



GOVERNMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



SOCIAL INCLUSION AND  
POVERTY REDUCTION  
UNIT





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*“I firmly believe in inclusion, defined as a set of traits, virtues, competencies and skills that make a human being human. Inclusion is an indivisible part of humanity, humanness. Inclusion is a team sport and each one of us has a role to play in it – let each one of us do our homework!”*

*Ivana Vasiljević, Belgrade Ignite event on social inclusion 2013*

## **What Is Social Inclusion?**

The process enabling those at risk of poverty and social exclusion to have the opportunities and funds required for full participation in the economic, social and cultural life and achieving a living standard and wellbeing considered normal in the society they live in.

## **What Is Poverty?**

**Absolute poverty** represents the inability to meet the minimum, basic needs, while **relative poverty** entails the inability to achieve a standard of living adequate from the perspective of the society in which an individual lives.



# SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION CONTRIBUTING TO INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In the EU accession process, social inclusion has become a common term in the vocabulary of both decision-makers and citizens of the Republic of Serbia. At the same time, fight against poverty remains a high priority for the Government and other public stakeholders.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in the sphere of social rights by ratification of international conventions and alignment with the EU legislation. Reform documents have been prepared and the development of a substantive partnership with the civil society has been initiated.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit has made a significant contribution to the achievement of these results and will remain an active proponent of the rights of vulnerable groups in the Republic of Serbia.

In the forthcoming period, as part of the EU accession process, substantial financial and institutional resources are expected to be provided in the Republic of Serbia, notably in the employment and social policy domains.

The system-wide measures to enhance social inclusion and reduce poverty through inclusive growth will include a social impact assessment of the Economic Reform Programme (ERP). The Government's efforts will be focused on empowering especially vulnerable groups, such as the Roma and persons with disabilities, as well as strengthening the gender dimension of public policies.

*Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit*



# ABOUT THE SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY REDUCTION UNIT

## The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit was established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2009.

The responsibilities of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit comprise:

- strengthening Government and public administration capacities to **develop and implement social inclusion policies** modelled after good practices from European states, in ongoing consultation with all stakeholders;
- supporting the **establishment of a monitoring system** based on social inclusion indicators;
- strengthening and developing public administration capacities for **monitoring of and reporting on the progress of social inclusion**.

Since 2009, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has supported the Government of the Republic of Serbia in promoting the social inclusion process in the Republic of Serbia through the project "Support to Improve Social Inclusion in Serbia".



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC**



## Since 2009, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit has:

- influenced the adoption of more than **30** policy documents and regulations;

30

- supported the development of more than **80** expert analyses in the area of social inclusion and poverty reduction;

80

- organised more than **50** peer review events at the local level;

50

- directly supported more than **20** projects at the local level;

20

- indirectly supported more than **40** projects at the regional, national and local levels;

40

- collected more than **150** social inclusion success stories;

150

- published more than **350** blog posts on social inclusion by more than 40 bloggers;

350

- engaged more than **20** young people as part of the internship programme.

20



# POVERTY STATISTICS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**Absolute poverty remains a highly pronounced problem – about 600,000 people are not able to meet their basic needs.**



It is very difficult to ascertain the real level of disadvantage of the most vulnerable population by means of general statistical methods.

Reliable indicators of the living conditions of vulnerable groups (e.g. the Roma, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, women victims of violence, LGBTI population) are still missing and are compiled only sporadically.





## The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit:

- **regularly reports on the living standards situation in the country**

Different dimensions of disadvantage are monitored: absolute poverty, risk of poverty, material deprivation, inequality and other factors relevant to the assessment of living standards in the country.

- **leads the process of defining social inclusion indicators in the Republic of Serbia**

This process identifies national indicators and ensures consistency of monitoring with the EU trends, maps the gaps in data sources and provides a framework for assessing the current status of social exclusion and poverty.

- **provides support for the development of regular national reports on social inclusion and poverty reduction**

The Government regularly reports on the status, policies, measures taken, challenges and developments in the relevant areas.

- **provides support for aligning the statistical framework with the European standards and promotes its sustainability**

The Republic of Serbia has introduced the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) into the national statistical framework and regularly reports on relative poverty indicators.

- **promotes evidence-based decision-making and provides support for improving research capacities**

In multiple cycles of support for research staff development through secondary analyses of data in the area of social sciences, more than 30 research projects have been supported, as well as more than 50 researchers at the beginning of their careers.

The most recent data on poverty and social exclusion are available at [www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/statistika/](http://www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/statistika/)





## Unit's Areas of Activity

# SOCIAL PROTECTION AND HEALTHCARE



Efficient and well-targeted social protection and healthcare comprises a set of measures and schemes to mitigate the consequences of socio-economic risks, such as illness, unemployment, advanced age or disability. These schemes include various cash benefits (pensions, unemployment benefits, social assistance, etc.) and services (for the elderly, children, families, persons with disabilities, etc.). Under the EU accession process, harmonisation in the area of social protection is of great importance, based primarily on respect for human rights and the reduction of inequality in society.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit takes active part in designing development and reform concepts for the social protection and healthcare systems, through activities such as:

- support for the development of policy documents and regulations;
- proposing reforms in areas such as long-term care, social pensions, deprivation of legal capacity, employment of persons with disabilities, etc.;
- support for strengthening civil society organisations' capacities to participate in designing and monitoring public policies on an equal footing.



## HIGHLIGHTS:

### **Support for the development of the Draft Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP).**

The ESRP will be the key mechanism for dialogue on the Republic of Serbia's priorities in the areas of social policy and employment and will serve as the strategy for boosting employment and reforming social policy – until Serbia's accession to the European Union.

### **Promoting evidence-based decision-making in the areas of social protection and healthcare.**

Impact assessments of policies and measures contribute to higher transparency of operations, designing more efficient and effective measures and better management of the available funds, resources and capacities.

**Mapping social welfare services within the mandate of local governments.** Support for the competent institutions to gain insight into the status and number of social services and clients contributes to further development of non-institutional forms of care, development of plurality of services and providers, as well as higher service availability and quality.



Social Protection in Old Age: Long-Term Care and Social Pensions



Mapping Social Welfare Services within the Mandate of Local Governments



Measuring Poverty – Theoretical Concepts, Status and Recommendations on Serbia



## Unit's Areas of Activity

# EDUCATION



High-quality and equitable education provides everyone with the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills, as a precondition for their active participation in society and greater social inclusion. Of particular importance are reforms in the area of inclusive education, providing equal opportunities for the education of all, regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnic background, place of residence, disability, etc.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit takes active part in designing development concepts and policies in the area of education, particularly aiming to improve the status of vulnerable groups.

The Unit's activities include:

- support for drafting regulations and policy documents;
- support for conducting analyses and developing proposals for additional support measures targeting students from vulnerable groups;
- improving education statistics;
- establishing and fostering regional and international cooperation in the area of education.



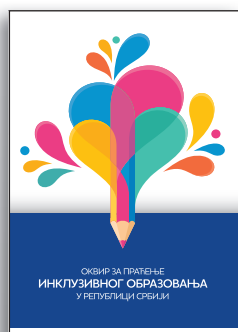
## HIGHLIGHTS:

**Support for improving and monitoring inclusive education in the Republic of Serbia.** Beside other measures, the development of the Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education aims to improve objective monitoring of progress and to define guidelines for further improvement of inclusive education on the basis of the evidence gathered.

**Providing additional support to students from vulnerable groups in pre-university education.** Investment in the education of children with adverse socio-economic backgrounds represents the investment with the highest rate of return to society and can break the “vicious circle” of poverty. Relevant analyses give recommendations for improving the measures to support the education of the most vulnerable children.

**Support for the participation of the Republic of Serbia in the Open Method of Coordination in education.** The state has the opportunity to learn about the best practices of EU Member States and their education policies as an equal participant, as well as to present the achievements of its strategic and reform activities ([www.omk-obrazovanje.gov.rs](http://www.omk-obrazovanje.gov.rs)).

**Improving inclusive education with the support of new technologies.** Since 2014, the theme of inclusive education has featured in the largest regional conference titled “New Technologies in Education”, followed by over 4,500 participants each year.



Monitoring Framework for Inclusive Education in Serbia



Guide for Schools, Teachers and Professional Associates: How to Find Information on Sources of Financing and Resources



Providing Additional Support to Students from Vulnerable Groups in Pre-university Education



## Unit's Areas of Activity

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT



Economic empowerment of every individual, in particular vulnerable groups, is an important factor for their social inclusion and active participation in society. Employment and inclusion in the labour market are key preconditions for socio-economic independence and taking responsibility for one's own life. Economic reforms should ensure that all regions, including rural areas, have equal opportunities for growth and development.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit takes active part in designing economic development and employment concepts through activities such as:

- support for boosting the employment and employability of the most vulnerable groups;
- promoting an entrepreneurial culture and active inclusion in the labour market;
- promoting and developing the social entrepreneurship concept;
- conducting evidence-based policy impact analyses.



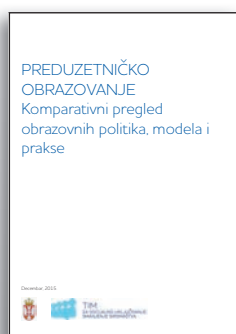
## HIGHLIGHTS:

**Youth employability and employment growth support project<sup>1</sup>.** The overall Project goal is inclusive and sustainable youth employability growth in the Republic of Serbia. The project comprises: support for evidence-based employment policy-making, development and implementation of a market-oriented non-formal and adult education model, and training programmes through enhanced public-private partnership.

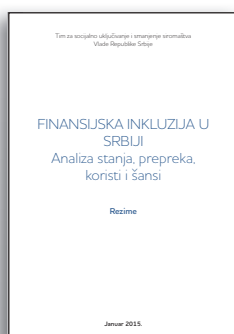
**Support for completing the national strategic framework in the area of employment.** The Unit's activities are geared towards providing high-quality analyses to serve as the foundations for designing the national strategic framework in the area of employment.

**Employment policy impact assessment.** Impact assessments of policies and measures contribute to higher transparency of operations, designing more efficient and effective measures and better management of the available funds, resources and capacities.

**Support for introducing and developing the social entrepreneurship concept.** Social entrepreneurship development contributes to society through work integration with a view to employment and social inclusion, social protection services conducive to social cohesion, rural development and contribution to civil society by building trust and social capital.



Entrepreneurship Education – Comparative Overview of Education Policies, Models and Practices



Financial Inclusion in Serbia – Analysis of the Status, Obstacles, Benefits and Opportunities



From Inactivity to Employment – Analysis of the Impact of Public Policies and Factors Affecting Inactivity

<sup>1</sup> Under a project financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.



## Unit's Areas of Activity

# VULNERABLE GROUPS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



The concept of human rights is based on the idea of all human beings enjoying universal rights. The Republic of Serbia has completed the normative framework in the area of human and minority rights. In its strategic documents and existing policies, the Government has identified the following vulnerable population groups at increased risk of social exclusion and poverty: persons with disabilities, children, youth, women, the elderly, members of the Roma national minority, undereducated persons, the unemployed, refugees and internally displaced persons, and rural population.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit takes active part in developing policies aimed at improving the status of vulnerable groups and respect for human and minority rights through activities such as:

- support for policy coordination with a view to improving the status of vulnerable groups;
- support for developing policy documents, monitoring of and reporting on policy implementation;
- conducting analyses aimed at improving the status of persons at risk of social exclusion;
- participation in programming EU funds in the human resources and social development sector.





## HIGHLIGHTS:

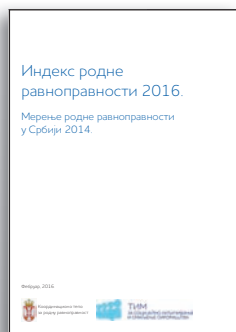
### **Support for policy coordination with a view to improving the status of the Roma at the national level.**

Beside supporting the development of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2016-2025, the Unit also contributes to policy coordination at the national level, as well as to regular reporting on the implementation of measures in all relevant areas.

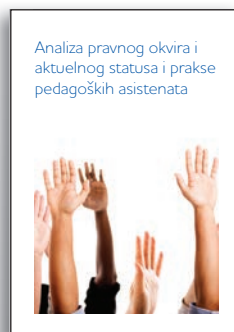
**Support for promoting gender equality in the Republic of Serbia.** The Unit's activities include the alignment of the national gender statistics with that of the EU, the development of the strategic and normative framework in the area of gender equality, capacity building of the national, local and regional stakeholders for gender mainstreaming in public policies. The Republic of Serbia is the first non-EU country to introduce the Gender Equality Index.

**Support for improving the position of persons with disabilities.** In addition to supporting the development of the Strategy for Advancing the Position of Persons with Disabilities until 2020, the Unit contributes to enhancing physical and communication accessibility and promoting the design for all principle.

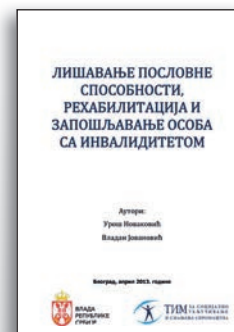
**Ensuring the conditions for vulnerable groups' participation in policy-making.** One of the Unit's operational principles entails devising mechanisms for the participation of vulnerable groups in policy-making and policy implementation monitoring.



Gender Equality Index 2016



Analysis of the Legal Framework and Current Status and Practice of Pedagogical Assistants



Deprivation of Legal Capacity, Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities



## Unit's Areas of Activity

# EUROPEAN INTEGRATION



The EU commits substantial efforts to improving the status of vulnerable groups in its Member States, as well as the states encompassed by the EU enlargement policy. The Europe 2020 strategy, as the EU flagship strategic document, contains a large number of guidelines for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, relevant also for the countries aspiring to EU membership, yet facing challenges such as poverty and social exclusion. Other European organisations are also engaged in these issues, primarily the Council of Europe through the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit contributes to the EU accession process through activities such as:

- participation in the EU accession negotiations process;
- strengthening the social inclusion dimension in the process of programming the EU funds and bilateral assistance and providing support for the Republic of Serbia's access to new EU financial instruments;
- support for the Republic of Serbia's preparation for participation in the European Social Fund;
- promotion of good practices in the area of social inclusion in the EU.

The Unit has supported the preparation and implementation of projects such as:  
[www.otvorenizagrljaj.rs](http://www.otvorenizagrljaj.rs), [www.equied.ni.ac.rs](http://www.equied.ni.ac.rs) and [www.alenproject.eu/](http://www.alenproject.eu/)



## HIGHLIGHTS:

**Participation in six EU accession negotiating groups.** The Unit's participation in the process of EU accession negotiations strengthens the social inclusion dimension of the EU accession process.

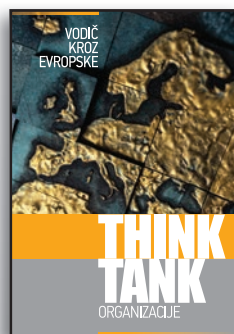
**Support for the Republic of Serbia's access to new EU financial instruments.** Since 2015, the Republic of Serbia has been able to participate in the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI), as well as the Third EU Health Programme 2014–2020.

**Support for the work of the SECO<sup>2</sup> for the human resources and social development sector.** The support for the SECO mechanism promotes increased participation of the civil society in the process of programming international development assistance.

**Guides to funds and networks at the national and international levels.** By promotion and more efficient utilisation of the available funding sources, the Guide enables more effective implementation of social inclusion projects and measures.



Guide to European Networks of Civil Society Organisations



Guide through European Think Tank Organisations



Study on Options for the Establishment of the Social Inclusion Fund

<sup>2</sup> Sectoral Civil Society Organisations (SECO) is a mechanism for cooperation between the civil society and the public sector in planning and utilising international development assistance funds.



## LOCAL-LEVEL SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES



### **Programme “Local Initiatives for Increasing Social Inclusion and Reducing Poverty”.**

This one-year programme (2015-2016) has supported 11 partnerships between civil society organisations, local governments and other relevant institutions at the local level. The projects are aimed at enhancing social inclusion measures in the areas of social protection, rural development, employment, education and social housing.

### **Support to Innovative Approaches to Increasing Youth Employment and Employability.**

The programme has supported 10 projects at the local level, with the purpose of improving cross-sectoral cooperation regarding youth employment and employability. The overall goal of the programme is to support innovative approaches in addressing the issues of youth (15-30) employment or employability through strengthening partnerships between civil society organisations and the private sector.



**Programme-based budgeting at the local level.**

The introduction of programme-based budgeting enables linking policy documents with expenditure planning, facilitates the prioritisation of expenditures and enhances the transparency of the budgeting process. The Unit takes active part in the process of introducing programme-based budgeting at the local level by developing the programme structure and indicators in the sectors of social welfare and child protection.

**Social Development Index of Towns and Municipalities.**

This composite index enables the comparison of the achieved degree of social development among towns and municipalities in the Republic of Serbia and allows the comparison of the quality of life by towns and municipalities in relevant areas. The purpose of the index is to facilitate national and local social development policy-making based on the data on the status of social development in the Republic of Serbia.



# KEEP UP TO DATE WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

## **Internet Presentation**

Be the first to know the latest news and updates on the social inclusion and poverty reduction process in the Republic of Serbia and the EU.

[www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs](http://www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs)

## **Current Calls**

Keep up to date with open calls in the area of social inclusion, in Serbia and abroad.

## **Success Stories**

Read about success stories in the key areas – employment, education, social policy, agriculture and rural development, etc.

## **National Reports on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction**

Find out about the status, policies, measures taken, challenges and developments in the key areas.

### **Blog on Social Inclusion**

Follow more than 40 bloggers who have shared their experiences and views on social inclusion in over 350 articles.

[www.socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs/blog](http://www.socijalnouljucivanje.gov.rs/blog)

### **Newsletter on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction**

Subscribe to the monthly overview of the most recent developments in Serbia and the EU.

### **Facebook**

Visit our Facebook page and join the discussion on social inclusion

[www.facebook.com/SIPRUnit](http://www.facebook.com/SIPRUnit)

### **Twitter**

Follow us on Twitter and keep up to date with all key activities

[\*\*@inkluzija\*\*](https://twitter.com/inkluzija)



SOCIAL INCLUSION AND  
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UNIT

The role that the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit assumed over the past years, specifically in regards to the EU accession negotiations and coordination of the public and non-public sectors, is an expression of the project's continued relevance for the Serbian government.

***External Review of the Support to Improve Social Inclusion in Serbia, Phase 2 (2016),  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation***

Various stakeholders attributed significant value added that the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, the flagship governmental organisation on social inclusion, brought about in the public debate, thinking and practice of social inclusion in the country. [...] The Unit is an outstanding example of institutional excellence supported by ODA.

***Evaluation report, Technical Assistance for Evaluation of Sector of Human Resources Development (HRD) Implemented and Financed by IPA Programme, EU Programmes and other Donors in the Republic of Serbia (2013), A.R.S. Progetti S.P.A. on behalf of the EU Delegation in the Republic of Serbia***

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit provides a valuable role in monitoring progress against government plans and strategies in the area of social inclusion.

***Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development for the Western Balkans and Turkey: Inception Report (2013) the World Bank group***

**Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit**

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