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## **Awardee Feedback**

### **Description of the Task:**

Feedback will be gathered from the awardees on the quality of the mentoring and capacity-building supports. This information will help to guide supports that will be built into phase 2.

### **Methodology:**

To gather the feedback of the awardees, two one-hour evaluation calls were held on November 18, 2021 and November 29, 2021. Six of the seven initiatives (lead organizations) took part in the evaluation calls. The goal of the calls was to collect in-depth feedback from the grantees on the quality on the non-financial support they received. During the calls, feedback was also given regarding to the financial support as well as on the overall administration of the fund.

### **Offered mentoring and capacity-building support:**

The ESCF Genio Operational Management Team led the provision of support which combined group and individual sessions supplemented by written documentation. Firstly, separate calls were offered to the lead organizations for each innovation to learn more about their needs and strengths (held online during February 2021). Following these meetings, a group programme was developed, focusing on topics that more than one consortium/ organization wanted to learn more about and also included some topics suggested by Genio that would be helpful for the development of their plans (held during 12 March and 1 September 2021). These group sessions were supplemented with further individual sessions and with written guidance.

The Participation was on voluntary basis. Overall, the sessions were well attended with 24 people participating in some or all of the sessions from 14 organizations involved in developing plans to scale up the seven selected innovations. Participants agreed to have their contact details shared within the group and encouragement was given for bilateral connections to be made where they felt that this would be helpful.

### **Feedback of the awardees:**

Awardees appreciated the fact that the support programme was tailored as much as possible to their needs. They valued that there was an element of choice in the mentoring and capacity-building support and that it wasn't mandatory. They interpreted this as a sign of a good partnership level and they felt they met on equal footing/terms with the ESCF consortium and the grant givers.

Awardees found the group sessions helpful. Initiatives address quite different social challenges, but during the group sessions, they also learned more about the interconnections between them, e. g. between housing and mental illnesses or between web accessibility and loneliness of the elderly. The initiatives also faced very similar challenges when it comes to finance schemes, organizational development or fundraising. They praised Genio's expertise on these matters and the experience of the external speakers that Genio brought in. In addition to these topics, some awardees told us that capacity building or support regarding to advocacy activities would have been of value to them. Awardees asked whether it would be possible to create a "ESCF knowledge database" / a cloud where the material offered by Genio is bundled

and kept accessible for the awardees.

Awardees told us that they might not have applied for ESCF if they hadn't known that there would be a second phase offering funding to implement their scaling plans, as they felt not able to find the funding by themselves. They told us, that the mentoring and capacity-building support by Genio empowered them to an extent to which some of the initiatives feel now able to find additional funding so they wouldn't need to fully depend on a second phase of ESCF.

### **Financial support:**

Planning grants of up to €100,000 were allocated to seven organizations/consortia.

### **Feedback of the awardees:**

Awardees stated that the sum was sufficient. As a result of limited travel activities due to Covid, savings could be made to make optimal use of the grant. They appreciated that there was a certain flexibility to switch budget (from travel to e. g. inclusion of end user of the innovation).

The awardees underlined that the ESCF filled a funding gap: They indicated that they didn't know other sources apart from the ESCF that would have provided funding for thoroughly developing a scaling plan to scale to multiple member states. "Power is in numbers and expertise", one of the lead organization told us, "the ESCF gave us the chance to gain that".

The fact that the ESCF was funded by the European Commission – and therefore public and not only private – was a success criterion when reaching out to public administration to collaborate on the scaling plans (e. g. access to data). Awardees explained that being chosen and awarded "proven innovation" by the ESCF was a door opener when reaching out to member states and stakeholders as they set up their scaling plans. The ESCF was a real catalyst, helping to unlock public funds at member state level and accelerating the debate on the specificities of the social challenge in the respective member state.

When it comes to the term "innovation" or the criteria for being chosen, the awardees appreciated that it was not an EU western countries' perspective only, but that also innovations from eastern European countries were awarded innovative – although the challenge in these countries are different from the challenges in western EU countries.

### **Spillover effects and additional value of the funding:**

Firstly, being awarded as "ESCF grantee" was a proof of concept and quality and increased their visibility. As their visibility before was often limited to national expert conferences, they e. g. gained press coverage in other member states thanks to ESCF.

Secondly, for several initiatives, the development of the scaling plans in the Member States didn't stop at national level, but also brought forward the expansion of the innovation on regional and local level.

Thirdly, the results of the data gathering, network building and research, spilled-over to other countries (beyond the target countries of scaling) and the already existing networks of the innovation learned from the scaling. In one case (IPS), it was even the US-network of this innovation, who became interested in this "common EU view on IPS".

**Administration:**

The timeframe of six months to create the scaling plans was a challenge for some organizations. The postponement of the deadlines due to Covid had the consequence that most of the activities fell into the summer break, a time in which it was difficult to reach public administration or stakeholders in the member states.

In general, all awardees praised the administration of the fund by Genio. The communication was clear and fast.