smartup
Social Innovation Lab

"We are a non-profit social innovation lab that co-creates and implements solutions to complex public challenges."



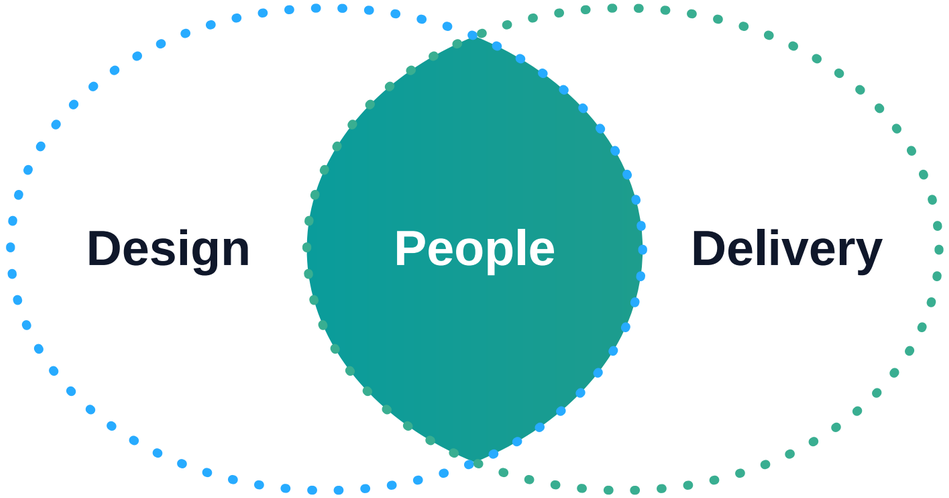
About us

SmartUp – Social Innovation Lab was founded in 2014 and has since built a **regional portfolio of projects and partnerships.** We collaborate with public institutions, private-sector companies, civil society organisations, and communities.

Our work is **human-centred,** combining **research, facilitation, co-creation, digital tools, and capacity building** to understand challenges, develop and test ideas, and support their implementation in practice. We **adapt our methods** to the needs of each project and the people and institutions involved.

We work across four programme areas: **Education, Youth, Climate Change, and Public Sector Innovation.**

Our Approach



Mission

We use custom-designed processes to understand complex challenges and co-create lasting solutions by connecting and collaborating with organizations, communities & individuals.

Vision

Our vision is to shape a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous region through innovation.

Our Programmes

To co-create an enabling environment where better teaching and learning experiences can evolve.

Education

To empower youth to become active changemakers and contribute to the development of their communities.

Youth

To transform the public sector into innovative and citizen-centred institutions.

Public Sector Innovation

To accelerate the transition to a climate-resilient society.

Climate Change

Our Services

Co-creation & innovation processes

Participatory workshops, design labs and tailored innovation processes.

Research, insights & strategy

Needs assessments, stakeholder research & analysis for better decisions.

Digital platforms & tools

Tools for learning, participation, collaboration, and public services.

Learning & capacity development

Training, mentoring and resources to strengthen institutional and community capabilities.

Pilots, implementation & scaling

Delivery, monitoring, learning & adaptation to move solutions into practice.

Services can be delivered individually or combined within wider programmes.

Impact at a glance



Mobilised 2,000+ educators to create 4,700+ video lessons, reaching 25,000+ teacher users and 30,000+ student users. The platform was transferred to the Bureau for Development of Education.



Across two national editions, SmartUp supported 20 youth-led solutions through mentoring and incubation, producing two global winning teams — AndroMeta in 2019 and eBionics in 2020.



Delivered 40 innovation activities, engaged 850+ citizens, supported the redesign and digitalisation of public services, and developed 16 public space concepts through citizen participation.



Led a five-city partnership, helped establish the Skopje Development Institute, and assessed roughly 60 municipal projects to create a prioritised impact investment portfolio for Skopje.

Our Latest Work



Promoting a Safe School Environment

We work with students and educators to support children's right to quality education by strengthening protection, participation, and equality in schools through capacity building and improved support mechanisms.



Community Mobility Co-operatives

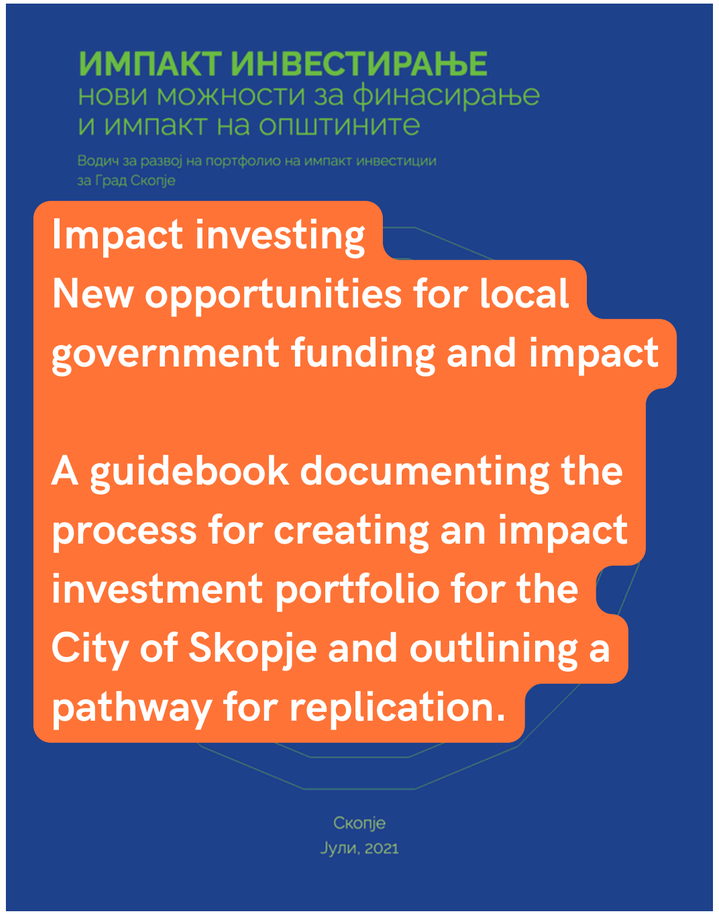
We are exploring how shared electric vehicle fleets and community-driven EV charging infrastructure can be supported and leveraged to advance community mobility in South East Europe.



Researching Mechanisms for the Operationalization of the National Development Strategy

We tested how strategic foresight can be leveraged to support North Macedonia’s long-term development goals, with a focus on co-creating policy pilots and institutional integration.

Handbooks & guides



Impact investing
New opportunities for local government funding and impact

A guidebook documenting the process for creating an impact investment portfolio for the City of Skopje and outlining a pathway for replication.

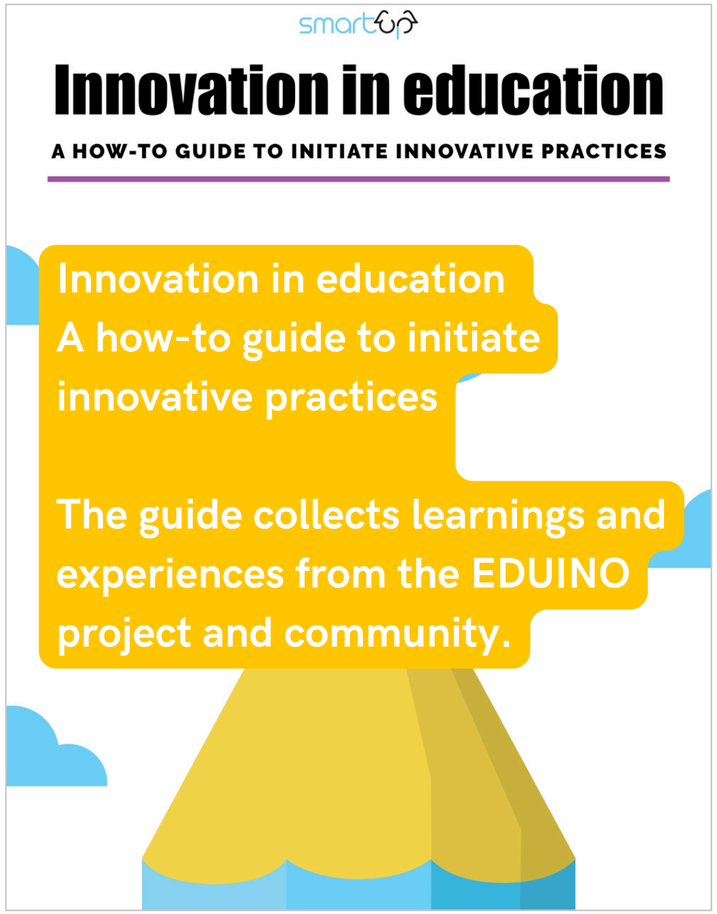
Learn more



Co-creating crowdfunding models - policy framework and models in North Macedonia

A handbook for local government and practitioners synthesising knowledge from the InnoFinRES project.

Learn more



Innovation in education
A how-to guide to initiate innovative practices

The guide collects learnings and experiences from the EDUINO project and community.

Learn more

Meet the team



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International partners & donors

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Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action

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European Climate Initiative EUKI

eit Climate-KIC

Climate-KIC is supported by the EIT, a body of the European Union

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation

unicef for every child

МАКЕДОНСКИ ЦЕНТАР ЗА ГРАѓАНСКО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ

СЕГА
Коалиција на младински организации
www.sega.org.mk

U.S. Embassy Macedonia

UKaid from the British people

UNDP

KORIMAKO

OSCE

ПРВА ДЕТСКА АМБАСАДА ВО СВЕТОТ МЕѓАШИ
МЕЃАШИ
РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА

P2R
PATHWAYS2RESILIENCE

Fundación hazloposible

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

European Commission

Horizon 2020
European Union funding
for Research & Innovation



Public Sector Innovation

Program: Public Sector Innovation



Initiating Public Sector Innovation: Co-creating for a Better Future

Our goal is to help public institutions develop and deliver more responsive, accessible, and effective services and public policies through research, co-creation, prototyping, and practical support for implementation.

Objectives:

- **Stronger institutional capacity** to identify, test and implement practical responses to complex challenges.
- **Better public services** that are more accessible, responsive and effective.
- **Meaningful participation** of citizens and affected groups in shaping public solutions.

Our Approach to Public Sector Innovation

We work with public institutions, municipalities, communities, and experts to turn complex public challenges into practical solutions.

Our work usually starts with understanding the problem and the people affected by it, then moves through co-creation, testing, and support for implementation. The aim is not only to generate ideas, but to help institutions put better ways of working into practice and build ownership around them.

Public Sector Innovation: Our Range of Services

We offer a comprehensive range of services to support governments and public sector organizations in their pursuit of innovation. Our services include:

Facilitating participatory innovation processes

We design and facilitate processes that help institutions and stakeholders define challenges, generate ideas, and work through solutions together.

Redesign of public services and spaces

We help public institutions rethink services, processes, and public-facing spaces to improve accessibility, user experience, and how things work in practice.

Engagement of citizens and other stakeholders

We create participatory processes that bring citizens, community organisations, and expert stakeholders into the design and improvement of public solutions.

Service digitalization and data visualization

We use digital and data tools to help simplify processes, improve service delivery, and support more informed decision-making.

Public Sector Innovation: Examples of Our Impact



Our work in public sector innovation has made a significant impact on public institutions and communities. Specific examples of our impact include:

- **Researching Mechanisms for the Operationalization of the National Development Strategy**: SmartUp supported the implementation of North Macedonia's National Development Strategy 2024–2044 through **research, co-creation workshops and strategic foresight training** focused on migrant and refugee integration. The process trained **93 stakeholders and produced 15 proposed policy measures**, including at least three with proposed policy pilots. SmartUp also explored options for establishing a national foresight unit.

Public Sector Innovation: Examples of Our Impact



- **SkopjeLab:** Established in 2017 in partnership with the City of Skopje and UNDP, SkopjeLab was the **first public sector innovation lab** within a public institution in the Balkans. SmartUp designed and managed its programme until 2022, introducing participatory approaches to improving public services and urban spaces.
- SkopjeLab brought together city administration, citizens, businesses, and civil society to **redesign public services, co-create public spaces, and develop digital solutions** responding to the needs of Skopje's residents.
- **Notable achievements** include the redesign of bulky waste collection, NGO grant applications, and the Correct Address service; digital tools for the City Inspectorate; **16 public space concepts** developed through citizen participation; and the Velo Parking initiative.
- SmartUp also **facilitated urban sustainability initiatives** related to the **Green Cadastre, energy efficiency, and e-waste,** alongside **public space innovation workshops and practical training for city employees.** The lab developed the City's first innovation framework and strengthened its capacity to apply citizen-centred approaches to public services.

Public Sector Innovation: Examples of Our Impact



- **Public Sector Innovation Training for Local Government and MZ (Mjesne Zajednice-Local Communities) Representatives:** Delivered two innovation training programs for **66 local government and MZ representatives**, improving their innovation skills through practical exercises. The project also identified opportunities for ongoing support and professional development in public sector innovation.

- **Workshop on service development for national parks (N. Macedonia)**: SmartUp designed and facilitated a two-day workshop on the challenges and opportunities for sustainable development of national parks. The workshop brought together **37** participants from national parks, municipalities, public institutions, development agencies, businesses, and civil society. Using design thinking, participants explored development challenges and opportunities, generating ideas that were refined into three **project concepts** for further development.

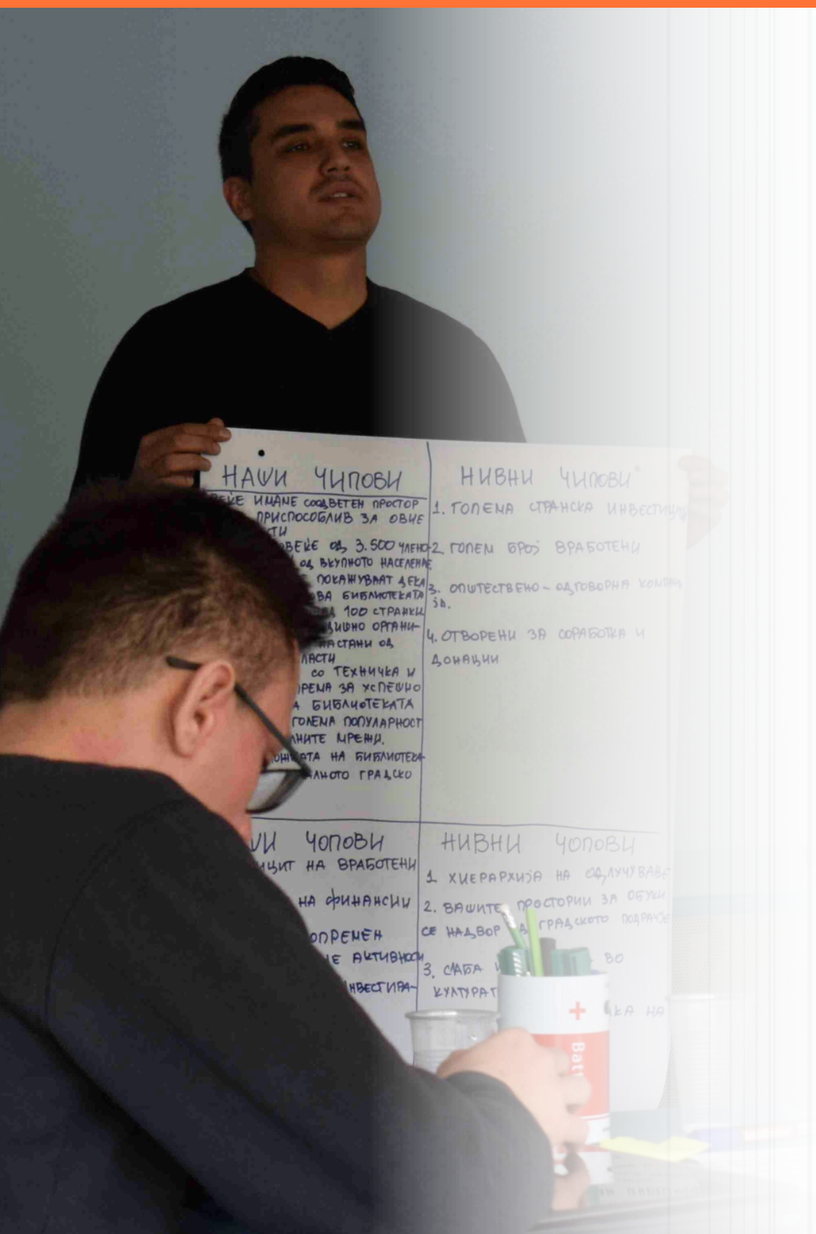
Public Sector Innovation: Examples of Our Impact



- **Public Sector Innovation Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In 2022, we developed and implemented a training program on public sector innovation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The training consisted of a comprehensive curriculum on public sector innovation, including introductory training and a policy lab for **50 public sector representatives**.

- **Open Government Partnership (OGP) for the City of Skopje:** In collaboration with the City of Skopje, SmartUp implemented the "Open Government Partnership (OGP)" initiative as part of the "Resilient Skopje" project. The project focused on **improving sustainability, innovation, and climate resilience** by establishing a framework for open data management, developing tools for data collection, and engaging stakeholders in these processes.

Public Sector Innovation: Examples of Our Impact



- **"Inclusive and Successful digital transformation for all - DIGITAL ALL" (N.Macedonia):** The DIGIT-ALL project, implemented by SmartUp as a subgrantee, aimed to accelerate Skopje's transition to a digital city by establishing a **fully functional e-government support center**. This center was designed to help citizens of Skopje navigate digital city services, including subsidy applications, grants, and more.

- **Impact Investment Portfolio for Local Governments (within Future Cities of SEE Project) (N. Macedonia):** Through the Future Cities of South East Europe project, SmartUp developed an impact investment portfolio for the City of Skopje and a guide to impact investing for local governments, in collaboration with Elson Solutions and with support from Bankers Without Boundaries.

Our belief

> If you want to be incrementally better, be competitive.
> If you want to be exponentially better, **be cooperative**.

We see problems as **opportunities**, and we believe that individuals and communities are the best agents of **sustainable development**.

Partner with us

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