



Co-funded by
the European Union



EU Funds for Social Services

Social Services Helpdesk on EU Funds

Main qualitative findings from 10 National
Evidence Gathering Fora

Eleni KEFALLINO, *Project Officer*, European Social Network (ESN)

EU HELPDESK

SESK – Social serviceS helpdesK on EU Funds

Project number: 101052902

10 National Evidence Gathering Fora



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



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



MAIN OUTCOMES: Needs

Managing Authorities & Social Services Providers



- **Thematic concentration** of financial resources to support areas not sufficiently covered: ie. employment of migrants, energy poverty, digitalisation, support for people with addictions, etc.
- **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



MAIN OUTCOMES: Solutions & Recommendations

Managing Authorities & Social Services Providers



- **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

Managing Authorities & Social Services Providers



- 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!

Contact

Eleni Kefallinou – Eleni.Kefallinou@esn-eu.org

Vesa Latifi – Vesa.Latifi@esn-eu.org



Co-funded by
the European Union

“Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them”