
Health and Structural Funds - Sharing Good Practice

The EIPA (European Institute of Public Administration) is organising a seminar in Maastricht on 13-14 September on the use of EU structural funds.

This seminar is intended for officials and experts especially from the EU12 and EU15 MS with Convergence Regions who represent SF Managing Authorities at national and regional levels, national and regional MoH, regional and local health authorities, regional governments, NGOs, regional development agencies who are involved in managing, accessing and using Structural Funds (SF) in the current period and planning for the 2014-2020 period.

The credit crisis and consequent fiscal austerity blending into the economic problems of ageing societies, is driving rapid reappraisal of public spending priorities, which will further promote a faster and deeper reconfiguration of health systems and structures. In this context, reconciling increasing health demands with lower GDP, pressure to outsource debt at the operational level and a risk averse banking sector will cause Member States especially in the EU12 to look to Structural Funds as a necessary source for health investment.

However, (i) competition for a reduced SF budget will become more intense (ii) each EU MS will be asked to focus on fewer development priorities related to Europe 2020 (iii) there remains a mutual lack of understanding between SF managing authorities and potential health sector SF beneficiaries about the added value of health-related investments.

At a time of rapidly changing outlook for healthcare investment and strategic redevelopment of the health field in connection with EU regional policy, this seminar uses evidence and learning from the EUREGIO III project, to take participants through the experience of using the Structural Funds for direct health sector investments. With inputs from people who manage the SF process and beneficiaries who have or are using SF, the seminar will explore five main challenges and opportunities to using SF in ways that will help participants anticipate and plan for the future.

Methods

The seminar will involve a mix of traditional methods (presentations, clear examples and case studies) combined with active participation (discussions, sharing experiences, peer panels, scenarios and round table). The projects selected from the current and previous SF periods offer good practice pointers for the future 'shape of things to come'. For example:

- Measurable contribution to reducing health inequalities
- Consistency with Europe 2020 aims and objectives;
- Coherence with master planning frameworks and regional development plans;
- Planning high-risk investment for example capital intensive high technology projects;
- Maximising the potential of ICT in the health sector with particular regard to e-health;
- Improving workforce competencies and skills; and
- Shifting emphasis from short-term tactical response towards sustainable strategic investment.

Objectives

The objectives of this seminar are:

1. To explore five key challenges to EU health systems in the context of ongoing financial insecurity and the role of EU policies in shaping opportunities for improvements.
2. To show how Structural Funds has and can contribute solutions to these key challenges.
3. To discuss how to advocate for transformative health sector investment in the run-up to informal (2012) and formal (2013) negotiations between EU MS and the EC regarding the next SF period.

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