

food needs

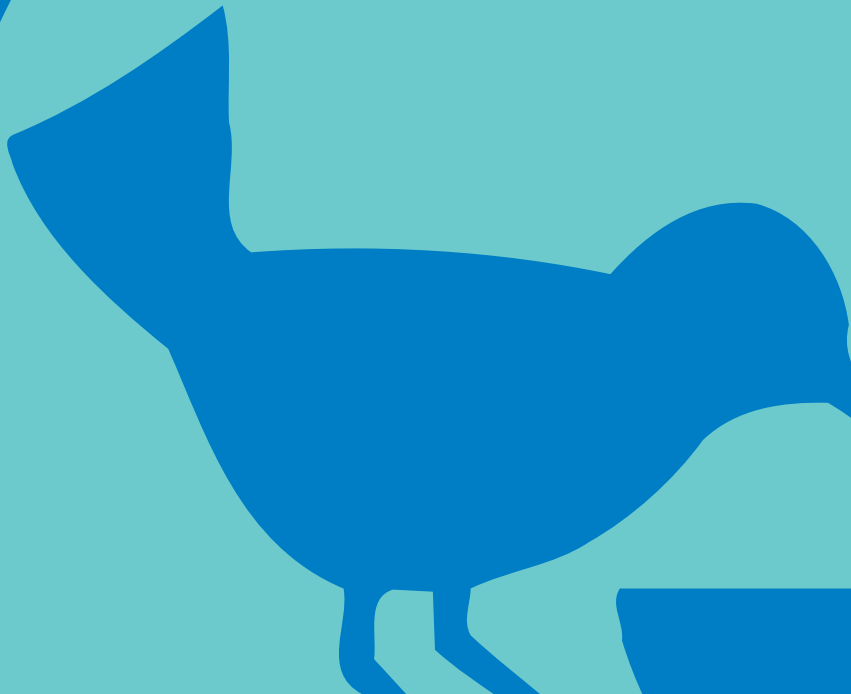
in the general population

**SURVEY ON THE NEEDS OF SOUP KITCHENS
SUPPORTED BY THE ATHENS FOOD BANK**



Athens, June 2022

FOOD



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1 Introduction

The objective of the Food Bank is to redistribute food in order to cover food needs, while at the same time limiting food waste, which is at very high levels in Greece.

The financial crisis -approximately 10 years ago- brought food insecurity to the forefront, overturned the social balance and for many years increased the number of people seeking help from soup kitchens and other civil society organisations.

In the last two years, international developments have been disturbing and unprecedented. As a result, food insecurity in Greece and Europe is on the rise, and at the same time there is talk about a potential broader food crisis and how it can be alleviated.

These future scenarios are certainly not auspicious. Increasing inflation is already affecting food prices, which are expected to go even higher since the increasing cost of energy will be passed on to the end customer. Thus, families will have to choose which expenses to cover. They will be faced with the dilemma of whether they should pay their electricity bills, buy food, heating oil, or whether they should pay their dues to the state.

Food quantities will be limited worldwide, however there will not be any shortages in Europe. Foods that are currently on their way to poorer regions of the world will be absorbed by European countries at higher prices. Food insecurity among the lower levels of society in European countries is expected to increase, while there will be more hunger in other parts of the world, possibly causing new migratory flows, protests, political instability, riots, etc.

The study of all these factors is complicated and it certainly far exceeds the capacity and scope of a Food Bank. This issue presents the data we have gathered on food insecurity and together we express our concerns for the future. Greek society has gained experience in matters of solidarity, however there is also a sense of accumulated weariness.

Dimitris Nentas

2 Official statistics

According to Eurostat, food insecurity is measured as the inability of a person to include chicken, meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent in their diet every second day, and is a sub-set of the material deprivation indicator.

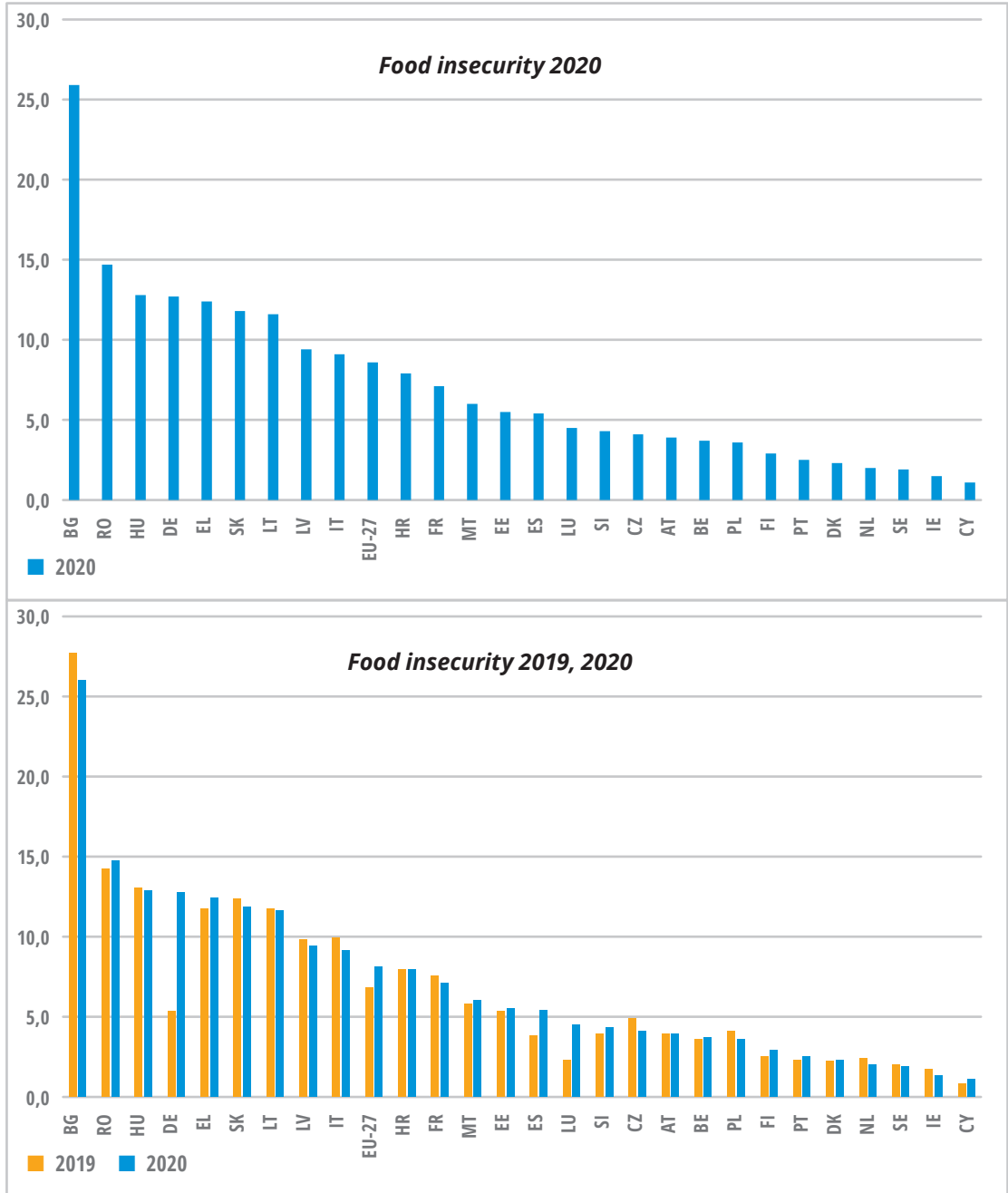
A person is considered food-insecure when they have no assured access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious foods. In developed countries, we do not see many cases of extreme hunger or starvation; however, food insecurity can have significant negative impacts, since "...it can cause mental and physical development problems, affect children's school performance and lead to obesity", (Prolepsis, 2016).

rates of food insecurity in the general population				
Countries		2010	2019	2020
Bulgaria	BG	43,2	27,6	25,9
Romania	RO	21,4	14,2	14,7
Hungary	HU	27,6	13,0	12,8
Germany	DE	8,6	5,3	12,7
Greece	EL	7,9	11,7	12,4
Slovakia	SK	23,0	12,3	11,8
Lithuania	LT	23,5	11,7	11,6
Latvia	LV	26,8	9,8	9,4
Italy	IT	7,0	9,9	9,1
	EU-27	9,4	6,8	8,1
Croatia	HR	15,7	7,9	7,9
France	FR	6,9	7,5	7,1
Malta	MT	10,8	5,8	6,0
Estonia	EE	10,1	5,3	5,5
Spain	ES	2,6	3,8	5,4
Luxembourg	LU	0,9	2,3	4,5
Sweden	SI	8,5	3,9	4,3
Czech Republic	CZ	9,7	4,9	4,1
Austria	AT	8,7	3,9	3,9
Belgium	BE	5,0	3,6	3,7
Poland	PL	15,5	4,1	3,6
Finland	FI	2,9	2,5	2,9
Portugal	PT	3,3	2,3	2,5
Denmark	DK	2,1	2,2	2,3
Netherlands	NL	2,6	2,4	2,0
Slovenia	SE	2,7	2,0	1,9
Ireland	IE	3,0	1,7	1,3
Cyprus	CY	4,4	0,8	1,1

Data in Figure 1 • Source: Eurostat EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03]

The figures below represent the percentages of food insecurity for European countries in the year 2020, compared to the years 2019-2020.

Figure 1: Food insecurity in European countries



Source: Eurostat EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03] • Processed by: Food Bank

Comparing data from 2020 and 2019:

- On average, food insecurity in Europe reached 8.1% compared to 6.8% in 2019. In 13 countries, it is less than 5%, while 20 countries in total have a food insecurity rate of less than 10%.
- Bulgaria continues to have a very high rate of food insecurity (25.9%); however, it drops every year (2019: 27.6%).
- What is truly surprising is the very high increase in Germany (from 5.3% in 2019 to 12.7% in 2020).
- Greece has the 5th highest rate for 2020, with a food insecurity rate of 12.4% which is still continuing on its upward path.

What is of particular interest is the curve representing food insecurity among the poorer levels of society (see Figure 2, orange). The numbers here are up to triple, and the changes are far more intense.


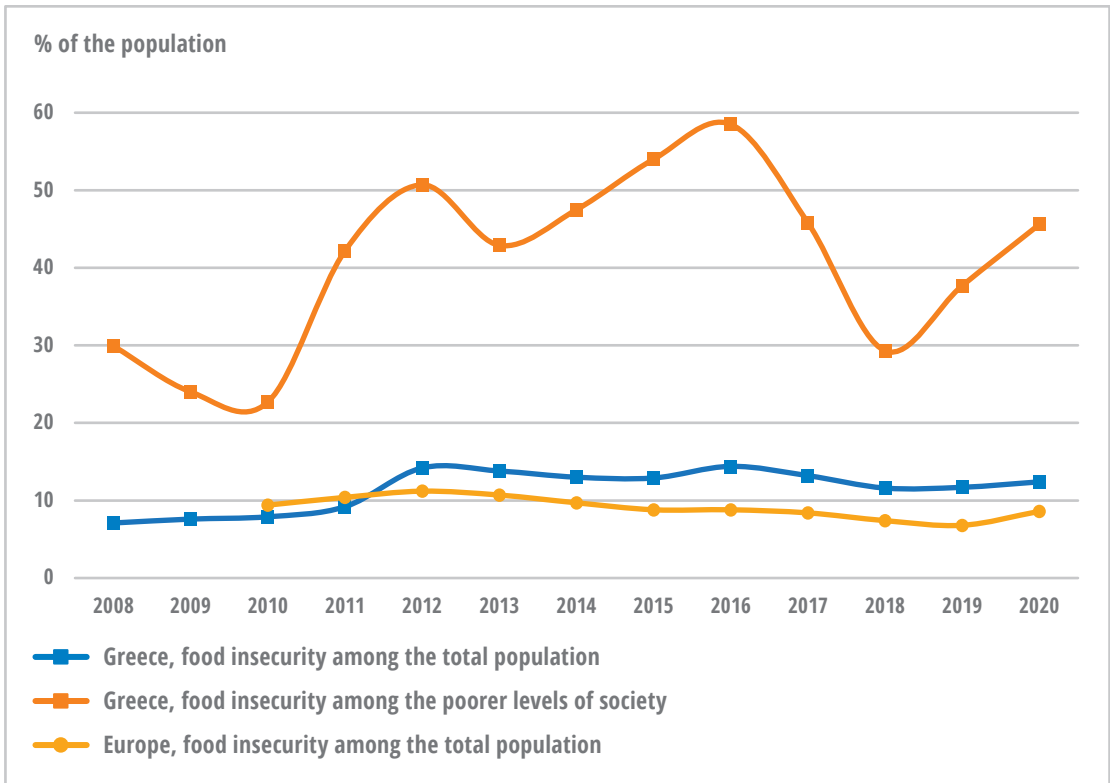
 These people are below the poverty line and any change in their income -even if slight- directly affects their ability to buy food.

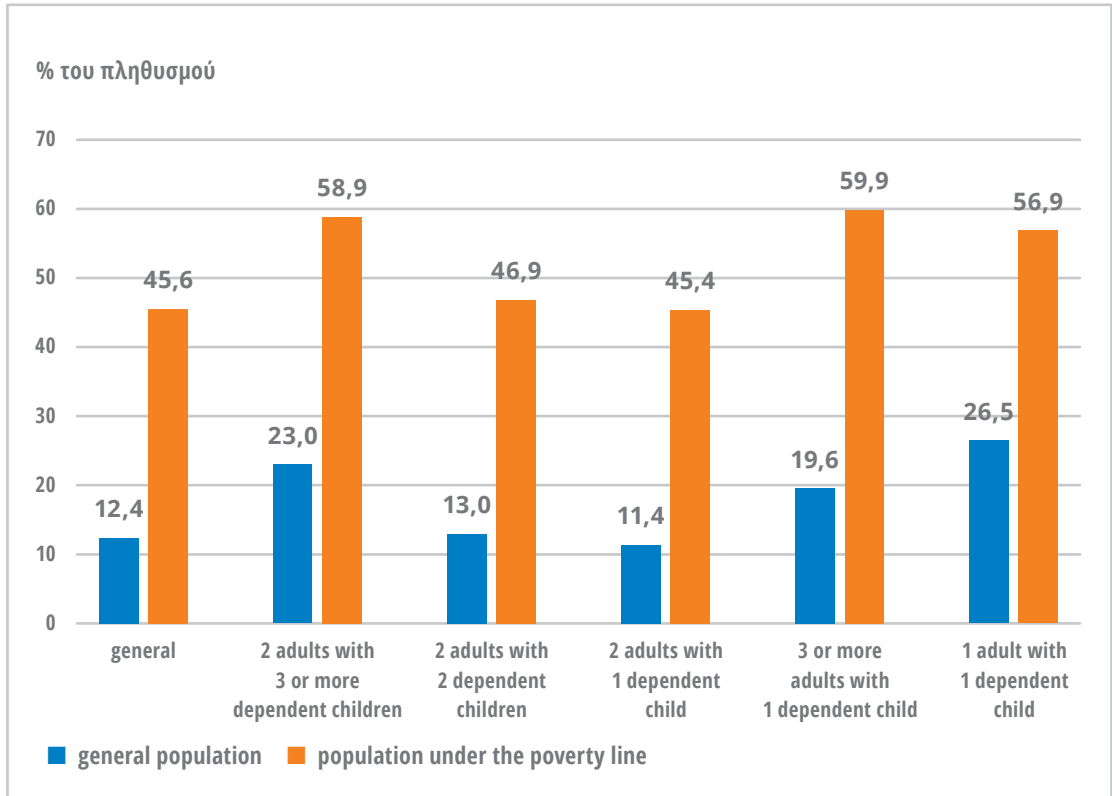
Figure 2: The development of food insecurity, Greece - Europe



Source: Eurostat EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03] • Processed by: Food Bank

Below is a presentation of the official statistics on food insecurity in 2020 based on the type of family and economic status.

Figure 3: Food insecurity in 2020, by type of family and income



Source: Eurostat EU-SILC survey [ILC_MDES03] • Processed by: Food Bank

- Generally, Figure 2 confirms the observation that food insecurity occurs in low-income homes at rates that are up to triple.
- Higher rates occur in multi-member families and in single-parent families.
- Families with two adults and one or two children follow -more or less- the rates of the general population.

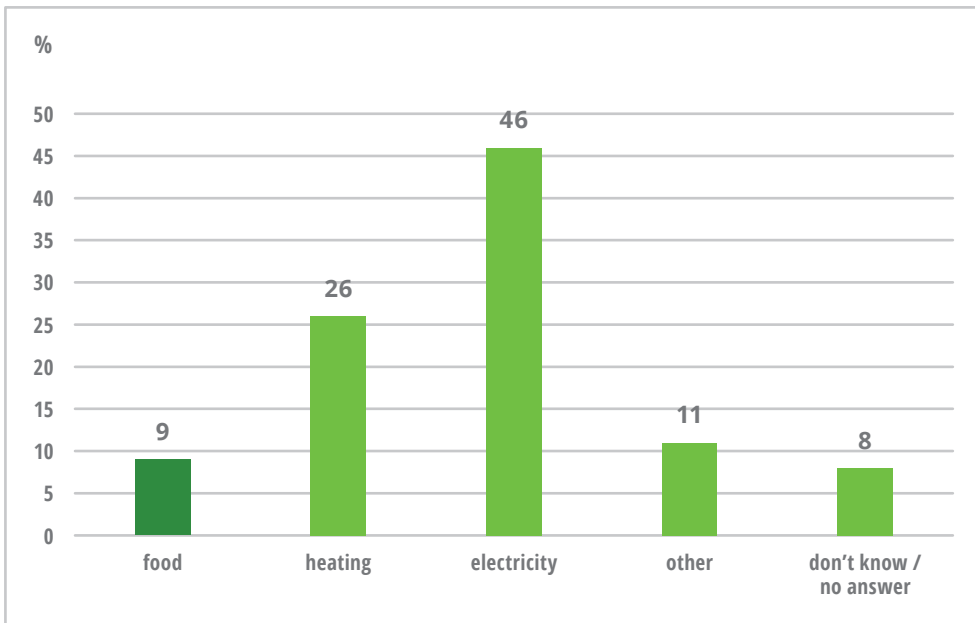
3 Opinion Polls

As part of this paper, we consider it useful to make a short reference to data resulting from opinion polls. Although these opinion polls mainly concern citizen opinions on matters of everyday life and politics, they also include data related to food insecurity.

The two opinion polls were carried out as part of a survey by Pulse on behalf of the Greek television station SKAI. The first opinion poll was conducted on 22-24 January on a sample of 1,504 interviews (*QR Code 1, page 14*) and the second on 27-29 March on a sample of 1,207 interviews (*QR Code 2, page 14*).

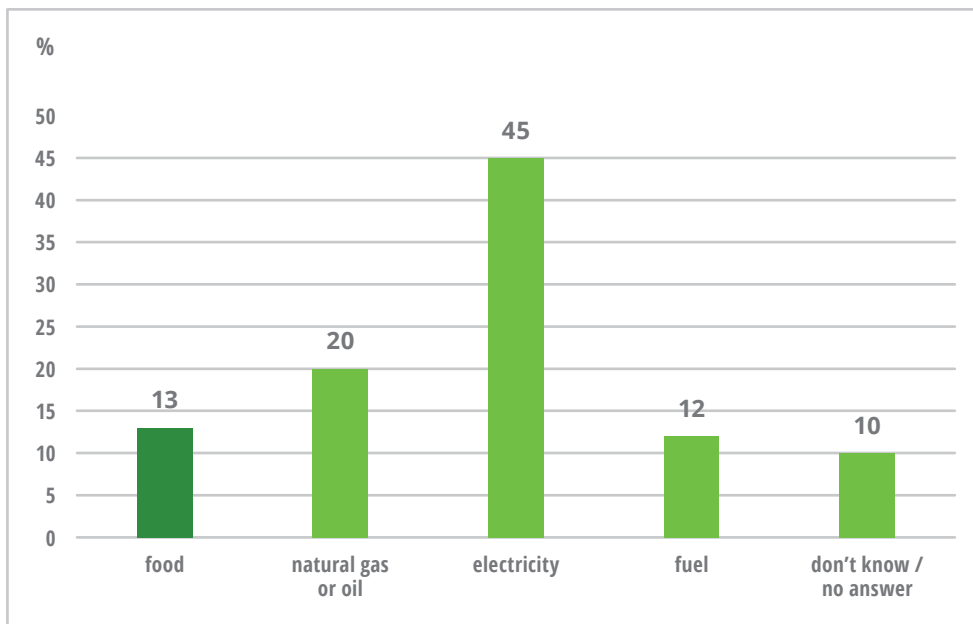
As part of the two interviews, the following question was posed and the responses were recorded as presented.

Figure 4: Which of the following expense categories for your family would you say concerns you the most these days?



Source: 22-24 Jan Opinion Poll by Pulse for SKAI • Processed by: Food Bank

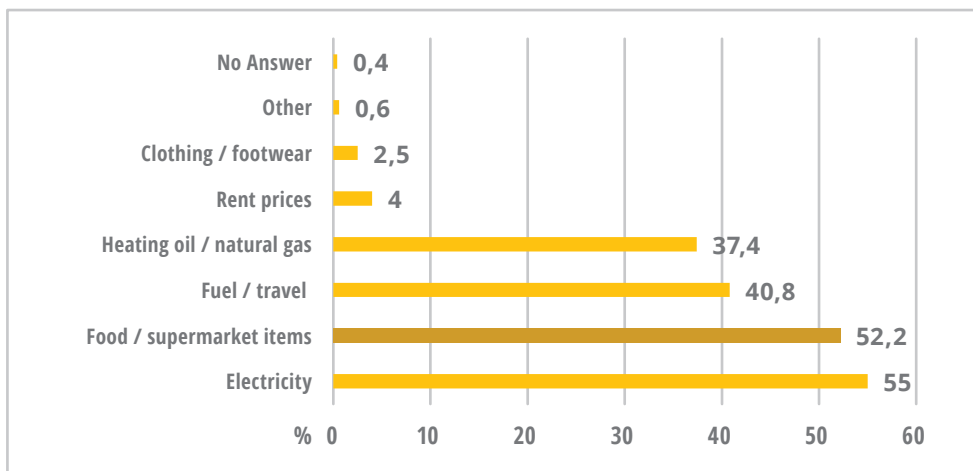
Figure 5: Which of the following expense categories for your family would you say concerns you the most?



Source: 27-29 March Opinion Poll by Pulse for SKAI • Processed by: Food Bank


Similarly, in an opinion poll by marc for the ANT1 television station, it appears that 52.2% of survey subjects are concerned about the price increases in food and other supermarket items. The opinion poll was carried out on 8-12 February on a sample of 1,037 individuals (QR Code 3, page 14).

Figure 6: In which category of goods do you find price increases most concerning? (choose up to 2)



Source: 8-12 Feb Opinion Poll by marc for ANT1 • Processed by: Food Bank

- Generally, the results of the opinion polls are not comparable between them, or in relation to official statistical data, since each opinion poll poses the food question using a different approach.
- It is striking that in the Pulse opinion poll, and in a period of just two months, there are 4 percent more questions concerning food (from 9% in January to 13% in March).
- When considering the above data, one must take into account the special circumstances prevailing at the time during which each opinion poll was conducted. The difficult weather conditions in January certainly affected the responses regarding heating needs, while the international developments in March created a different framework.

 Whatever the case may be, it is clear that food needs are increasing. This can be seen, firstly, in the inability of citizens to purchase foods based on their habits, and in their concerns about the future, taking into account the difficulties they are already facing. Furthermore, the issue is of interest to polling companies, although it is not in any way their main subject of study.



QR code 1:
***Pulse opinion poll for SKAI,
January 2022***



QR code 2:
***Marc opinion poll for ANT1,
February 2022***



QR code 3:
***Pulse opinion poll for SKAI,
March 2022***

4 Survey

4.1 Introduction

The Food Bank mainly accepts donations of food from companies whose products are then offered free of charge to soup kitchens and institutions throughout Attica. Part of its activity is to review the bodies it supports and to be knowledgeable about their needs.

Soup kitchens are facilities which offer food to people who turn to them for assistance. They operate at “neighbourhood” level; they may know the people who need help personally and, aside from providing food, usually support them in other ways as well (material assistance, psycho-social support). In most cases, particularly after the economic crisis, they maintain records on beneficiaries, their family and economic status, any health problems they may have, and so on. This does not apply to soup kitchens which support a large number of homeless or substance-dependent individuals, usually in the city centre.

The number of people each soup kitchen supports depends on its capacity and a review of people's needs. It is important that there are no across-the-board criteria, but the needs of each person are assessed individually. As a result, a three-member family with a child with disabilities may have a greater need for assistance than a couple, even if that family's income is proportionately higher. Similarly, someone with real property (e.g. a house in a village) but zero income is excluded from official state welfare programmes, though they have a real need for food.

Soup kitchens are not part of a unified and organised network, nor is it possible to obtain an overall record of how many soup kitchens there are. Most are run by church parishes, various organisations or unofficial social groups. They endeavour to find food donations from donors in the area in which they work, while also buying food with their own funds (membership fees, fund-raising bazaars and events, etc.).

The Food Bank maintains a strict principle of supplying only soup kitchens with official legal status and a Tax Registration Number. Goods are distributed with packing slips with appropriate codes for the soup kitchens and products provided by special software. This makes it easier to handle products and ensure food traceability, while making it possible to keep complete statistical records.

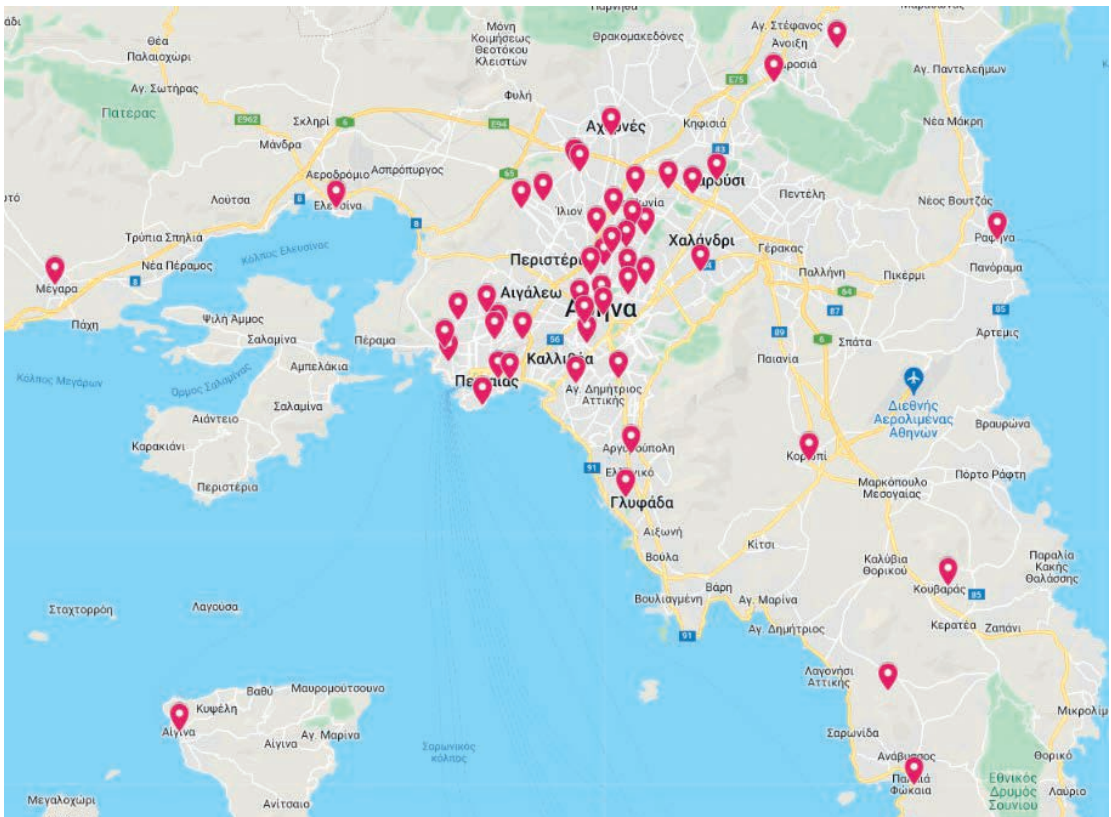
This paper is a continuation of the corresponding paper published by the Food Bank in January 2021. Many questions concern possible changes in circumstances in the last year and a half, while some issues are not analysed in detail.

The responses to the questionnaires were gathered in the period from 16 March to 24 April 2022 through telephone interviews with the persons in charge of the soup kitchens. The questionnaire was designed exclusively for soup kitchens serving the general population. The Food Bank also supplies institutions (nursing homes, orphanages, centres for people with disabilities, drug rehabilitation facilities and others) who serve social groups with diverse but unique characteristics.

In total, 52 complete responses were received from soup kitchens. Their geographic distribution is shown on the map. The sample of soup kitchens was derived from a total of 94 that the Food Bank supports. These soup kitchens distribute cooked food or offer food items so that families can cook at home. The specific soup kitchens support a total of 15,941 people, 3,867 of whom are minors and 4,342 are over the age of 65. Of these 40 are run by church parishes (77% of the sample), 8 by civil society organisations (15%) and 4 are municipal social food pantries (8%).



QR code 4:
Survey by the Food Bank on the “food needs in the general population”, 2021



4.2 Responses - The needs

The questionnaire is structured along two axes. We are interested a) in how the problems of people and soup kitchens developed through time based on the experience of people running soup kitchens, and b) how broader developments affect the needs and efforts to support more vulnerable groups.

All answers collected from the questionnaires refer to people who need and seek out food, according to the soup kitchens themselves.

Figure 7: The previous survey (November 2020) showed that 8 months after the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic in Greece (March 2020), the number of people in need of food increased in the soup kitchens. Today, 15 months later, the number of people:

- Remains the same
- Has increased
- Has started to drop to pre-pandemic levels

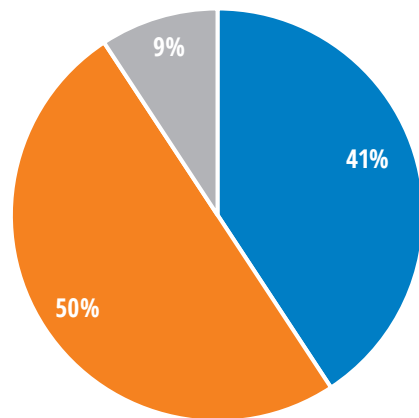


Figure 8: The previous survey (November 2020) showed that 8 months after the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic in Greece (March 2020), the needs of the same people resorting to soup kitchens had increased, in other words, individuals who needed support before the pandemic had an even greater need for help. Today, 15 months after this phenomenon, the number of people:

- Remains the same
- Has increased
- Has started to drop to pre-pandemic levels

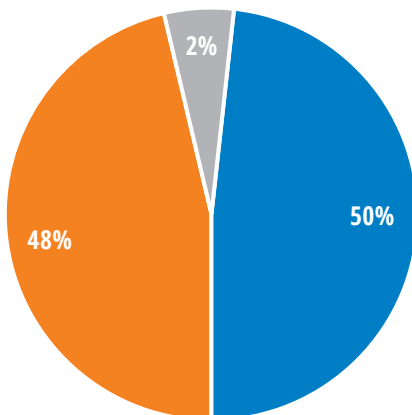
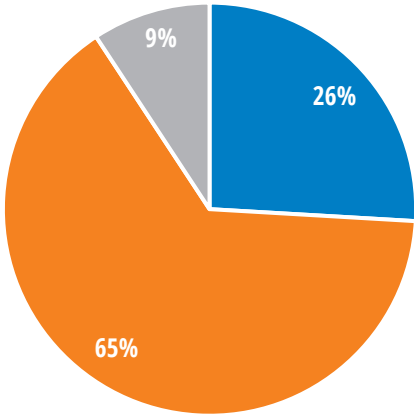


Figure 9: The previous survey (November 2020) showed that 8 months after the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic in Greece (March 2020), food insufficiency in soup kitchens had increased. Today, 15 months later, this insufficiency:

- Remains the same
- Has increased
- Has started to drop to pre-pandemic levels



- 50% of soup kitchens state that the number of people seeking help has increased (Figure 7).
- 48% state that the needs of the same people have increased, while 50% state that the needs remain at the same high levels as those recorded in late 2020 (Figure 8).
- According to Figure 9, 65% of soup kitchens state that it is even harder to find food in order to serve the people asking them for help. Furthermore, only very few of the unemployed individuals asking for help from soup kitchens have managed to find employment (Figure 10).

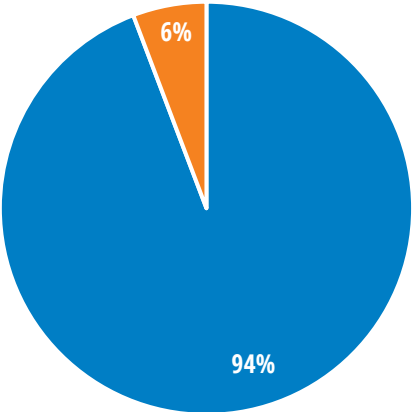





Figure 10: Within the last 15 months, how many of the unemployed individuals you help have found employment?

- Have found employment
- Have not found employment

The above responses alone confirm the data from the previous survey, which appear to have deteriorated.

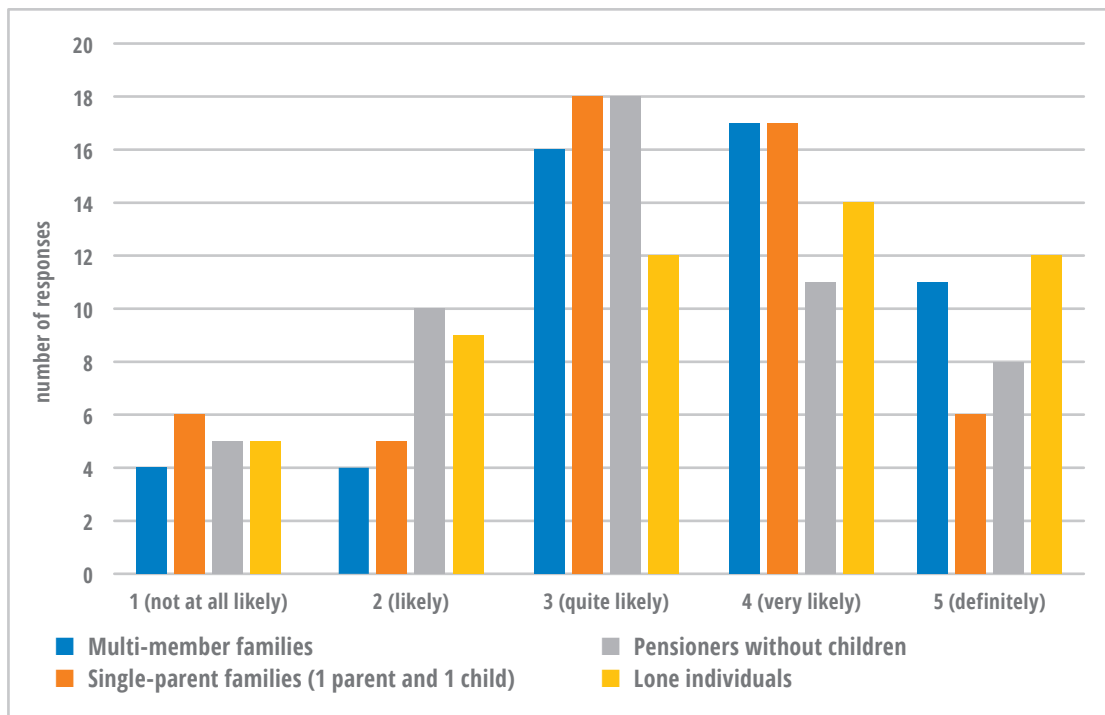
-  There is an increase in the number of people in need
-  Needs per person are growing, i.e. someone who already needed support now needs even more assistance
-  The difficulty of finding food which could meet these needs is growing

The below table was prepared based on the data from the 52 soup kitchens participating in the survey, in terms of the final beneficiaries, while Figure 11 represents the risk of food insecurity by family type, based on the responses we received.

Table 1: Final beneficiaries of soup kitchens participating in the survey

How many families do you help? (total of 8.636)		
Out of the families you help, how many are multi-member families?	1.913	22%
Out of the families you help, how many are single-parent families? (1 parent with 1 or more children)	923	11%
Out of the families you help, how many are pensioners with no children?	1.276	15%

Figure 11: From your experience, how likely is it for the families below to face problems in finding food?



The responses have resulted in the below weighted averages, which show on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (definitely) how likely it is that each family type will face problems finding food. Generally speaking, with small differences, there is a medium risk of food insecurity, with multi-member families and lone individuals facing the highest risk.

Table 2: The likelihood that each family type will face a problem finding food on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (definitely)

Family type	Weighted average %
Multi-member families	3,5 / 5
Single-parent families (1 parent and 1 child)	3,2 / 5
Pensioners without children	3,1 / 5
Lone individuals	3,4 / 5

4.3 Responses – The broader problems

It is obvious that international developments, with increases in inflation, the cost of energy and problems in the food production and distribution chain, are affecting food insecurity.

The figures below represent the consequences on people supported by soup kitchens, and also on the operation of the soup kitchens themselves.

Figure 12: How much does the increase in the cost of energy (electricity, gas, fuel) reduce the food purchasing power of (a) the people you help? (b) your soup kitchen?



- The increase in energy prices (*Figure 12*) and in food in particular (*Figure 13*) is strongly affecting the purchasing power of society's weaker social groups, and of the soup kitchens themselves.

- Electricity is the expense category that most concerns the population, at a rate of 71%, while food comes second at a rate of 15% (*Figure 14*).

- As regards the operation of soup kitchens, the above expense categories present rates of 52% for electricity and 35% for food, which shows the great need of soup kitchens to ensure sufficient food for the people they care for (*Figure 14*), as well as the positive effect of soup kitchens on the people they help.

Figure 13: How much does the increase in food prices reduce the food purchasing power of (a) the people you help? (b) your soup kitchen?

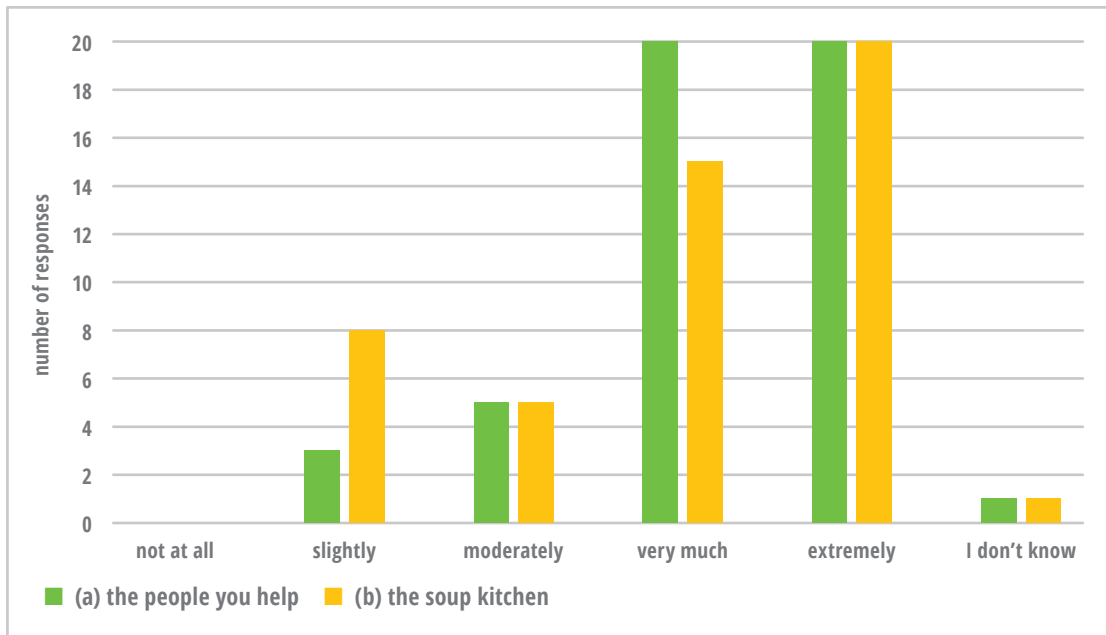
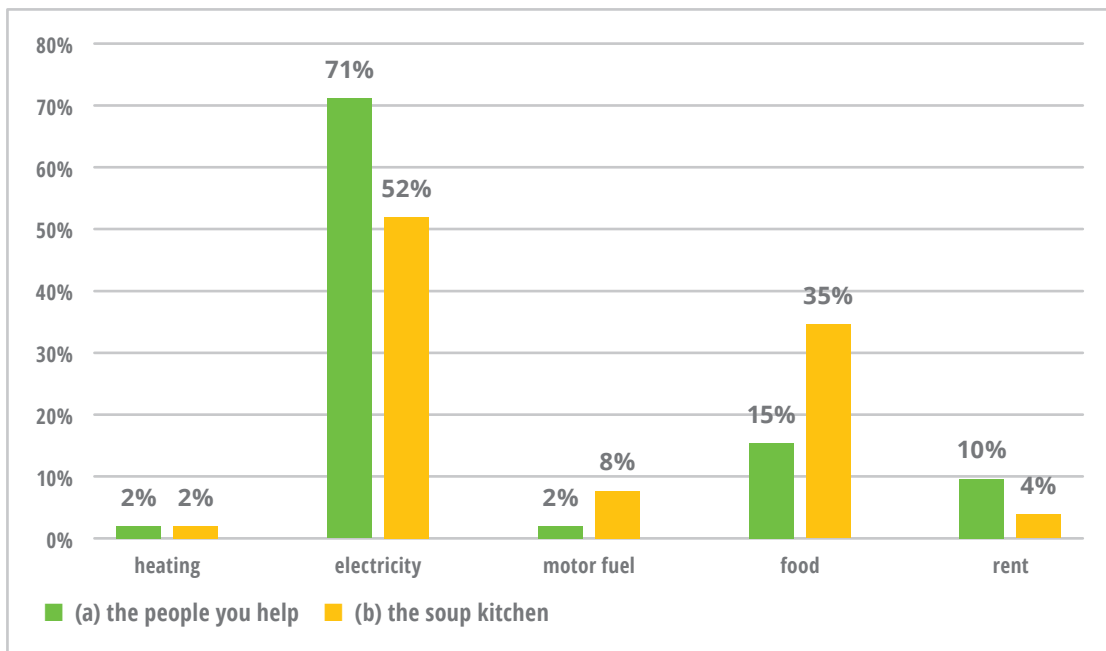


Figure 14: Which of the following expense categories would you say concerns you the most



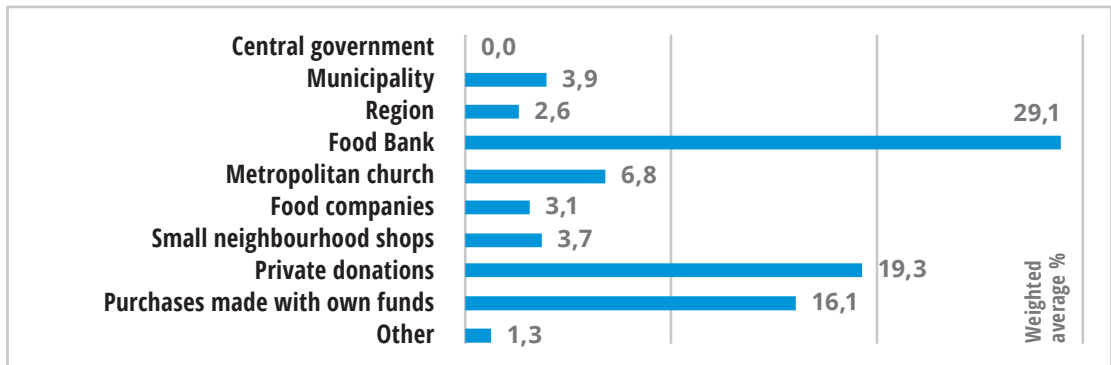
4.4 Responses - Regarding food

Below is a presentation of the data gathered on the 'sources' from which soup kitchens draw or could draw food. The data in Table 3 have been used to calculate the weighted averages, as depicted in the Figure.

Table 3: Indicate which of the following are sources for your food

Potential sources of food provision	Rate of contribution						
	0%	1-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	>51%
Central government	52	0	0	0	0	0	0
Municipality	29	18	3	1	0	1	0
Region	33	15	4	0	0	0	0
Food Bank	0	3	5	11	10	8	15
Metropolitan church	24	12	9	4	0	1	2
Food companies	18	17	10	1	4	1	1
Small neighbourhood shops	25	21	4	1	0	0	1
Private donations	1	16	11	6	10	4	4
Purchases made with own funds	8	13	8	10	4	4	5
Other	45	4	3	0	0	0	0

Figure 15: Food sources for soup kitchens - weighted averages



Similarly to the previous survey, food sources of an institutional nature appear to make a small contribution, while soup kitchens depend on private initiative

5 Beneficiary examples

As a side-line to the survey, we asked some of the soup kitchens in our sample to share with us some examples of the people they benefit, while protecting any personal data that could expose someone's identity. Below are a few examples:

G.K. is divorced and lives in ... with her daughter, G.S., who is disabled and receives a benefit of €3,130. G.K. does contingent work and declares zero income.

E.A. lives in ... with her son, G.A., who is a contingent worker. E.A. has serious health problems and declares a pension of €6,990.45.

O.M., place of residence: The mother has abandoned the family and the father has undertaken to care for the three children, S.M. 13 years old, O.M. 10 years old and N.M. 18 years old. They are in a rather tough financial situation since the father is a contingent worker and they pay rent for the home they live in.

M.E., place of residence: The family lives with its two children, E.E. 16 years old and M.E. 20 years old, in a house provided to them rent free in Elefsina, which does not have electricity. The family has also undertaken to care for the paternal grandmother, who is bedridden. The father is in casual employment, collecting metal scraps; the mother is unemployed and the son does odd jobs.

E.P., place of residence: This is a single-parent family with two under-age children, who live in a rented home in the area of Elefsina. The daughter is severely handicapped and attends a special school. The family's income is limited to the children's benefit and the daughter's disability allowance.

A.A. is 47 years old, a widow and mother of 2 children; she lives on ... street. She declares an income of €4,600. She has a disability rate of 67% resulting from a heavy stroke caused by a ruptured aneurysm, and also from a psychiatric disorder. She is incapacitated for any gainful employment.

K.L. is 40 years old and the mother of one under-age child who is 16 years of age. She is separated from her husband, G.D., and declares an income of €2,500. She lives with her mother on ... street.

A.K. is 64 years old and lives in the home of his sister, E.K., on ... street. He declares an income of €5,088 and has serious psychological problems.

P.G. and his family live in ..., in a privately-owned home. They are a three-member family. Only the father and one child live at home since the oldest son suffers from bipolar disorder and is in a mental institution. The mother was removed from the home because she was abusive towards the children and indifferent. The family's annual income amounts to €9,276.04.

A.P. is 45 years old. She has been separated from her husband for 10 years, but they haven't gotten a divorce. The husband lives in France. Rent: €150. She works anywhere that can provide her a wage. Her two children aged 21 and 23 live with her most of the time.

M.S. is 24. She is married, but her husband, C, is in prison. She has a 14-month-old son. She lives in a house her father owns. She receives SSI and a child benefit. Their total income is €3,420 annually. She cannot work because of the child.

C.T. lives on ... street. She is 26 years old and unemployed, and her husband receives a low salary. They have an 11-year-old child. They have an annual income of €5,200 and pay €300 in rent.

M.A., area: She lives with her two children aged 16 and 14. Her husband has left her. She has suffered a stroke even though she is 46 years old. They live on a social solidarity income card and the A21 family benefit, and on child support, whenever her husband provides it. Rent: €230.

K.M. and T.A., ... street. Couple with a 10-month-old baby girl. The young man works for a public works company and earns €600 per month. The young lady is unemployed. Rent: €270. Rent subsidy: €120.

G.E. and F.A., ... street. Aged 42 and 46. The family has five children, N. who is 18 years old, E who is 18, M. who is 19, N. who is 21 and G. who is 25. G. has suffered a serious leg injury and the mother has an autoimmune disease and many other health problems. N. also has a son who is 3 years old. She had him when she was a minor and the father was a minor too. Income: €18,154. Rent: €300.

K.A., ... street. Recently divorced, she lives with her two children, A., 10 years old, and E., 23 years old. She has an unemployment card. She has an income of €4,640 and pays €200 in rent.

6 Conclusions

From the publication of the previous survey until today, there has been a decline in the pandemic and the economy is functioning with fewer restrictions. There was first a picture of returning to 'normalcy', although international developments from the end of 2021 were highly adverse.

Official statistics, opinion polls and the results of the questionnaire show that the situation is deteriorating, but remaining on the level of 'food insecurity' and not 'hunger'.

According to Eurostat, 12.4% of Greece's population was in a state of food insecurity in 2020. We can safely conclude from the remaining data that this percentage has clearly increased, without however being able to assess this increase in numerical terms.

The responses show that the problem of food insecurity has three dimensions:

- There is an increase in the number of people in need.
- Needs per person are growing, i.e. someone who already needed support now needs even more assistance.
- Soup kitchens, which could meet these needs, are facing increasing difficulties in finding food.

All three dimensions were discerned in the previous survey. However, they did not remain fixed in the in-between period, but continued to increase. Now, there are even more people who resort to soup kitchens and they are in an even tougher financial situation, while soup kitchens face greater difficulties in carrying out their work.

The general conclusion is that a substantial part of society has been strongly impoverished and they undoubtedly turn to soup kitchens for support. These are people with particularly low incomes, which are limited by various extrinsic factors (pandemic, rising inflation, price increases), and they therefore limit the quality and quantity of the foods they buy for their families since they have no other choice.

Given the circumstances, the next two—at least—years are bound to be difficult. Developing countries will face serious food problems, which will lead to the further spread of famine, while food prices in developed countries will increase even more as a result of limited availability of food quantities. The fear of a global food crisis is being openly discussed by executives of international organisations and heads of state, while this fear is also being openly expressed by the general population.

One thing is certain, Food Banks and civil society organisations will continue with their work. Greece now has 6 Food Banks in Athens, Thessaloniki, Thessaly, Drama, Epirus and Crete. They have formed a developing network of organisations which can exchange food, ideas, experiences and practices. More food is being distributed by the Food Banks, reaching thousands of our fellow human beings in Greece, with the exclusive support of the private sector.

The new challenges demand greater cooperation. In the last decade, the state has established important policies in the right direction (minimum guaranteed income, school meals, etc.); however, it took a long time to implement them. The building of trust and a closer working relationship between the central government and the network of soup kitchens, and private charity organisations in general, would have a positive impact on the whole of society. Civil society organisations can contribute with their experience and flexibility; however they do also need the support of the state.



QR code 5:
Food Bank, Statistical Record 2021

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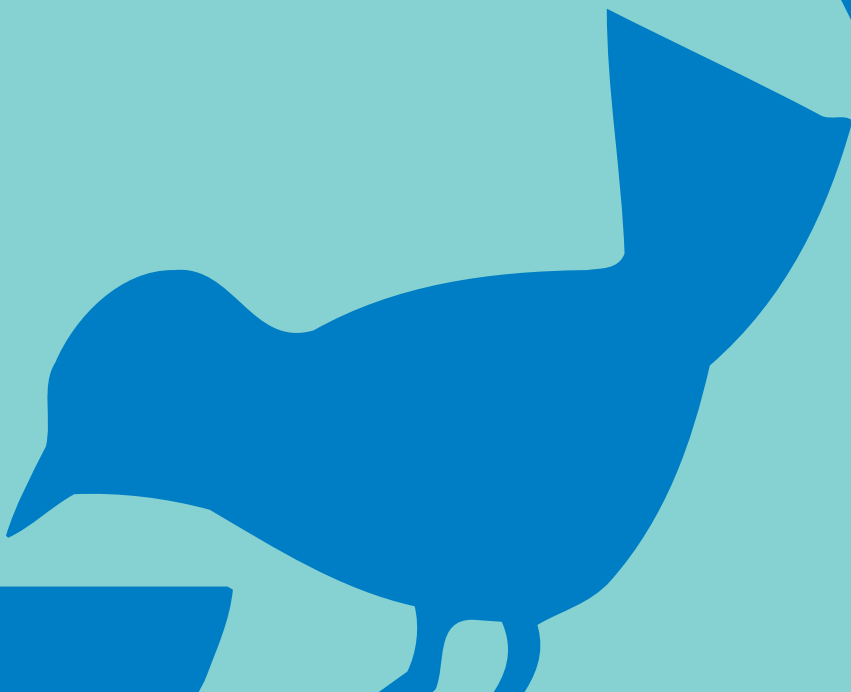
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БАНК



Food Bank

A charity organisation, since 1995, aiming to stop hunger and food waste. It works with food production and trading companies, with the Federation of Hellenic Food Industries (SEVT) and other public benefit organisations so that food not absorbed by the market can be provided free to soup kitchens and institutions.

It is a member of the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA - www.eurofoodbank.org) along with 422 food banks in 28 European countries. We work in accordance with its principles, we take part in training seminars on actions that take place in Greece and other EU Member States, and we closely monitor EU policies on issues of concern.

The Athens Food Bank has helped to establish food banks in Thessaloniki, Thessaly, Drama, Epirus and Crete. In 2020 overall, more than 2,160 tonnes of products were distributed, and nearly 26,000 tonnes have been distributed over the 26 years of their operation. They receive no funding from the state and their operation relies solely on private initiative.

Our goal is to establish more food banks that will save even greater quantities of food and form a cohesive network of social solidarity.



FOOD BANK

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