

SESK – Social sErviceS helpdesk on EU Funds

Project number: 101052902

HELPDESK

SOCIAL SERVICES HELPDESK ON EU FUNDS

Key Findings – The Use of EU Shared Management Funds by Social Services in FRANCE

Date: 10 January 2023

Version: 1

Restricted or Public: Public

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1. Introduction - identification of country and respondents

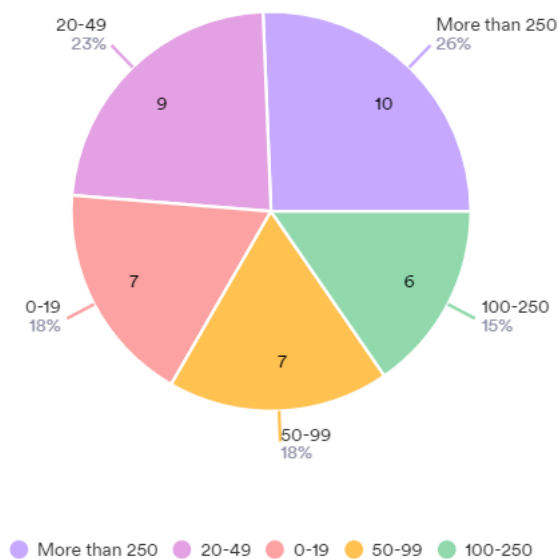
41 social service operators in France responded to our survey. 31 of them are from non-residential social work (NACE code 88) and the other 15 from residential care (NACE code 87).

The two main target groups that respondents work with are persons with disabilities (26 %) and children (26 %); then comes the elderly (19 %), refugees (9 %) and homeless people (7 %). 85 % of the respondents are from an organization established by a region, the others are associations or the non-profit sector. However, considering the different categories as suggested, one cannot identify the profile of respondents, from the public/private sector nor their legal statute.

Respondent organizations are mainly small and medium-sized enterprises (41 %) and 26 % of them are big enterprises with more than 250 employees.

What is the number of employees in your organization:

39 Responses

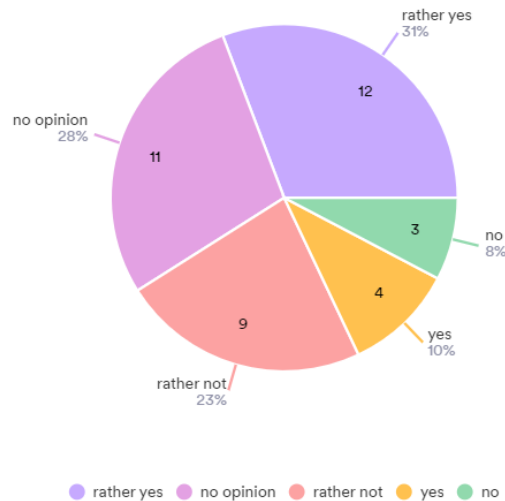


2. Call for projects

There are mixed views on the clarity of the calls for projects with 28 % of the respondents without

3. Are the calls for projects clearly formulated? Are the supported activities, target groups, indicators, etc. clearly defined?

39 Responses



opinion. That relates to the fact that 50 % of the responding organisations have little experience with EU-funded project (50 % of them having not submitted or implemented EU projects in the last programming). For the remaining answers, most of respondents (41 %) declare that calls for projects are most or less well formulated, whereas 31 % think the opposite.

However, some comments highlight the lack of experience with procedures when answering to a call for projects for the first time. Some operators would like to have access to tools (such as a presentation) to better understand how to complete the calls for projects. Also, they complain that sometimes questions are too technical and do not correspond to the reality of the actors in the field.

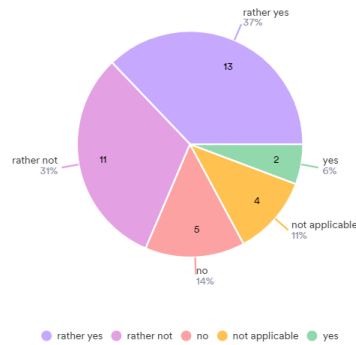
3. Application

We asked participants about the difficulties that they encounter when applying. The difficulty that was mainly highlighted relates to the short deadline for submitting the project (24%). Then, respondents highlighted the following difficulties (15 % for each them):

- The ineligibility of the applicant organisation
- Lack of clarity on project rules
- Lack of co-fundings

Finally, 11% complain about not finding an eligible project partner. Regarding the ability to meet post-project sustainability rules, most of the organisations (47 %) reply that these rules represent more of a barrier.

7. Are the so-called "post-project sustainability rules" (if applicable for your country) a barrier for submitting your projects?
35 Responses

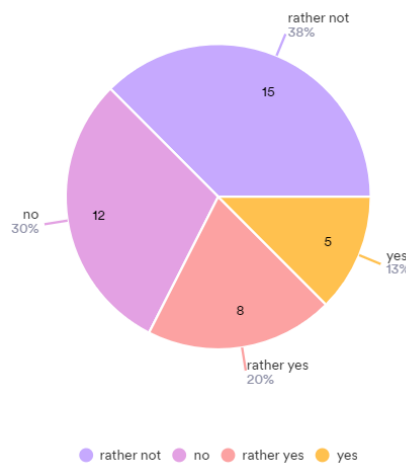


Finally, about 20 % of the respondents related to various reasons for not applying for a project (e.g. lack of human and financial resources, lack of support, inadequacy of proceedings)

Operators also highlighted various difficulties encountered when applying for funding. What stands out is the inability to follow the public procurement and/or state aid rules. There is also the lack of from the managing authorities and the lack of internal resources. Finally, the application forms are too complex and time consuming to complete. There are a lot of documents to produce, and constraints are imposed even before receiving funding.

98% of the operators who responded to the survey said that an internal worker oversees applying for funds and that they do not hire an external consultant. 68% of them say that they do not have the funds to train their staff for properly filling-out these calls for projects.

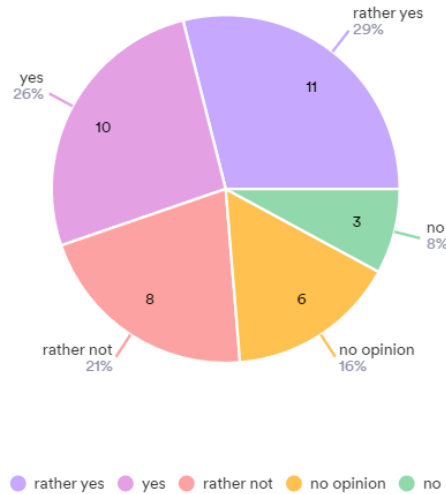
11. Do you have means to train or educate your staff so that your organization can better apply for European funds?
40 Responses



4. Co-financing

5. Is the co-financing percentage limiting for you, when planning the implementation of a project?

38 Responses



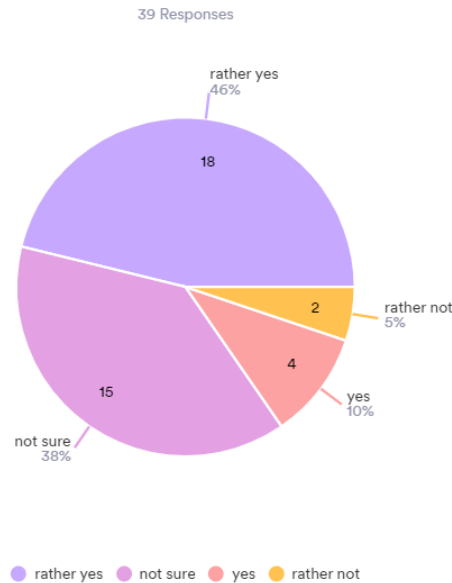
55 % of respondents consider the level of requested co-funding percentage as a limit in implementing a EU-funded project.

We gathered the open-ended responses to see the main different sources of co-funding in these organisations:

- City and region (public authorities)
- Own funds and revenues from other activities
- Donations
- Bank loan
- ...

5. Funding

2. Are the EU priorities in line with your needs for financing? In other words, can EU projects fund the activities you really need?

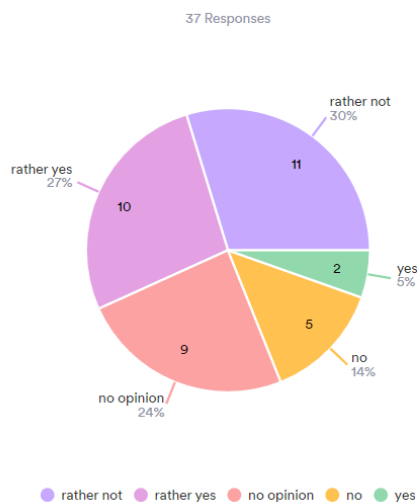


EU priorities seem to be in line with most of respondents' financing needs, but what emerges mainly from this question is the difficulty encountered by these operators to fit into the criteria. Some complain that there is nothing on child protection in the context of innovative schemes, or on inclusive housing.

6. Collaboration with Managing Authorities

Whereas 24 % of the respondents have no opinion on the level of interactions with managing authorities, 44 % of them seem dissatisfied with the communication and assistance provided by managing authorities.

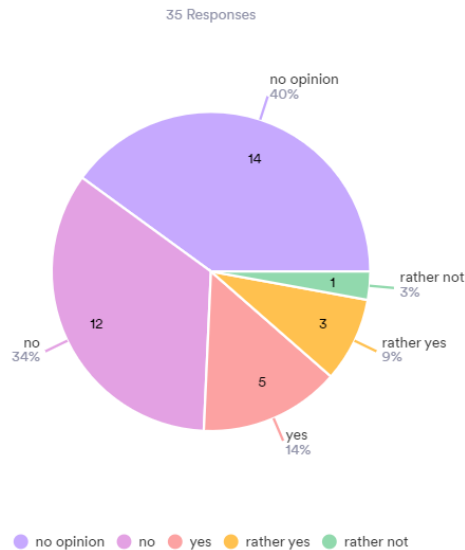
12. Does the European grant provider (your Managing Authority) communicate sufficiently with you during the project writing, implementation and reporting and provides you with relevant information and support when necessary?



18% of them have already encountered a situation where the managing authority changed the rules during the implementation of the project. For example: change in the constitution of the file after 3

months, request to reduce the duration of the project by half, requirement of reports with new regulations along the way, etc.

19. Have you experienced audit control by a European grant provider? If so, do you think it was adequately set up?



Although a majority of respondents had no opinion, most respondents (37 %) have not been audited by a European grant provider.

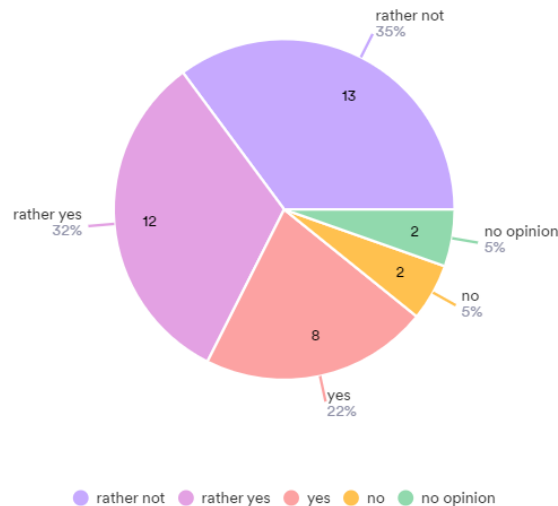
Concerning the rules for public procurement in European projects, 59% find them poorly implemented. According to these social service providers, these rules are too complex and too restrictive for small structures, being difficult to understand and to implement.

7. Implementation of the project

Regarding the implementation of the project, the creation of an efficient and competent work team is an issue for 54 % of organisations but not for 40 % of them.

14. Is it easy for you to put together a professional team for successful project implementation?

37 Responses



Most of the time, teams are created with in-house workers. Often, these workers do not have the training to manage these processes in an optimal way. There is a need for a specific administrative position for this kind of task. Some hire a person to handle funding, but these workers receive only a standard salary and are only eligible for rather precarious, fixed-term contracts.

8. Evaluation

We asked the operators about the biggest difficulties that they face when writing the project report. For them, there is a heavy administrative burden that is difficult to manage, whether it is to retrieve all the documents from the partners but also to have all the valid proofs of the various actions and steps (supporting documents). Also, they do not always know who to refer for any questions.

They also express the difficulty encountered in showing the richness of a project and synthesizing it through a rigid institutional language.

Sometimes, it is also a question of a lack of time and of having competent people for the writing.

Concerning the time elapsed between the submission of the report and the moment when the reimbursement is received, the answers all converge in the same direction. The time elapsed is far too great and unbearable for these organizations. They report a delay ranging from 12 months to sometimes 6-7 years. In all cases, this delay makes cashflow management very difficult. Moreover, the cash advance while waiting to receive the funds is only allowed for holders with the financial capacity.