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HELP

EU Funds for Social Services

Social Services Helpdesk on EU Funds

Main qualitative findings from 10 National Evidence Gathering Fora

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EU HELPDESK SESK – Social sErviceS helpdesK on EU Funds Project number: 101052902

10 National Evidence Gathering Fora





the European Union

- 1. Sweden (SE)
- 2. Belgium (BE)
- 3. Czech Republic (CZ)
- 4. Spain (ES)
- 5. Italy (IT)
- 6. Greece (GR)
- 7. Ireland (IE)
- 8. Austria (AT)
- 9. Slovakia (SK)
- 10. Bulgaria (BG)









MAIN OUTCOMES: Obstacles & Challenges

Managing Authorities & Social Services Providers







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General:

- Knowledge gaps on EU funding
- Complex regulations
- Lack of **communication** with funder
- Language barriers
- **Mismatch of calls & real needs**/ national criteria and indicators imposed not aligned with ESF & ERDF/ Augmented needs due to crises, etc.
- Gap between regional/ national/ local needs and EU priorities
- Low level participation of Social Services Providers in Operational Programmes & design of calls
- Mid-term appraisals of an OP do not feedback into the design & implementation processes
- Low access of NGOs in EU funding
- Calls for proposals not adjusted in **long-term interventions**
- Limited **complementarity** among EU funds

MAIN OUTCOMES: Obstacles & Challenges

Managing Authorities & Social Services Providers





> Initiation Phase:

- Complexity of EU funding
- Lengthy assessment of application process/ Unrealistic deadlines
- Exchange of knowledge/ Difficulty in establishing partnerships
- Financial barriers (ie. high co-funding %, reimbursement gaps)
- Lack of strategy and vision

➡ Implementation Phase:

- Knowledge gap in procurement procedures
- Lack of workforce (ie. skilled staff, high turnover)
- Complex/ heavy administrative workload (pre- & post- implementation)
- Unrealistic timeline (management of project)
- Monitoring use of funds and implementation (ie. measurable KPIs in terms of social impact)
- Different management patterns of MAs/IBs create legal uncertainty & audit risks
- Lack of support and training systems (ie. to encourage partnerships, prep for open calls)

Closure Phase:

• Continuity and sustainability of activity & employment of staff during post-implementation

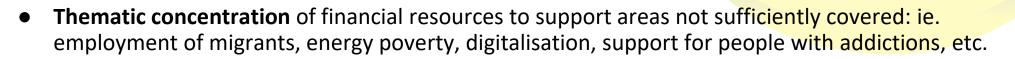


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MAIN OUTCOMES: Needs

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- Enlarge/ support participation of smaller organisations in accessing EU funds (project management knowledge gap, lack of motivation, financial difficulties, etc.)
- Offer support in relation to administrative workload: ie. during preparatory phase, simplified costs system, indicators, strengthened and modernised and procedures, etc.
- Clarity and a defined framework is needed during project calls
- **Appropriate deadlines**: ie. the period gap between programmes create financial difficulties for social services, hence challenging the sustainability of their activities
- **Restrictive co-funding** requirements for local organizations vs. compulsory EU partnership
- Monitoring the use of funds and implementation (i.e. measurable indicators in terms of social impact)
- Short-term funding for **short-term impacts vs. long term issues** of vulnerable groups
- **Communication** with funders should be further developed
- Portfolios of projects in the same territory, to assist in **partnership** creation



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MAIN OUTCOMES: Solutions & Recommendations

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- Creation of an accessible, responsive, efficient, and interactive Helpdesk
- Ensure continuity of funding: ie. cushioning of financial risks through bridging loans, contribution towards capacity building through funds available in programmes, etc.
- Create **national funding programmes** to provide co-funding and help maximize national impact
- **Provide support/ coaching** by the ESF+ agency (i.e. financial management training) & reference person to contact for relevant information/ support related to informing fundees on their eligibility
- Creation of useful tools:
 - project portfolios with diversity (size, geography, sectors, etc.),
 - list of possible lead organizations to facilitate partnership,
 - **"checklist" of steps** to be planned & template documents as a starting package for the selected projects,
 - **"checklist"** that indicates whether or not organizations are eligible (as already exists in some calls for proposals)
- **Public procurement review**, more proportionate sanctions

MAIN OUTCOMES: Solutions & Recommendations









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- Review the appraisal criteria for subsidy applications to assist smaller organisations
- Create an appropriate NGO representative body at national and European level to collect opinions, formulate proposals and undertake advocacy actions on behalf of the civil sector.
- **Support committees** once or twice a year to provide technical support and an environment for experience sharing: to learn about other successful projects and unsuccessful applications: trainings, support committees, events (such as forum)
- IT support systems improved, allowing automation and include feedback systems
- Standardization of management requirements/ establish common management criteria and generate synergies during the intervention
- **Timelines revisited & replanned** matching realities on the ground (ie. earlier project calls and more time to develop project proposals)
- Incorporate indicators that complement job creation indicators to give visibility to social aspects (including qualitative ones)



THANK YOU!

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