

PRESS RELEASE

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EU Funds for Social Inclusion: Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights by investing in quality services, support and lives

The further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is one of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU. During the [high-level Conference in La Hulpe](#) on 15 and 16 April 2024, policymakers aim to adopt an interinstitutional Declaration to prepare the 2024-2029 social agenda and to reconfirm the European Pillar of Social Rights as the EU social policy compass for years to come.

On this occasion, the [Helpdesk project](#) consortium underscores that investing in social services and **funding quality social inclusion projects, including through EU Funds, is essential in driving forward a social and inclusive Europe with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights at its heart.**

Over the past two years, the Helpdesk project reinforced the capacity of social services in accessing and using EU Funds and helped managing authorities use EU Funds to finance quality interventions in social services, in particular the [European Social Fund+ \(ESF+\)](#) and the [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#).

Social services face important challenges related to underfunding, staff shortages and the transition to community-based and person-centred care and support. EU Funds are essential to overcome these difficulties; however, social services often struggle to effectively access funding opportunities. Managing authorities also often face difficulties in using EU funds to finance social services projects.

To address and solve these issues, the project partners developed a wide range of concrete activities, tools and recommendations for social services providers, managing authorities and the European Commission, including:

- [10 National Knowledge Gathering events](#) and a set of [reports](#) on the obstacles in accessing and using EU Funds.
- A [massive open online course \(MOOC\)](#) on how to successfully fund EU projects, from finding the right Calls and writing project proposals to the implementation, final report, and beyond (will be available in EN, FR, SP, IT, CZ).
- A booklet of promising practices and inspiring examples (will be available in [EN](#), [CZ](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [IT](#), [ES](#), [SE](#), BG, GR, SL).
- A [facilitation toolkit for social services projects](#), to assist managing authorities in responding to administrative and technical challenges. (will be available in [EN](#), [CZ](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [IT](#), [ES](#), [SE](#), BG, GR, SL).
- A [Technical Guidance](#) on how to optimise the use of ESF+ and ERDF for social service providers and managing authorities, including policy recommendations (will be available in [EN](#), [CZ](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [IT](#), [ES](#), [SE](#), BG, GR, SL).

The Helpdesk project will host a large-scale conference titled [“Unlocking EU Funds for Social Inclusion: Investing in quality services, support and lives”](#) on 16 April 2024 at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels.

The conference will bring together social services representatives, managing authorities, EU policymakers, and beneficiaries of EU Funds to present the project’s achievements and **discuss the**

enabling environment needed to foster social inclusion with EU funds, and consequently deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

For more information on the project, visit <https://eufunds4social.eu/>.