smartup
Social Innovation Lab

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



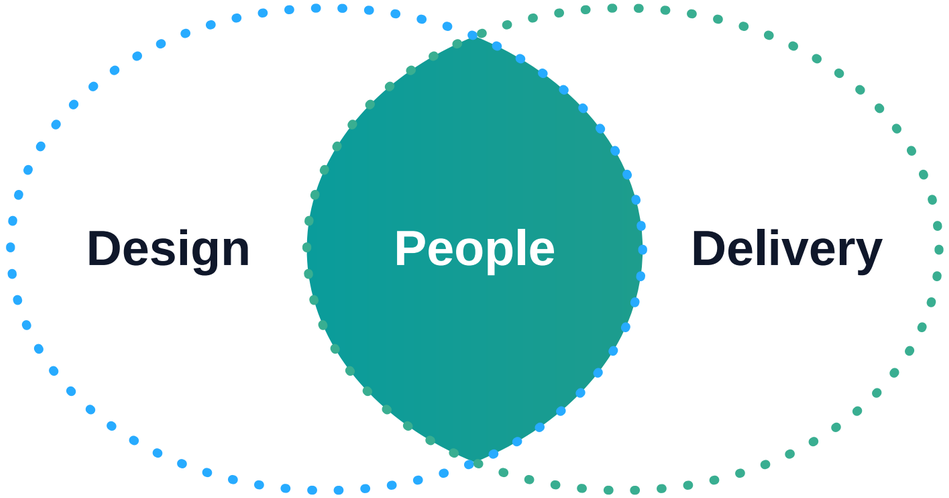
About us

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

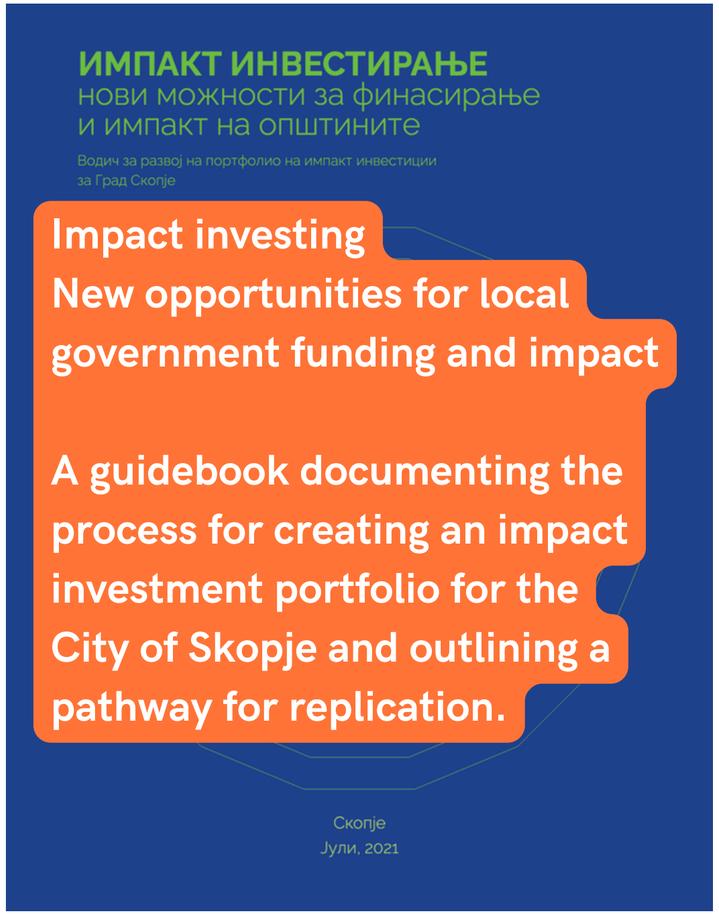
We are exploring how shared electric vehicle fleets and community-driven EV charging infrastructure can be supported and leveraged to advance community mobility in South East Europe.



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.

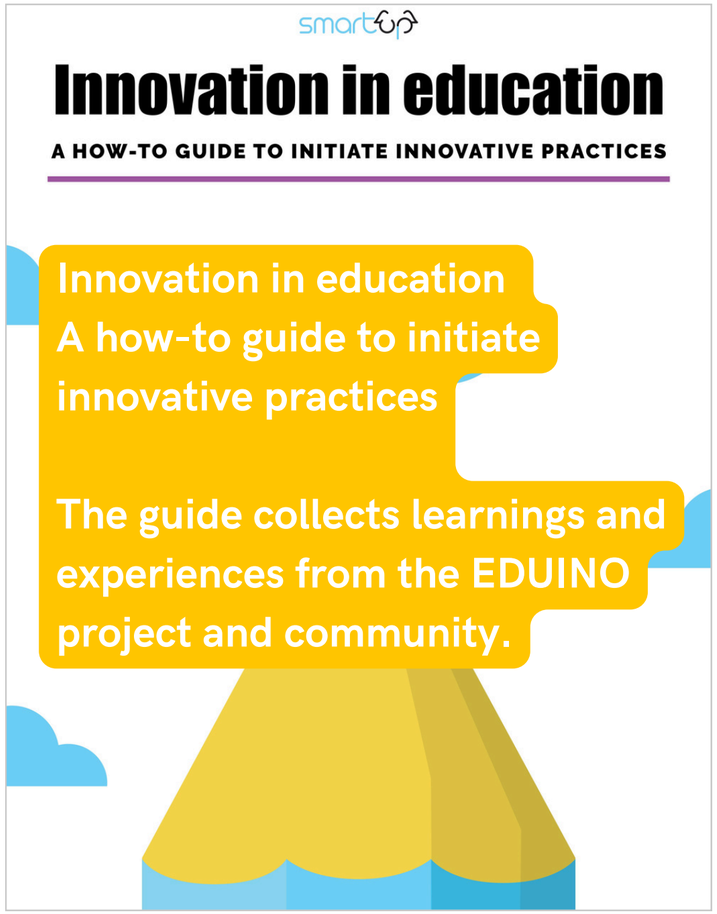
Learn more



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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European Climate Initiative EUKI

eit Climate-KIC

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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



Youth



Program: Youth

Cultivating changemakers through engagement & innovation

Our goal is to help young people become active changemakers with the skills, support, and space they need to shape their communities and influence decisions that affect them.

Objectives:

- **Meaningful participation** in programmes, services and decisions that affect young people.
- **Skills and confidence** built through active participation and practical experience.
- **Stronger support systems** that create relevant opportunities for young people.

Our Approach to Youth Development and Engagement

We design with young people, not for them.

That means involving them in defining problems, shaping solutions, and leading initiatives, while also creating the structure, mentorship, and institutional connections needed to turn ideas into action. We focus on participation that is meaningful and inclusive, and connected to opportunities for young people to develop ideas, build skills, and take action.

Youth: What we offer

We offer a comprehensive range of services to support organizations and communities in their efforts to engage and empower youth. Our services include:

Youth engagement processes

We design inclusive processes that help identify young people's priorities and shape engagement strategies around them.

Participation platforms and initiatives

We create and run platforms and initiatives that help young people participate, connect, and contribute ideas and solutions.

Youth capacity development

We deliver training, workshops, mentorship, and collaborative formats that strengthen the skills and confidence young people need to lead.

Innovation challenges and hackathons

We facilitate challenges and hackathons that bring young people together to work on real problems and develop practical solutions.

Youth: Examples of Our Impact



Our commitment to fostering positive change and empowering individuals is exemplified through impactful initiatives:

- **Youth Climate Action Fund: Sveti Nikole:** SmartUp served as the local partner to the Municipality of Sveti Nikole in implementing the Youth Climate Action Fund. The programme enabled young people aged 15–24 to develop local climate initiatives eligible for grants of US$1,000–5,000. SmartUp facilitated three co-creation workshops, guiding youth teams through identifying climate challenges, developing project ideas, defining activities and preparing budgets and applications.

- **Mediathon: Youth Voices for Social Change:** We supported **47 high school students and teachers** from Skopje to create impactful media content addressing modern social challenges. The initiative promoted media literacy, storytelling, and leadership skills while encouraging youth to tackle issues like bullying, social inclusion, and community well-being through media campaigns.

Youth: Examples of Our Impact



- **Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge** is a global initiative aiming to ensure young people's access to education, training, and employment by 2030. SmartUp delivered two national editions (2018/19 and 2019/20), guiding young people through workshops, co-creation sessions, and mentoring to develop **20 innovative solutions** addressing violence prevention and digital inclusion. Both editions produced global winners: **AndroMeta in 2019, with its SpeakOut** anti-bullying app, and **eBionics** in 2020, with its **Venus Arm prosthetic prototype**. Both teams received international recognition and funding to develop their solutions further.

- **Nasoci.me Career Guidance Platform**: We designed and launched this platform for the City of Skopje, providing secondary school students with accessible career guidance resources and educational videos featuring professionals from different fields.

Youth: Examples of Our Impact



- **Extended Mentorship and Incubation for Team AndroMeta – Global Winners of GenU Youth Challenge (N. Macedonia):** Following Team AndroMeta's global victory in 2019, SmartUp provided extended **mentorship and incubation to support the further development of SpeakOut,** a mobile app designed to help young people affected by bullying. We guided the team through product development, business planning, and communication, helping them make effective use of their global seed funding, refine their solution, and strengthen their entrepreneurial and pitching skills.

- **#MeetTheSkopjans/ #ZapoznajGiSkopjani:** Inspired by diverse cultures in Skopje, we launched the #MeetTheSkopjans initiative to collect and share the stories of over **100 local citizens**. Through storytelling, we engaged local institutions and promoted positive change in the community. By incorporating creative event organizing, branding, and merchandising, we helped strengthen the connection between Skopje's citizens and their city.

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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