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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Minzatu
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.2.2026)

1. Food prices and household budgets are key drivers of deprivation trends¹. The increased cost-of-living has put pressure on income, reducing room for expenses, including food-related ones. This, coupled to potentially inadequate social protection or inefficient policy responses can contribute to food insecurity outcomes and lead to the increased use of food banks. The Commission has commissioned a study on food affordability in the EU, to be finalised by the end of 2026. It will assess food affordability, the common agricultural policy's contribution to food prices and review other measures in place across the food system to support food affordability.

2. Ensuring the dignity and respect for the privacy of beneficiaries of food banks and rolling out accompanying measures are key to avoid stigmatisation and promote social inclusion.

3. Based on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Child Guarantee² recommends Member States to guarantee access of children in need to at least one healthy meal each school day and healthy nutrition. Inclusive access to healthy food yields positive returns. School meal programmes, for instance, have positive impact on pupils' health and educational outcomes. The Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion³ considers that social safety nets should help those in poverty access healthy food. The European Social Fund+ addresses material deprivation with a total allocation of EUR 5.5 billion for food and material support. Lastly, the Commission will put forward the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy in the second quarter of 2026.

¹ See for instance https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a91b3841-6021-489e-b877-7f0f5278c88c_en?filename=efscm-assessment-spring-2024_en.pdf.

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2021.223.01.0014.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A223%3ATO
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³ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32023H0203\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32023H0203(01)).