly relevant to examine the impact of European funding on the welfare state embeddedness of food aid as well as on national anti-poverty policies in general.

5 Limitations

First, we want to point out factors that carry a potential risk of selection bias: (a) While we assumed that all units with valid email addresses on the contact lists could be reached via this email address, it cannot be excluded that, for example, very small organisations or organisations with senior volunteers/staff use their email account less than other (larger) organisations; (b) Furthermore, it is also possible that particularly organisations with few volunteers/staff found it difficult to spend extra time filling out the questionnaire in times of crisis; (c) Another point concerns the lack of (valid) email addresses of the contact lists, especially those from Poland. In this case, it was hardly possible to replace the large number of missing or incorrect email addresses with correct email addresses. Thus, for the survey in Poland, we only had an incomplete list and therefore no sample frame that one-to-one reflects the population; (d) In Lithuania and Portugal, the umbrella organisations sent the invitation email with the link to the survey themselves for privacy reasons. Hence for these countries, we ourselves could not control the process of reaching out to the respondents.

Second, given the low response rates in some of the countries surveyed, the risk of non-response bias is an issue in this study. In the context of this working paper presenting a first descriptive analysis of the results, however, this issue was not addressed. Consequently, we cannot exclude possible non-response bias. The results discussed are therefore presented in the form of case studies of the country samples.

Future studies will have to address the issue of possible bias in order to examine the data for generalizability with respect to the respective target population. On this basis, further analyses

151 https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089

will also be devoted to comparing the results from different countries. In the course of further research, the open-ended questions are to be analysed for commonalities, differences and additional information and then interpreted in relation to the results of the closed-ended questions.

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Annex

List of variables

Profiles of the surveyed organisations

Variable	Type of variable	Representation of data
1. Type of organisation		
(a) governmental - nongovernmental	Categorical	Yes/No outcomes
(b) for-profit – not for-profit	Categorical	Yes/No outcomes
(c) faith-based – not faith-based	Categorical	Yes/No outcomes
2. Age of the food distribution	Quantitative	Number of years
3. Size of the organization		
(a) Work force (at the beginning of 2020) - number of volunteers (beginning of 2020)	Quantitative	Number of people
- number of full-time employee (beginning of 2020)	Quantitative	Number of people
- number of part-time employees (beginning of 2020)	Quantitative	Number of people
- number of staff from special work programs (beginning of 2020)	Quantitative	Number of people
(b) Supported households (in 2019)	Quantitative	Number of households
4. Associations	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)

Food aid within the welfare state arrangement

Variable	Type of variable	Representation of data
1. Kinds of support		
(a) Food (before the COVID-19 crisis)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
(b) Importance of food distribution within the organization (before the COVID-19 crisis)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
(c) Non-food support (before the COVID-19 crisis)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
2. Accessibility of food aid		
(a) Allowed frequency (in 2019)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
(b) Necessity of proof of need (in 2019)	Categorical	Yes/No outcomes
(c) Types of proof of need (in 2019)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
3. Sources of support and links to welfare state actors		
(a) Nongovernmental sources of support (before the COVID-19 crisis)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
(b) Governmental sources of support (before the COVID-19 crisis)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
(d) Governmental food aid providers	Categorical	Yes/No outcomes
4. User awareness of food aid services through public actors	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
5. Demand and user profiles		
(a) General Demand		
Demand related to supply in 2019	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
Number of supported households in 2019	Quantitative	Number of households
(b) Demand from specific user groups		

Household types (in 2019)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
Income of household (in 2019)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
Other vulnerable groups (in 2019)	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
6. Users' experiences of social exclusion	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
7. Importance of food aid organisation for users	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them

Food aid during the COVID-19 crisis

Variable	Type of variable	Representation of data
1. Crisis-related difficulties and changes at the operational level		
(a) Difficulties to deal with the crisis regarding general aspects	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
(b) Particular changes	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
(c)Changes concerning staff		
Changes concerning number of staff due to crisis	Categorical	Yes/no outcomes
Number of staff increased/ decreased	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
2. Additional or special support		
(a) Additional/ special support via nongovernmental actors due to crisis	Categorical	Yes/no outcomes
Kinds of support via nongovernmental actors due to crisis	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
More or less support via nongovernmental actors than before crisis	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
(b) Additional/ special support via governmental actors due to crisis	Categorical	Yes/no outcome
Kinds of support via governmental actors due to crisis	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
More or less support via governmental actors than before crisis	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
3. Accessibility of food aid during the crisis		
(a) Changes regarding allowed frequency	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
(b) Changes regarding proofs of need	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
4. Crisis-related changes regarding demand and user groups		
(a) Changes in demand		
Demand higher or lower than supply in 2020 – compared to 2019	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them
Number of households in 2020 – compared to 2019	Quantitative	Number of people
Changes in demand	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)
(b) Changes with respect to user groups		
Increased/ new user groups due to crisis	Categorical	Groups with no rank or order between them (multiple choice)