



Co-funded by  
the European Union



EU Funds for Social Services

# Webinar on Social services opportunities, needs and challenges in accessing EU funds

Mathieu DE POORTER

European council of associations of general interest (CEDAG)

Margot RENARD

UNIPSO (BE)

## HELPDESK

SESK – Social sErviceS helpdesK on EU Funds

Project number: 101052902

# Evidence gathering activities

## Objective

Gathering existing evidence and information on the use of European Social Fund (ESF+) & European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for social services

## Activities

Compiling of **existing knowledge** about EU funds ([EU funds in your country webpage](#))

**European surveys** on needs, opportunities and challenges faced at the national level by both social services & managing authorities and intermediate bodies

**10 national evidence gathering fora** on common needs and practices implemented at the national level



## Methodology & scope

2 online surveys towards social services & managing authorities/intermediate bodies

Dissemination in the 27 EU Member States in 21 EU languages through the national/regional membership of consortium partners

Reaching of more than 3.000 contacts between Sept.-Nov. 2022

### Results

379 inputs from social services in 27 countries & 78 from managing authorities in 23 countries

### Outcomes

European reports for social services & managing authorities/intermediate bodies

National reports on social services for 6 countries (BE, BU, CZ, FR, GR, IT, SP) & on managing authorities/intermediate bodies for 5 countries (CZ, PL, SP, BU, GR)



# EU Helpdesk Surveys

## Main takeaways from Service Providers survey

### Design of calls for EU funds

- 60% consider EU priorities in line with Service Providers needs, except for social work and aftercare activities
- For 70% of Service Providers, project calls are rather well formulated (despite the usual jargon)
- Main barriers to project submission:
  - co-funding capacity
  - short deadlines for application
  - ineligibility criteria
  - lack of guidance and support from both Managing authorities and leading organisations
- Challenge of post-funding sustainability of projects because national funding mechanisms and focus are not aligned with EU priorities



# EU Helpdesk Surveys

## Main takeaways from social service provider survey

### Project submission

- **Internal challenges:** staff capacities and skills - lack of financial resources to upskill (project) staff
- **External challenges:** administrative (complex forms), regulations of public procurement & State aid

### Project implementation

- **Changing rules during the project implementation:** refining and adding requirements & changes of public procurement rules
- **Specific issues to in the reporting phases:**
  - Complexity in the administrative & financial reporting
  - Issues in framing activities in unrealistic indicators
  - Lack of feedbacks from Managing Authorities
  - Processing delays and audits occurring sometimes a few years after the end of the project



# EU Helpdesk Surveys

## Main takeaways from managing authorities & intermediate bodies survey



### Relevance of operational programmes for social services

- A large majority of Managing Authorities consider that Social Providers are quite active in using EU funds and that EU funds are efficiently allocated to Social Providers
- Managing Authorities face operational challenges in: defining applicants rules (implementation), setting priorities & allocating funds and controlling & auditing
- Most (72%) national ESF+/ ERDF managing bodies carry out the implementation of the Operational Programme without involvement of external experts, as they claim this is the most appropriate way to carry out their responsibility
- The most common leverages available to help social services overcoming challenges in accessing and using EU funding are: information/knowledge sharing tools and channels and involvement of the relevant public bodies as intermediaries or in an advisory capacity
- Among available simplifications – Simplified Cost Options (lump sums, standard scale unit costs and flat rates) – were the most preferred followed by the usage of IT monitoring tools and platforms



# EU Helpdesk Surveys

## Main takeaways from managing authorities & intermediate bodies survey

### Capacity of social services to mobilise EU funds

- Most Managing Authorities consider that Social Providers have the capacity to submit and implement project proposals, and they consider that human resources (experienced, skillful, knowledgeable, and dedicated people) is the most important internal factor to guarantee the success of social services implementing their project financed by EU-fundings
- Internal factors contributing to successful project implementation are:
  - staff skills & experience
  - dedicated staff
  - financial capacity
- Main issues in project applications & management:
  - Administration issues
  - Budget & Co-financing issues
  - Complexity of procedures
  - Lack of knowledge & experience



## 2.3 - National Evidence Gathering Fora

### Methodology

Half to one-day events (live / online) in 10 countries

Participation of up to 30 national stakeholders in events, representing :

- public and third sector social service providers and coordinators of all administrative levels;
- representatives of EU funding national / regional managing structures.

Common framework (adapted by country):

- Introduction
- EU & national funds frameworks relevant for social services (discussion between EU, regional and national speakers)
- Sectoral group work
- Presentation of each group results and discussion on common conclusions

