



GOVERNMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



SOCIAL INCLUSION AND  
POVERTY REDUCTION  
UNIT



# PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

INNOVATIVE  
APPROACHES  
TO YOUTH  
EMPLOYMENT



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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# PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

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**NOTE:** This publication does not represent the official views of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, or the Government of Switzerland. All terms used in the publication in the masculine grammatical gender cover both the male and female gender of the persons they relate to.

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<b>AP</b>	Action Plan
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>E2E</b>	Education to Employment Programme
<b>EMinS</b>	European Movement in Serbia
<b>ESRP</b>	Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IPA</b>	Instrument for pre-accession
<b>LIP</b>	Local Initiative program
<b>LOT</b>	Lot under the public call for grants
<b>LSU</b>	Local self-government unit
<b>NEET</b>	Not in employment, education or training
<b>NES</b>	National Employment Service
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PCM</b>	Project cycle management
<b>PRAG</b>	Practical guide on contract procedures for European Union external action
<b>SIM</b>	Social innovation mechanism
<b>SIPRU</b>	Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>Webmo IT</b>	Web platform for monitoring and reporting on achieved results and impact

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The aim of this document is to further present the SIM<sup>1</sup> mechanism for the development of innovative local models of youth employment in the Republic of Serbia. The manual was developed within the project aimed to support the implementation of the Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme (ESRP), part of a broader "Education to Employment - E2E" programme. Support for the implementation of the E2E programme was provided by the Government of the Swiss Confederation, with implementation entrusted to the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: SIPRU) during the period 2015-2019.

During the implementation of the E2E programme SIPRU has developed a **support mechanism for the development of social innovations** (hereinafter: SIM<sup>2</sup>), aimed at the development of effective local solutions with the goal of reducing youth unemployment. The main goal of the SIM instrument was the development of solutions at the local level (innovative models) that function in practice, and for people and their needs to become the centre of public policy and services. Furthermore, any lessons learned during the development and testing of innovative models for increasing youth employability and employment will make a considerable contribution to the improvement of public policy both at the national and the local level.

SIPRU has provided support through the SIM mechanism for a total of 19 projects (the total value of donation was CHF 450,000), with the participation of over 650 young people<sup>3</sup>.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The term SIM mechanism involves elements such as: programme for the development of innovative models in the field of youth employment, programme of raising the capacities of parties submitting applications for social innovations, system for monitoring and evaluation of models, adequate human resources, and institutional support for scaling up models, provided by SIPRU.

2. SIM - Social Innovation Mechanism.

3. Evaluation of implemented calls for funding available at [LINK](#)

4. Available at [LINK](#)

## Achieved impact of the SIM instrument:

- Six innovative youth employment models have been fully developed at the local level, undergoing the process of institutionalisation, up-scaling and achieving sustainability.

- The employment and/or self-employment rate of young people one year after completing the programme was 58.5%.

- The third national report on social inclusion and poverty reduction<sup>4</sup>, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, contains measures to resolve the issue of youth unemployment, based on experience gained in testing innovative models.

- The measure from the National Employment Action Plan titled "Training at the employer's request" has been improved in 2018 based on an innovative model tested in Kragujevac, regarding employer obligations towards persons seeking employment after the end of the measure. Two educational profiles in the metals processing sector have been accredited and rolled out based on the same model.

- NES capacities for the employment of youth with disabilities have been enhanced by introducing into practical use a manual for NES counsellors that significantly facilitates work with companies and persons with disabilities based on one of the developed innovative models.

- Several local employment action plans have been amended based on experiences gained through piloting innovative models at the local level. In this way, the models have found a place in local public policies, along with the relevant funds.

- IPA 2014 Project in the field of employment and active inclusion (EUR 4 million) emphasises the importance of testing public policies with the aim of improving them, and also embedded innovation criteria in the evaluation list.

- It supports the development of civil society organisations and local partners participating in the testing of innovative models for youth employment.

Civil society organisations and local self-governments that have participated in the SIM mechanism have secured an amount of nearly EUR 2 million<sup>5</sup> for improving the area of youth employment through participation in national and international public calls for awarding grants.

## 1.1 UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES

### ***Why did SIPRU choose social innovation as a way to solve the issue of youth unemployment? ?***

An analysis implemented by SIPRU before the start of project implementation showed that certain categories of unemployed persons still face difficulties in accessing the labour market and uncertainty regarding the retention of jobs. This category includes youth, particularly youth not in employment, education or training (so-called NEET), young Roma, youth with disabilities, etc. The same conclusion was given in the European Commission Progress Report for Serbia for 2018: “Measures are too limited, given the number of unemployed, and predominantly one-off like job counselling and job fairs”.

<sup>5</sup>. The data is based on the results of a survey implemented by SIPRU among grant recipients who participated in the Social Innovation Mechanism during the period 2015-2019.

To respond to the above issue, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the *Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme (ESRP)* in 2016, guided by the European Commission recommendations for identifying and monitoring priorities within the employment and social policies of countries undergoing the accession process. The ESRP covered the labour market and employment, human capital and skills, social inclusion and social welfare, and challenges for the pension and healthcare system.

Aiming to provide support to the Government of the Republic of Serbia in combating the challenges faced by certain groups of youth, the Swiss Office for Cooperation<sup>6</sup> has provided financial support to the project “Support to the Implementation of the Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) in Serbia focusing on Youth Employment and Employability Policies”. The project was started in November 2015 as part of a broader programme “Education to Employment - E2E” with the aim of implementing one of the measures defined under the ESRP.

The key elements for the development of new initiatives adapted to the target group are **intersectoral cooperation and partnerships at the local level that** needed to be promoted to direct all available resources towards resolving the issue of youth unemployment. The main idea was to find local solutions that would be effective within existing and available resources.

To support the development, testing and upscaling of innovative approaches to youth employment, SIPRU has developed a financial support programme aimed for local stakeholders. The first step was to understand the “youth employment issue” and to support the development of solutions that effectively tackle the issue, or some part of it, at the local level. In line with this logic,

6. Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)



a grant scheme was launched in November 2015 (in the form of a *Call for the Proposals*<sup>7</sup>). Through this call, SIPRU provided support for a “bottom up” approach and **promoted initiatives that are applicable and effective in local communities, placing young people and their needs at the centre of the solution**, responding to their needs in a different manner.

The overall goal of the call for proposals was to promote intersectoral cooperation to resolve the issue of youth employment through several topics: entrepreneurship, traineeships, increasing the employability of the NEET category of youth, youth with disabilities, or youth facing discrimination on multiple grounds. The call for proposals was designed so as to support local stakeholders in creating solutions they believe (based on reliable data and analyses) would best solve the issue of youth in their community, considering the available capacities and resources.

With this aim, SIPRU has issued a call for proposals to provide local partners with enough time and funds to generate innovative ideas.

### *What did SIPRU do as part of this step?*

- Provided support to the Government of the Republic of Serbia to develop the strategic framework (ESRP) that recognises the importance of the topic, as well as innovative approaches to the employment of the most vulnerable categories of youth.
- Secured the required funds to develop innovative solutions at the local level.
- Established a team of experts to work on

7. Available at [LINK](#)

complex issues in the field of youth employment and employability.

- Deconstructed the issue of youth employment and created a support mechanism for the development of social innovation that would help create innovative models.
- Provided support for intersectoral cooperation in seeking out solutions in the field of youth employment at the local level.
- Provided support for local partners facing challenges in the development and testing of innovative models through the required financial, expert, advocacy and other forms of support.
- Presented social innovation as a method for resolving social issues.

## 1.2 SEEKING OUT SOLUTIONS

### *Why did SIPRU decide to apply a different approach to solving youth unemployment at the local level?*

The key part of the mechanism for the development of social innovation was the Public Call<sup>8</sup> for proposals (2015) with **three different lots** available to applicants. In accordance with the way the call was designed, applications were open to registered *civil society organisations (CSO) in mandatory partnership with the private sector*. The CSOs primarily had an initiating and coordinating role at the local level, while the private sector was engaged with the idea to offer opportunities for youth employment. The public sector had the opportunity to participate in these partnerships in the role of project associate.

SIPRU intention was to use this Call for Proposals and support solutions firstly to thoroughly understand and deconstruct the problem, to contextualise it, to determine its structure (cause, consequences, scope, etc.) and to test possible solutions<sup>9</sup>. This concept represents a key point for designing a call for grants that corresponds to different phases of creating social innovation.

8. First call available at **LINK**

9. Social Innovation Manual: The core of the process of social innovation is to correctly understand the problem, to contextualise it, i.e. connect it to the real situation, and to seek out implementable solutions. Within this process, testing and piloting are some of the key steps (SIPRU, 2019).

Below is a description of all the lots within the call for awarding grants:

LOT	LOT 1 Support for the early development of innovative ideas	LOT 2 Support for the testing or improvement of developed innovative solutions	LOT 3 Support for the up-scaling of successful innovative solutions
Objective	Support for the innovative approach/ idea <sup>10</sup> that best responds to the community issue to develop it up to the point where it is ready for testing.	Support for an innovative solution developed for testing.  OR  Support for an innovative solution to improve it based on a previously implemented pilot and prepare it for upscaling.	Support for piloted innovative solutions that have shown results in practice for upscaling and transition from piloting to introduction in practice, and for increasing their impact and scope.

**Each of the lots had a different purpose, budget and schedule.** An overview is provided below:

**LOT 1** (early development of innovative ideas) aims for the applicants to better understand the problem they want to work on (precise definition of causes, consequences, scope, previous attempts and reasons for failure, etc.), to generate various ideas during the problem analysis process, to develop the service/measure they will test and propose a solution that corresponds to the needs of the target group to a greater extent;

<sup>10</sup>. The approach/ idea is the initial hypothesis that needs to be checked and used (if proven correct) to develop a solution that better responds to the specific issue.

funding was limited to CHF 5,000.

**LOT 2** (testing/improvement of the innovative model) is intended to determine the effects of the proposed solution on the target group with the aim of finding out how the solution can be improved as needed (whether a certain youth employment solution applied in practice earlier could be improved in its entirety or in certain parts); funding was limited to CHF 30,000.

**LOT 3** was aimed at support for up-scaling and/or disseminating successful models through several directions: additional promotion of intersectoral cooperation, public policy changes, institutionalisation of the model, regional expansion, target group expansion, knowledge transfer in various sectors, etc.); funding was limited to CHF 25,000.

One of the challenges in this process was also setting the criteria for **measuring the level of innovation of the proposed models** (to what extent can these models be considered innovative). Within the Call, SIPRU presented a definition of the level of innovation of a model along with the criteria for measuring the degree of innovation of the proposed initiatives:

**“A social innovation can be a practice, process, product, service, business model, tool or methodology, or a combination of all of the above, aimed at better responding to an unmet need or social issue.”**

SIPRU sought ideas at the local level that could improve the status of youth in local communities. The following criteria have been used to more precisely assess the degree of innovation of the proposed solutions:

- 1. Does the idea, and to what extent, respond to a social need and focus on people/beneficiaries?**
- 2. Does the idea, and to what extent, improve the daily lives of citizens - target groups/beneficiaries?**
- 3. Does the idea, and to what extent, empower and include citizens – the target groups/beneficiaries as partners and co-creators of the solution?**
- 4. Does the idea, and to what extent, contribute to the efficient and effective use and conservation of resources?**
- 5. Does the idea, and to what extent, contribute to cooperation and the development of partnerships between various sectors (e.g. private, public, civil society)?**
- 6. Does the idea, and to what extent, contribute to changes in relations between the beneficiaries, the public sector and other stakeholders?**
- 7. Does the idea, and to what extent, have transformation potential that would reduce, and/or eliminate social inequalities?**

Each of these criteria is evaluated separately as part of the evaluation grid. To be assessed as innovative and receive financial support, the idea of the applicant had to meet at least three of the seven criteria for innovation. If it failed to meet these minimum criteria, the idea was not considered acceptable.

Applicants had to evaluate and describe the innovative element of their proposal in the application form<sup>11</sup> and/or to confirm to what extent it meets the innovation criteria in narrative form.

**11.** Available at [LINK](#)

The evaluation process selected 10 of the 120 proposals.

### ***What did SIPRU do as part of this step?***

- SIPRU created a mechanism for development of social innovation, with its main elements (funds secured through a donation by Swiss Development Cooperation) used to award grants to local partners (Public call for the submission of project proposals with all required forms used to submit applications, and the process of monitoring/reporting).
- Secured the required human resources (members of the SIPRU-E2E team responsible for implementing the “Education to Employment - E2E” program).
- Members of the SIPRU team with specific knowledge in various areas (statistics, education, Roma inclusion, impact assessment, etc.) were responsible for implementing the “Social Inclusion in the Republic of Serbia - phase 3” project.
- Mentorship was secured for applicants during the development and testing of innovative models for youth employment.
- Regular external evaluation was implemented as support for SIPRU and applicants to improve the developed and tested solutions, as well as the mechanism for the development of social innovation.
- During the process of submitting project proposals, the applicants were offered to participate in the programme of capacity raising in the field of project cycle management (PCM) and in the field of social innovation.
- SIPRU strengthened its position in the Prime Minister’s Office for public policy change advocacy purposes.

## 1.3 PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

### *How did SIPRU deconstruct the problem of youth unemployment?*

Using the SIM mechanism, SIPRU sought out new approaches that could clearly define the problem or part of the problem in the field of youth employment and employability at the local level, that could be used to obtain relevant solutions while simultaneously ensuring their feasibility in the given context and having in mind the available resources and capacities. **This required support tailored to applicants, depending on whether they are in the phase of development, testing or scaling of solutions.** Furthermore, SIPRU wanted to incorporate a component of CSO capacity raising for the use of EU funds in the process, achieved through the development of the SIM mechanism in accordance with PRAG rules.

In addition, **two additional novelties were introduced within the funding mechanism:**

- Between the submission of the concept note and full project proposal SIPRU organised workshops for *enhancing capacities for the topic of social innovation and project cycle management* as support for applicants to submit the highest quality project proposals;
- After submitting the full project proposals, SIPRU organised a public presentation of the proposed solutions in front of the call committee, so that the applicants would confirm the highest degree of identification with the ideas they have developed by presenting them in vivo.



## Tailored support in accordance with the lots

For project proposals supported under Lot 1 - Early development of innovative ideas, SIPRU participated as a partner, providing professional support for key activities. These are: *problem analysis* – it was important to enhance capacities to better understand and analyse the problem from the viewpoint of the service beneficiaries and providers, since correct understanding of the problem is key, while at the same time representing the greatest obstacle in the local context. SIPRU provided additional assistance in the development of *research tools* (improving the methodology and instruments of study, analysis) and support when developing the description of the innovative model (solution) itself, to be ready for testing. A challenge for applicants was to precisely *define the causes of the problem, analyse the consequences, and map what local stakeholders could do* so the problem (or part of the problem) is solved, having in mind their own resources and the local context.

In this phase it was important to maintain focus on the problem analysis and consultations with the target groups, and to avoid, as often happened, the applicants starting to implement activities. The intention was to provide support for partners to think about the problem, to research and consult about the problem and implementable solutions, before they finalise a solution they would test in the subsequent phase of support. Briefly, the results of this phase were: **identified problems and needs, mapped local resources, solution described in a form ready for testing.**

For project proposals supported through Lot 2, SIPRU provided support to applicants to ensure that the supported solutions are adequately implemented in practice and in ac-

cordance with the proposed plan and mandatory activities, with the achieved impact measured thereafter. Furthermore, SIPRU required the applicants to implement mandatory activities, such as: *detailed project implementation monitoring plan, external evaluation and development of a sustainability plan for the model*. The aim of these requirements was, inter alia, to ensure the **quality of products/services provided to young people through the model**, while complying with all standards and regulations established by national legislation regarding the quality of employment. Additionally, the idea was to support candidates in the process of achieving the defined outcomes and to *describe the model elements* that could be implemented in other local communities or at the national level, thereby ensuring greater impact.

Lot 3 was aimed at providing support to applicants in the process of scaling up successful models for youth employment that have been tested in practice. **The upscaling of models could be performed through the territorial expansion of the model (e.g. implementation in another municipality), increase in the scope of the target population, or knowledge transfer from one sector to another (e.g. from the metals processing to the wood processing industry).** In this manner SIPRU helped applicants to apply a *scaling plan or sustainability plan*. As part of this process, SIPRU first worked with the applicants on developing these plans and provided support in advocacy activities at the local level.

At the end of the Call, when it was determined that an insufficient number of applications with quality project proposals was received, the decision was made not to support any of the projects from Lot 3. This proved that it was better to invest the limited funds into the early development phase of models and their testing in prac-

tice, than into scaling up models that are not adequately designed (there is no evidence that they correspond to the needs of youth to a greater extent or that they have been well thought through, although not tested in practice).

### ***What did SIPRU do as part of this step?***

- In addition to financial support, introduced a programme of capacity raising for applicants as an integral part of the SIM support mechanism.
- Established close cooperation with applicants to stimulate their ideas and ways of thinking by offering different work methods and tools that were less utilised by that point.
- Tailored support to applicants under the different lots.
- Advocated sustainability as a mandatory aspect of each of the supported youth employment models, asking the organisations to develop sustainability plans for their innovative models.
- Provided financial support to applicants to implement activities under the sustainability plan.
- It regularly collected lessons learned through the implementation of the SIM mechanism, including lessons learned through external evaluation, and from the local partners themselves, so that support would be continuously improved placing the needs of youth at the centre.

## 1.4. SECOND ROUND OF PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

*What did SIPRU do with the results of the first round of testing of innovative models for youth employment?*

After testing innovative models for youth employment through the first Call launched in 2015, SIPRU **evaluated<sup>12</sup> the results of the achieved impact, and the manner how the mechanism for supporting the development of social initiatives was conceived.**

The evaluation was done by an independent third party indicating a number of important items:

- *One cycle of testing the solutions is not always enough to reach a fully developed youth employment model.*
- *It is necessary to review the need and justification for a second round of testing with improved solutions, to be decided on a case-to-case basis.*
- *The issue of youth employment and employability requires a systematic response from all partners (public, private and civil sector, academia, youth, etc.), therefore insisting on intersectoral cooperation is one of the greatest factors of success for SIM support.*
- *The SIM mechanism should be improved to make it more flexible and inclusive (focus on vulnerable groups of youth).*

12. Available at [LINK](#)

- *A two-step model of a public call for awarding grants has been established, along with a limit to administrative expenses, support in the work of grant applicants, improvements to the public call for awarding grants in accordance with the EU-IPA call conditions to prepare the candidates for using forthcoming funds, etc.*

- *In addition to financial support, it is necessary to raise the capacities of local CSOs to achieve a higher impact of the youth employment model.*

- *The lack of a sufficient number of developed models for increasing youth employment and employability ready for scaling to a broader regional or national level required SIPRU to modify the approach in this area.*

Based on the above findings obtained through the evaluation of the first Call, SIPRU and the line ministries continued to support six innovative models for youth employment.

**An important step for continuing work with the six innovative employment models was the drafting of the “Model Description” document, describing the employment service process, the main steps in this process, the key stakeholders, and each of their roles in the model.**

The focus of the improved youth employment models was on testing novelties, and/or on necessary improvements to the models, repeat measuring of impact on the target population, as well as preparations for scaling the model up or producing an impact on public policy.

The testing of the improved model for youth employment required strengthening CSO capacities, and deeper involvement by private sec-

tor representatives and other partners to increase the degree of their participation and trust between partners, thus ensuring better effects of the model.

A second public Call “*Support for innovative approaches to youth employment and employability*”<sup>13</sup> was issued in the spring of 2017, approving another nine projects. Among those nine, four projects were chosen for Lot 1, and five for Lot 2; no projects were chosen for scaling up innovative models.

**The evaluation of the second public call from the viewpoint of young people states, inter alia:** “*Based on the responses of young participants from 2017, the Programme contributes very significantly to the development of interpersonal competences and contributes significantly to the development of working and personal competences.*”

*The greatest importance for the process of learning and developing competences for youth from 2017 lies in practical training (professional and entrepreneurial), mentor support, and educator expertise.*

*In addition to the above, based on discussions with young people, perhaps the greatest benefit of participation in the Programme was for these young people to feel empowered for further undertakings on the path of achieving their professional competences”*.<sup>14</sup>

### **What did SIPRU do as part of this step?**

- Redesigned the second public call in accordance with the recommendations from the evaluation, to respond to the needs of local partners.
- Improved the monitoring system (introducing the Web-Mo IT system<sup>15</sup> for monitoring the impact on the target population), organised more frequent field visits to applicants, including interviews with all local stakeholders.

**13.** Available at [LINK](#)

**14.** Available at [LINK](#)

**15.** IT platform for monitoring the results of the programme and impact on youth.

- Organised peer-to-peer meetings for exchanging experiences between local partners.
- Provided additional financial support to certain models to test improved solutions for youth employment.
- Set the sustainability of innovative models as the highest priority.

## 1.5 PREPARATIONS FOR CHANGES AND MODEL SUSTAINABILITY

### *How did SIPRU link the testing of innovative models for youth employment with changes to public policy and how did it work on model sustainability?*

Since the innovative models for youth employment were tested in the middle of the implementation of the E2E programme, during 2019 SIPRU focused on achieving sustainability for the six innovative models. SIPRU developed a **format for a sustainability plan** that served local partners as a basis for designing and planning the sustainability of the successfully tested innovative models. A sustainability plan was developed for a total of six models, while its drafting represented a precondition for additional financial support by SIPRU for working on activities related to the sustainability of the model.

The sustainability plan considers four dimensions of model sustainability; each of them was analysed to assess whether the financial support provided for local partners has an im-

pact, with the aim of implementing the planned activities. Within their sustainability plans local partners first reviewed the *financial sustainability* of the model that was to respond to the future funding of the model, after the “Education to Employment - E2E” programme is over. Public policy sustainability could be achieved through the inclusion of the model in local or national public policy documents. The *institutional sustainability* of the model could be ensured through its inclusion in an existing institutional framework or through amendments to the existing institutional framework. *Managerial sustainability* as the fourth dimension of the sustainability plan was just as important as the above, since it deals with issues such as governance and model implementation, ownership over the model and trust among local stakeholders.

In addition to sustainability plans, local partners were encouraged to develop at least two options for *achieving sustainability and to assess which of them is more realistic, with a higher chance of success*. After developing the sustainability plan, SIPRU and local partners jointly decided on what direction to pursue for sustainability. To ensure model sustainability, SIPRU supported local partners in discussions with *local self-governments, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders*, as an agent of change.

This step proved to be useful, since the presence of SIPRU at the local level confirmed to all stakeholders that model sustainability is also a priority at the national level.

The final programme evaluation has shown that model sustainability was achieved at a considerable level, within the existing legislative and institutional environment, while long-term sustainability should be ensured by national or local authorities. In the long term, this significantly con-



tributes to the creation of necessary resources and capacities for effective youth initiatives, and for the successful absorption of EU funds. The EU accession process, the adoption of the AP for Chapter 19 - social policy and employment, and the plan for the introduction of the Youth Guarantee present requirements to re-examine the implementation of employment policy.

The goal of the E2E programme – for unemployed youth to benefit from innovative solutions and models for increasing youth employment and employability – was achieved, and inclusion of hard-to-employ and vulnerable groups of young people on the labour market and an employment impact of 47% represent significant results of the programme. Furthermore, the impact on raising youth activation is just as important, along with their increased trust and interest for inclusion in support measures and programmes. Based on experiences from working with innovative models of youth employment, SIPRU launched a **Local Initiative Programme -2, as a new grant scheme aimed to develop innovative service is social inclusion and poverty reduction area**<sup>16</sup>. The goal is to improve the status of vulnerable groups in society (women, youth, Roma, migrants, persons with disabilities), particularly those living in rural and extremely impoverished areas, through the improvement of innovative measures, services and programmes in local communities.

16. Available at [LINK](#)

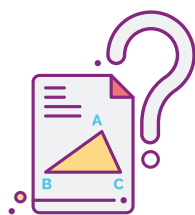
## 1.6 INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT – GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

*Select examples of good practices are provided below, to present the achieved impact and elements of sustainability of employment models.*

### EXAMPLE NO. 1:

#### Local partnerships for youth employment - education tailored to businesses

.....



#### Problem

Due to the long history of the car industry present in the region, the metals processing sector is predominant in Kragujevac. However, the region is facing *a gap between the demand on the labour market and skills possessed by young people*. Companies are much faster to transition to the use of new and high-quality technologies that require specific knowledge, competence and skills, thus youth in Kragujevac acquire limited knowledge and skills about these high-quality technological systems within the formal educational system.

#### Proposed innovative solution

The Business Development Centre, through close cooperation with the Polytechnical School and representatives of key companies in the metals processing sector (Milanović Inženjeri-





ng, Gorenje, Sunce Marinković, etc.) developed a model where young people are offered a three-month paid traineeship in select companies. In addition to the three-month traineeship, young people had access to opportunities for further professional development, along with mentorship by experienced experts from the company the young people worked in (work that the mentors were paid for). Young people that met the expectations of the companies and showed interest in staying with the companies were employed after the traineeship.

### Achieved impact

The model was proven to be highly successful with a success rate of **over 90%** of youth employment in the companies where they completed their traineeship. Furthermore, *the know-how from this sector was later transferred to the wood industry sector by the same local partner in Čačak*, thereby proving the possibility of scaling up the model. Additionally, SIPRU supported local partners from Kragujevac in developing two educational profiles in the metals processing sector: *technician for computer management and technician for computer construction*. Support for the adoption of these two educational profiles was provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Institute for the Improvement of Education.

Based on this model, SIPRU managed to change a specific active labour market policy measure provided by the National Employment Service in Serbia entitled “*Training at the employer's request*” regarding employment obligations and fixed-term labour contracts. The change also motivated employers to use this measure to a greater extent.



## EXAMPLE NO. 2:

### Traineeships for youth with disabilities in Belgrade

#### Problem

The core of the issue in the field of employment of persons (including youth) with disabilities is employer prejudice about the employment of this population group, as well as their long-term inactivity in finding jobs. According to the legal framework of the Republic of Serbia relating to persons with disabilities, companies with over 50 employees have the obligation of employing one person with disabilities or paying a fine (a certain amount of money) if they fail to meet this obligation. Most companies in Serbia opt for the second option, thus the policy goal (employment of persons with disabilities) is not being fully achieved. Furthermore, most companies in Serbia are small or medium-sized enterprises, and have additional difficulties in employing this target group, due to insufficient resources and procedures available for support to working with youth with disabilities.

#### Proposed innovative solution

SIPRU, working with the Youth with Disabilities Forum, developed **“inclusive” procedures** that, if implemented correctly, reduce the gap between employers and youth with disabilities. Since both parties have a degree of reservations regarding employment, this model offers a *three-month paid traineeship for youth in select companies* to reduce the existing gap. Companies were chosen through a public call, and had to complete considerable capacity enhancement regarding sensitivity in their approach and communication with youth with disabilities, adaptations of the workplace for



**17.** External evaluation report on the effects of employment programmes for persons with disabilities.

this target group considering the degree of their disability and readiness for employment, etc. At the same time, young people were informed far more about the employer's profile, corporate culture, workplace they would occupy, expectations from them, etc. than before starting their traineeship.

*After completing the paid traineeship the majority of employers expressed satisfaction with the performance of the trainees, having in mind their initial expectations and thoughts.* The traineeship has shown that direct cooperation successfully decreases the gap between employers and youth with disabilities, significantly facilitating the employment process for both parties.

### Achieved impact

Through close cooperation with the NES and Youth with Disabilities Forum, SIPRU continued working on changes to public policy through the development of a "Manual for the Application of Inclusive Procedures" used by NES advisers to work with youth with disabilities towards their employment. This raises the quality of service provided to companies and achieves the main goal of the public policy, i.e. the employment of persons with disabilities.

After participating in the model, **over 80% of employers** confirmed their readiness to hire youth with disabilities, while 50% of participants were employed after the programme at the companies where they completed their traineeships.<sup>17</sup>

*Sustainability means not only the need for funds, but also other aspects of sustainability - this objective is a project in itself, and great efforts are needed to achieve it. The core of model sustainability is trust between the main stakeholders participating in the implementation of activities, as well as motivation to apply the model after programme implementation is completed.*



## EXAMPLE NO. 3:

### Multisectoral partnership in Leskovac

#### Model summary

SIPRU provided support for testing the “Activator” multisectoral partnership model for two youth employment programmes - one dealing with youth entrepreneurship, and another with traineeships. The project was implemented by the European Movement in Serbia from Leskovac (EMinS) with regional partners (Regional Chamber of Commerce, NES office, a number of companies from Leskovac, secondary schools, other CSOs, etc.).

Innovation in both programmes comes from the *method of providing services to youth* (system of integrated service in a single place), assessment of youth capacities and selection of appropriate programme, development of individual business plans, psychological support for youth, and mentorships provided by business partners in both programmes.

#### Chosen approach

The plan to secure the financial sustainability of the model relied on the budget of the City of Leskovac, but due to the high interest shown by neighbouring municipalities it was decided to *test the improved model in the municipalities of Lebane, Bojnik, Medveđa and Vlasotince*. The main goal was to provide for the financial and governance sustainability of the model by **including the model in local public policy planning documents** (LSU budgets, schools, etc.) which was provided by local self-governments.



## Lessons learned

The youth employment model tested in Leskovac showed that the civil sector is very important in promoting intersectoral cooperation (public, private, academic, and civil sector). *The entrepreneurial programme requires the provision of a package of services* for youth to make it sustainable after the programme ends. This means that, in addition to support for youth to develop their business plan, young people also have a need for support in resolving legal and financial obligations in the role of entrepreneurs, psychological support and empowerment, mentor support in doing business, tax relief during the first year of doing business, and greater funds for starting their business. *The traineeship programme* was proven as more attractive for young people compared to the entrepreneurship programme, because it is paid, indicating that young people still opt for the safer option.

In the case of this model, nearly 20% of participants established their own business (60% of women). Two thirds of them assessed that this model “provided them strong support with the required entrepreneurial competences”<sup>18</sup>.

18. Available at [LINK](#)



## EXAMPLE NO. 4:

### Practical Academy in Niš, Kamenica

#### Model summary

The model is aimed at support to *student traineeships as a mechanism for increasing student employability and a more effective link to the SME sector* in underdeveloped municipalities in the Niš County. The model was implemented by the Association for Local Development Kamenica, in cooperation with six faculties and several companies from the Niš County.

#### Chosen approach

SIPRU, working with local partners in Niš during 2019, developed a sustainability plan for this model, with the financial sustainability envisaged through budget funds of the City of Niš. The institutional sustainability of the model was planned through the transfer of knowledge to the academic community (Career Development Centre) that would take on a mediating role in this model, since the model itself was developed by a CSO, but it requires the cooperation of the academic and private sector.

The municipality of Crveni Krst allocated **RSD 0.5 million** in 2019 for the implementation of the model. Furthermore, **the model was recognised in the Local Employment Action Plan** of the municipality of Crveni Krst through a special measure wherein **RSD 1,500,000** was allocated for implementation in 2020.





## Lessons learned

The local partner (Association for Local Development Kamenica) recognised the missing link between the academic community and private sector in Niš County. Furthermore, the civil sector has proven to be effective in promoting public-private partnerships, offering students useful traineeships with very precise tasks and needs expressed by the private sector.

The private sector assessed the tested model of student traineeship as important and suitable, since one of the phases of the model occurred in a co-working space, thereby reducing the burden on the production process of the involved SME stakeholders. The CSO provided the **space (a local camp) where students could work together, exchange knowledge and experience under this model, and help each other during the traineeship.** Professors from the University of Niš played the role of business mentors, since they were introduced to the interests of the students and needs of the SME representatives.

The total market value of the products and services produced during the testing of the model exceeded the total sum required to implement the student traineeship using the “Practical Academy” model. Local partners secured nearly RSD 2 million for implementing the model through the Local Employment Action Plan of the municipality of Crveni Krst.

### *What did SIPRU do as part of this step?*

- Established and maintained intensive relations with the relevant line ministries for youth employment, public agencies relevant for the specific models and local self-governments where the model was tested.
- Advocated and promoted the tested youth employment models as initiatives by the Government of the Republic of Serbia (Office of the Prime Minister), reducing the gap between the public, private, and civil sector, particularly at the local level.
- Supported local partners through professional and financial support in amending local planning documents and public policy documents to make the models sustainable after the programme intervention.
- Placed innovative employment models high on the agenda of the Office of the Prime Minister and thus gained support for introducing certain changes.
- Developed a format for drafting a sustainability plan that was used to evaluate each of the innovative models as a precondition for further financial support by SIPRU.
- Cooperated intensely with local partners in developing sustainability plans as a basis for implementing activities with the aim of ensuring model sustainability.
- Played a key role as a promoter of the youth employment model and coordinator of advocacy activities at the local level.
- Facilitated amendments to the regulatory framework and public policy documents both at the national, as well as the local level.

# PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES  
TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

1

## ANALYSE

ANALYSE THE CONTEXT OF  
THE SITUATION  
AND STAKEHOLDERS

5

## EVALUATE AND ROLL-OUT

DEFINE THE NEW  
POLICY CONTEXT  
BASED ON A THOROUGH  
ANALYSIS

4

## TESTING

TESTING THE PROTOTYPES  
LIVE WITH USERS

2

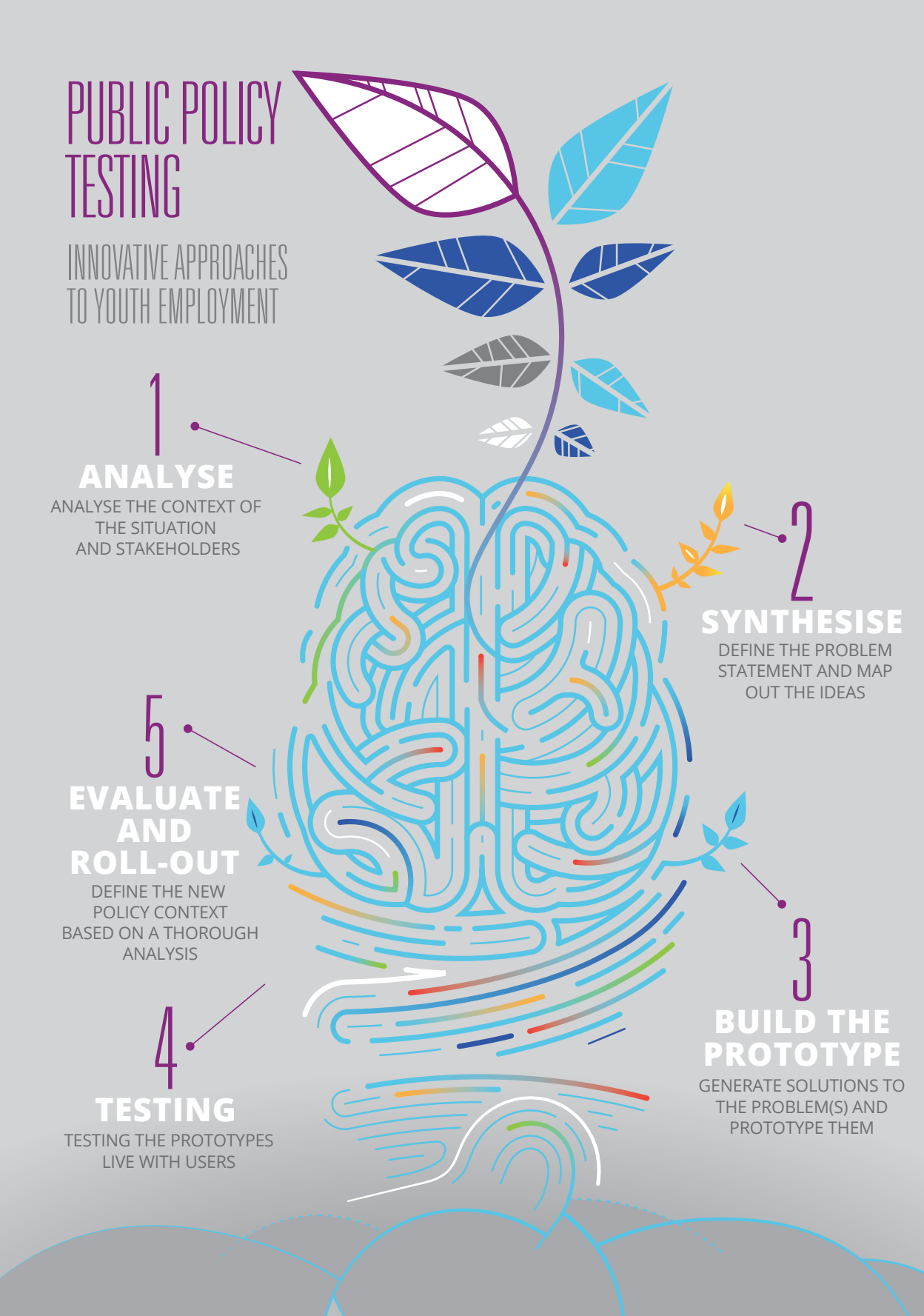
## SYNTHESISE

DEFINE THE PROBLEM  
STATEMENT AND MAP  
OUT THE IDEAS

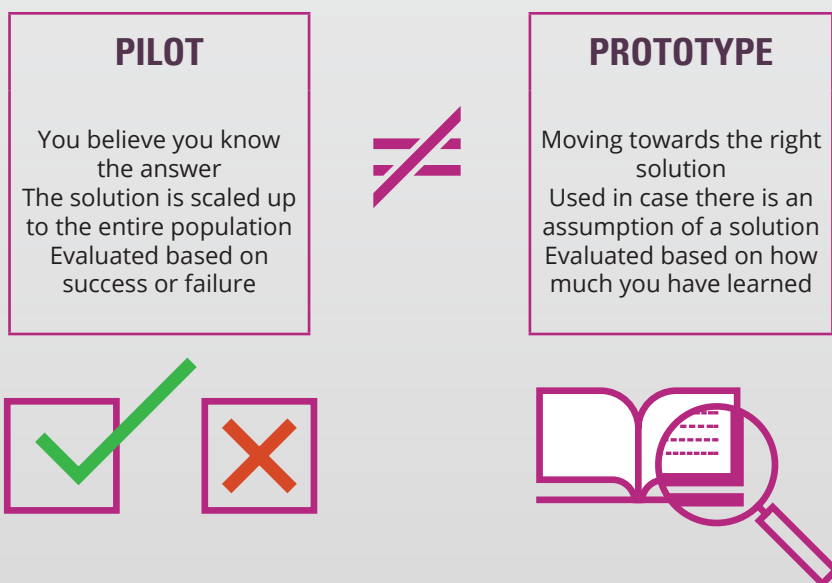
3

## BUILD THE PROTOTYPE

GENERATE SOLUTIONS TO  
THE PROBLEM(S) AND  
PROTOTYPE THEM



**How were the “prototypes”, i.e. innovative models for youth employment produced?** There are many explanations regarding the process of prototyping, but most of them follow the same logic. First, it is necessary to understand the context that the prototype occurs in, then analyse and define the problem(s) being solved, then design the prototype, test it, evaluate it, and apply it in practice. **Prototyping should not be confused with piloting**, since these are not the same terms (although the Serbian language uses the term piloting more often). The idea behind prototyping is to develop, try out and test part of a service or an entire service and to learn as much as possible from this process, while piloting is used to test the end product/service before roll-out. Piloting is a step that comes after the prototype has been designed and successfully tested in practice, with the qualification that piloting involves a higher coverage of the target population, because it is assumed that the solution is producing the expected impact.



**Public services are no exception to the use of prototypes.** Moreover, prototypes in public administration and services are a new turn, an innovative approach to testing ideas and seeking out alternatives in an early phase of consideration, emphasising the efficient use of public funds to develop new services and improve existing ones.

Innovation in public administration has already become a **new paradigm** to be used to assess the success of governments. This approach follows the latest trends in this field, since 40 OECD countries have signed the *Declaration on Public Sector Innovation*<sup>19</sup> in May 2019, accepting the following principles:

- Embrace and enhance innovation within the public sector.
- Encourage and equip all public servants to innovate.
- Cultivate new partnerships and involve different voices.
- Support exploration, iteration and testing.
- Diffuse lessons and share practices.



# PUBLIC POLICY TESTING

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES  
TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT