

Brussels, 13th April 2016

REF: Invitation for a meeting between civil society stakeholders and the High Level Group of Independent Experts on Monitoring Simplification for Beneficiaries of the European Structural and Investment Funds to discuss 10 Recommendations.

Dear Mr Siim Kallas,

We are writing to congratulate you on being appointed Chairperson of the High Level Group of Independent Experts on Monitoring the Simplification for Beneficiaries of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

As representatives of beneficiaries of these funds, we can only applaud the European Commission's willingness to tackle the barriers currently limiting the take-up and effective use of the ESIF. We also regret having not been invited to present our perspective on simplification to the HLG in a meaningful and formal manner.

Our members represent tens of thousands of civil society organisations and not-for-profit social service providers active in the field of human rights and social inclusion and for whom ESIF is a very important source of public funding. The efficient and effective uptake of ESIF by civil society organisations is essential to achieving social and territorial cohesion, as well as on achieving the European Union's broader strategies; be it the European 2020 strategy and the Juncker Plan for Jobs, Growth and Investment.

For this reason, we would very much wish to meet with the High Level Group in order to further elaborate and discuss the ten following recommendations we believe are necessary to guarantee the take-up of ESIF by civil society organisations and not-for-profit social service providers:

1. Bring together all information on ESIF programmes, requirements and funding opportunities on one central website per country (one-stop-shops);
2. Ensure that the information available on ESIF is written in an accessible and non-bureaucratic language, especially for an inexperienced audience;
3. Organise sector-specific information and training days on ESIF for interested yet inexperienced stakeholders;
4. Inform regularly about forthcoming Calls for Proposals and guarantee adequate preparation time for applications;
5. Provide clarity on the role and tasks of different bodies involved in ESIF within a Member State, including the role and composition of the Monitoring Committee;

6. Clarify in accessible language the ESIF rules and regulations that apply within an Operational Programme, as well as the reporting requirements and expectations in terms of project accounting;
7. Reduce the reporting duties, particularly with regard to a possible audit of the financial expenditure, especially for smaller projects to avoid disproportionate red-tape;
8. Speed-up the payment schedule of ESIF funds, through, for instance, pre-payments, earlier last-payment and facilitating the own-contribution process;
9. Pay more attention in the selection of applications to the outcomes, aims and objectives of the proposal and to the project results delivered in the report, rather than on the bureaucratic processes and procedures.
10. Structurally involve civil society stakeholders and not-for-profit social service providers – in line with the partnership principle - in the development of the structure, composition and management of the Operational Programmes, in particular for initiatives taken to enhance the simplification of ESIF.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding your availability for a meeting to discuss these points.

Kind regards,

Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General, European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

Pierre Baussand, Director, Social Platform

Heather Roy, President Social Services Europe and Secretary General Eurodiaconia

Aurélie Baranger, Director, Autism Europe

Fintan Farrell, Acting Director, European Anti Poverty Network

Laura Jones, Secretary General, European Platform for Rehabilitation

Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General, Eurochild

Allan Päll, Secretary General, European Youth Forum

Freek Spinnewijn, Director, FEANTSA

Sorcha Edwards, Secretary General, Housing Europe

Miloslav Hetteš, President, International Council of Social Welfare

Cristina Martins, Regional President for Europe, International Federation of Social Workers Europe

Barbara Steenbergen, Head of EU Liaison Office, International Union of Tenants

Conny Reuter, Secretary General, Solidar



Attached documents:

EASPD Study on Simplification of ESIF for Social Service Providers