



Government of the
Republic of Serbia



SOCIAL INCLUSION AND
POVERTY REDUCTION
UNIT



Ex-post Evaluation of the Open Call “Supporting Innovative Approaches to tackle Youth Employment and Employability”, 2018–2019



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

SUMMARY

The scope of the ex-post evaluation encompasses an assessment of achieved effects and impacts including sustainability potential of innovative models that were developed during 2018 and 2019 as part of the Open Call “Supporting Innovative Approaches to tackle Youth Employment and Employability”, which was published in 2017. This Open Call was implemented within the “From Education to Employment (E2E) Program: Youth Skills Development and Public-Private Partnerships in Serbia”, which is financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The goal of the evaluation is to contribute to the formulation of the recommendations aimed at public policies in the youth employment area based on lessons learned through the implementation of innovative models, which can be discussed through policy dialogue, and which can guide the work of the SIPRU in the next phase of the E2E Program.

The analysis provides an overview of the context in which innovative models for increasing employment and employability of young people were developed, and the social innovation approach was applied, as well as findings of the evaluation of innovative models in terms of archived effects, their impact on young people, efficiency of implementation of innovative models and potentials and achieved sustainability of innovative models, i.e. the achievement of the second specific objective of the E2E Program, which refers to innovative models for increasing employment and employability of young people. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented within each chapter, as well as in the final chapter.

The analysis included the implementation of eight innovative models, which were supported with the Second Open Call from 2017, and which were implemented in 2018 and 2019 in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Vlasotince, Lebane, Bojnik, Medveđa, Leskovac, Niš, Sombor, and Užice. The developed models are tailored to the local context, based on multisector cooperation and tailored to the social group they are addressing. The models represent a set of integrated services provided to the youth with comprehensive support throughout the process, from information, counselling and evaluation to engaging in appropriate measures, which lead to employment or higher employability of young people.

The analysis of the achievements of SIPRU support to the innovative models during 2018 and 2019 shows that significant results have been achieved. Innovative models made a *difference in local communities*. The models have influenced the *advancement of the planning and programming of local policies* related to increasing youth employability and employment, and they have been successful *in generating additional resources for youth employment*. The models *created a new value in addressing the youth unemployment issue*, which is realistic for the context, resources and capacities, making the models competitive with the potential for continued and broader implementation. The experience in developing and implementing innovative models and the cooperation with the SIPRU team has contributed to the **improvement of the capacity of CSOs and portfolios of services** they offer to youth. *Cooperation among the academic, business and public sectors has been enhanced*, and lasting cross-sector partnerships and platforms have been formed, which is a significant resource for social change in the local community. *Satisfactory private sector participation* is ensured in accordance with their capacities, capabilities and interests.

The models have shown that they can respond effectively to the needs of the unemployed young people, especially young people who are furthest from the labour market and who are not addressing the institutions of the system. Two Open Calls for **innovative models supported 651 young people**, out of which, **during 2018 and 2019, models included 345 young people, 54% were young women, and 46% were young men**. The models included the unemployed youth, and a large percentage of

passive and inactive individuals, as well as a significant portion of the NEET category. *The models have been successful in reaching young people from hard-to-employ and vulnerable categories with an average coverage of 64%*; these categories include the long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, unqualified youth, informally employed youth, young people from rural areas, Roma, children and young people living and working on the street, young people from materially disadvantaged families, young people from the social protection system, while a significant percentage of young people belong to multiple vulnerable categories.

The inclusion in the labour market of hard-to-employ and vulnerable youth groups, which are furthest from the labour market and the effect on employment of 47% represent significant results of the Program. In addition, the impact on the increase of youth activation is equally important, as well as their greater confidence and interest in engaging in supportive measures and programmes.

From everything that was mentioned above, the conclusion is made that **the second objective of the E2E Program has been achieved, i.e. unemployed young people benefit from innovative solutions and models for increasing youth employment and employability.**

Significant capital, which has the potential for sustainability, has been created to increase youth employment and employability. The sustainability of the model has been achieved at an enviable level within the existing legislative and institutional environment, while long-term sustainability should be ensured by national or local authorities. Sustainability is conditioned by the commitment of national authorities to decentralise employment and labour market policies, followed by the devotion of local actors to the development of employment policies and, ultimately, to the provision of adequate funding mechanisms¹. When viewed long-term, this contributes significantly to the creation of the necessary resources and capacities for effective youth initiatives, for the successful absorption of EU funds during the EU accession process, and the successful absorption of European Structural Funds when Serbia becomes a member of the EU, which will be an essential source of funding for policies and initiatives in this area. The EU accession process, the adoption of the AP for Chapter 19 - Social Policy and Employment, as well as the plan for the introduction of the Youth Guarantee mechanism² all set requirements for revising the implementation of employment policy.

Recommendations were made for further work of the SIPRU based on the experience gained from the implementation of innovative models for increasing employment and employability of young people. At the national level, **they include support for the processes of building a supportive environment for employment policies** in line with the needs of the local labour market, by supporting and initiating policy dialogues that arise in the process of **creating a new strategic framework, as well as amending the umbrella employment law**. In this area, an important topic is **recognizing the role and potential of CSOs with regard to employment policy, as well as encouraging the introduction of innovative approaches to employment policies at the national and local level**. The recommendations relate to continued support for the development of innovative models to increase youth employment and employability, model sustainability, and support for the development of capacities of CSOs that implement these models, in order to increase youth employment in an inclusive, quality and sustainable manner.

¹ Ružić, B (2016), The Scope of the Localisation of the Employment Policy in the EU: Lessons for Serbia, European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade

² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>