

SESK – Social sErviceS helpdesk on EU Funds

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HELPDESK

SOCIAL SERVICES HELPDESK ON EU FUNDS

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

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1) Introduction - identification of country and respondents

There were 18 responses from social service providers. 15 respondents were non-profit organisations, and 2 established by state. Split by number of employees is reflected in the graph below.



12 organizations provide non-residential social work (NACE code 88), none Residential care (NACE code 87) and 4 organizations provide both types of social services (NACE code 87 + 88).

Almost three third of these organizations (8) consider their knowledge in the area of the possibility of drawing EU funds for the social services sector to be rather good. None of these organizations reported very good knowledge, while representatives of 33% of these organizations reported medium knowledge. None of the organizations reported complete ignorance, neither very little knowledge.

2) Calls for project proposals

For the majority of respondents (12), the calls for project proposals are clearly and comprehensibly formulated. Despite this, organizations express that it is still necessary and useful to organize trainings in order to become familiar with the eligibility rules and how to shape their idea within the limits set by the call. Also, they highlight the difficulty of meeting the eligibility requirements. This leads organizations to move away from the initial focus of their idea and enrich it with actions and deliverables that fit the call to increase the chances of approval.

3) Application

Regarding the ability to apply for a project in a specific field, organisations chose 3 reasons that made it difficult for them to apply:

- The deadline for submitting the project was too short (10)
- Your organization was not listed among the eligible applicants (8)
- You did not have money for co-financing (8)

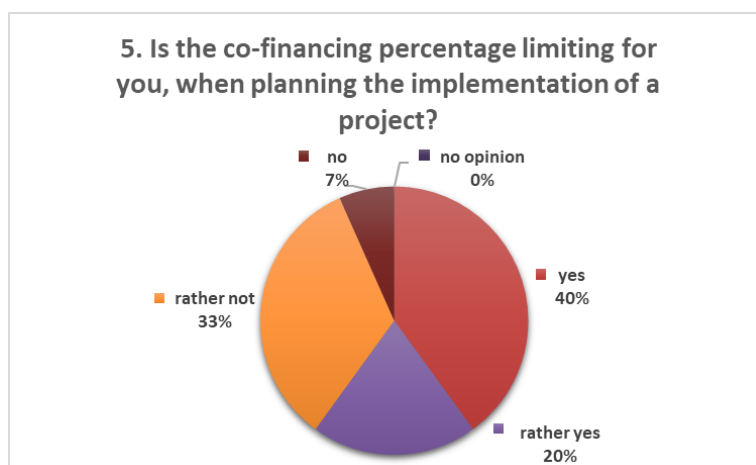
8 respondents indicated that "post-project sustainability rules" (if applicable in their country) were not a barrier to submitting their projects. For those who consider it as an obstacle (4), they put forward several difficulties.

- the need for projects to comply with European and national policies;
- the evaluation of deliverables;
- the involvement of the relevant national bodies;
- the difficulty to describe projects of more than 2 years, not always realistic.

According to the respondents, the most difficult part of applying for an EU project is allocating sufficient internal resources, creating the budget, and managing the length of the application form. 13 organizations responded that they use internal staff members to handle project applications, and 5 use external one. The organizations using internal staff indicate that they do not have enough resources (12) to train them to better apply for European funds. So, this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

4) Co-financing

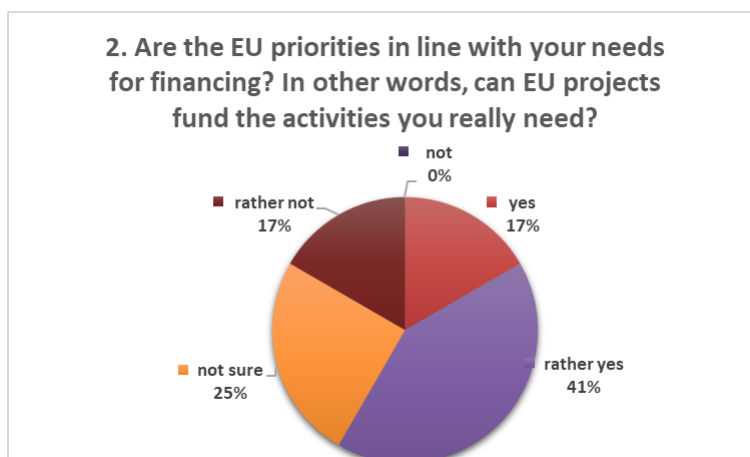
Almost half of the respondents find the co-financing percentage limiting when planning the implementation of a project (12).



They explain that many times the co-financing is not easy to find, and it makes it very difficult to implement the project, plus for them EU co-financing is not an incentive to attract other funding types.

5) Funding

Most organizations (15) consider that the EU priorities match their funding needs, i.e. that EU projects can fund the activities they really need. While some point out the lack of coverage of certain humanitarian needs in the comments, others explain that EU priorities are often described in general terms, allowing a wide range of activities to apply for funding.

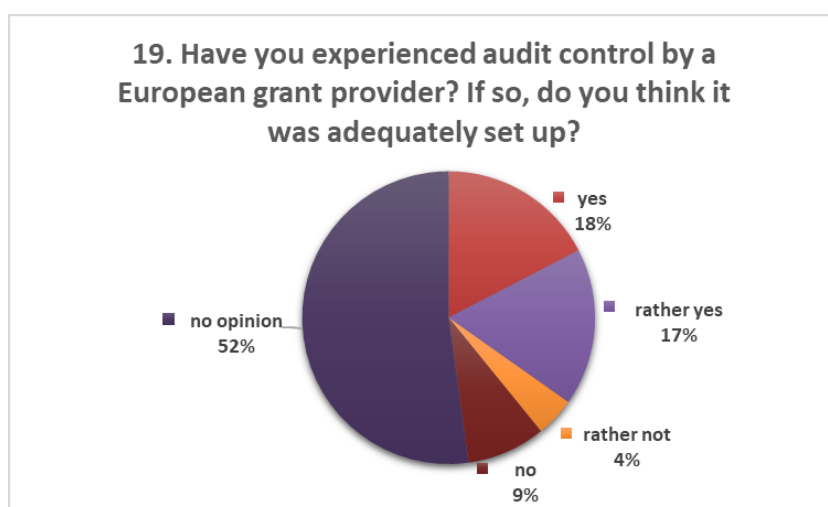


6) Collaboration with Managing Authorities

8 organizations expressed that the European funding provider (managing authority) does not communicate or rather does not communicate sufficiently with them during the drafting, implementation and reporting of the project and does not provide them with the necessary information and support.

8 respondents (almost 50%) also indicated that they had already encountered a situation where the European funding provider (managing authority) had changed requirements or rules during project implementation. They expressed that this happens quite often and that it has an impact on the creation of contracts with new partners and could delay the start of the project.

About half of the respondents had already experienced an audit check by a European grant provider and felt that it was not done adequately. The other half considered it to have been done well. Only 4 respondents did not have an opinion.



71% of respondents believe that the rules set for public procurement in EU projects are well established. However, they still express some dissatisfaction. According to them, national procurement rules are much stricter than EU rules, which creates a dysfunction in project implementation.

Also, they consider it a waste of resources to record all their movements in detail.

7) Implementation of the project

Responses were mixed on the ease of assembling a professional team to successfully implement a project. 10 respondents answered "yes" or "somewhat yes" and 8 "somewhat no" or "no".

Regarding the recruitment process 'internal or external, salary, team building, most organizations say they use existing staff, without being able to offer a higher salary than the current one due to barriers arising from the form of contracts with employees. They use existing staff because it is not possible to hire new staff.



8) Evaluation

Organizations were able to highlight the biggest challenges they face when writing project progress reports. Respondents provided 24 written comments, of which these summarize their substance:

- Collecting data from consortium partners when we are the coordinators;
- Lack of clarity about the application of certain rules;
- Lack of time;
- Time sheets.

Respondents estimated the average time from submission of the project progress report to receipt of reimbursement to be 2-3 months. This affects their organization at different levels:

- Cash flow and accounting problems;
- Actions and priorities have to be frozen;
- Staff delays in getting paid.