

# STEPPING STONES FOR THE FUTURE

UNOPS in Serbia 2000-2020



This publication is a narrative of 20 years of UNOPS working in Serbia. It is a compendium of its endeavours and successes, an anthology of its people and relationships. It testifies to the commitment of fulfilling our entrusted mandate, the support of all our partners, the belief of our beneficiaries. It reveals our unique identity within the United Nations system.

This book is a testimony of our striving to build a better future.

It is dedicated to all those who have been building it with us, and to those who will join us on the path of building better lives.

UNOPS Serbia Office team

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>OUR 20 YEARS</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>OUR PROXIMITY, OUR ACTIONS</b>	<b>93</b>
		Local Developement	96
<b>OUR MISSION, OUR CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>13</b>	Social Cohesion	106
		Good Governance	119
<b>OUR MANDATE, OUR IMPACT</b>	<b>31</b>	Emergency Response	127
Project Management	35	<b>OUR ASPIRATION, OUR ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>145</b>
Infrastructure	41	Gender	149
Procurement	51	Environment	155
HR and Financial Management	57	<b>OUR KNOWLEDGE, OUR DIVERSITY</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>OUR COMMITMENT, OUR TRUSTWORTHINESS</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>OUR VOICE</b>	<b>176</b>
Partnership and Ownership	68		
Excellence	84		



**OUR  
20 YEARS**

# FOREWORDS

UNOPS' mission is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development. We help build a more sustainable future for all.

We take pride in ensuring national ownership and enhancing local capacity, as we help our partners achieve their goals and improve lives in the communities where we work.

The UNOPS Serbia Office exemplifies what UNOPS stands for: it has grown slowly but steadily from a small office in 2000, responsible for one project, to an office now also covering projects in North Macedonia and Montenegro. It is widely recognized by the government, national institutions and the international donor community as a reliable and resourceful partner for the implementation of complex socio-economic development, infrastructure, procurement and human resources projects.

Thanks to its dedicated team, the UNOPS Serbia Office today is also a respected partner with local governments, civil society organisations and the local private sector, delivering results that make a difference to people's lives.

From reconstructing roads damaged by floods to contributing towards the creation of a favourable environment for business and infrastructure growth, UNOPS has enabled its partners in Serbia over the past 20 years to drive sustainable development throughout the country. It is now expanding its support in the region, always with a focus on building local ownership and capacities, and promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

I would like to thank our partners for their trust over the years and congratulate the UNOPS Serbia Office for this milestone anniversary.



**Grete Faremo**

United Nations  
Under-Secretary-General  
and UNOPS  
Executive Director

It is with great pleasure that I am contributing to this publication, marking the 20th anniversary of UNOPS in Serbia. I have a vivid memory of the Serbia Office team and the moment when I first met them in 2012 when I joined UNOPS. This team of truly dedicated professionals has maintained this DNA of commitment and professionalism along the years, as I could see in my role as Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia.

The hallmark of the Office is its unwavering commitment to operational excellence and growth, its highly skilled and motivated staff, and last but not least - the depth of its roots in the communities it serves.



**Moin Karim**

UNOPS Regional Director  
Europe and Central Asia

It has always been evident to me that this is a team that has much to contribute to the Government and people of Serbia, and the potential to expand in the region. Today, I am proud to say that my intuition was right.

Over the past five years, the Serbia Office has exceeded our expectations. It has become synonymous with best practice and excellence in UNOPS, notably winning the Project of the Year award in 2019. It has become the leading international partner of the Government of Serbia, from disaster relief to upgrading the national infrastructure. It now works across the region, supporting the neighbouring governments of North Macedonia and Montenegro, and made critical contributions to UNOPS ability to establish offices in Ukraine and Georgia.

Today, we have an office that is implementing a diverse portfolio of 100 million euros across three countries, working in a wide range of sectors to assist the people of the Western Balkans to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We have an office that works closely with our sister agencies in the UN Country Team, under the coordination and leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, and last but not least an office that, thanks to the trust of our key partners and donors, is sustainable.

For these achievements, I would like to thank Mr Graeme Tyndall, the former UNOPS Serbia Operations Centre Manager, and Ms Michela Telatin, the Head of UNOPS Serbia Office, as well as the Serbia team for reaching this important anniversary - and all our present and past staff who helped the office reach its goals. Lastly - I would like to thank the Government and people of Serbia and our international partners for their continued trust and support in UNOPS.

# INTRODUCTION

UNOPS has been working in Serbia since 2000. It has been 20 years of commitment, building trust and partnership with national and international stakeholders, cultivating knowledge, meeting its people, voicing their concerns, building on their strengths and willingness to build better lives for them and their communities.

I am proud to present you this book that epitomises our engagements and results, together with some of the people that with us fulfilled our mission and mandate, and projects that filled our hearts with satisfaction. While reading this book, you will be joining us in this celebration that is uniting thousands of people who have, in different ways, contributed to building stepping stones for the future.

In Serbia, UNOPS has designed context-specific projects to build synergies between different national and international normative frameworks such as the Sustainable Development and European Union agenda, and United Nations values. These are in line with our institutional mission, and provide the context for our agency's contribution.

Our mandate in project management, infrastructure, procurement, human resources and financial management is a tool to an end to have a tangible impact on people's lives. We have proved it in Serbia during all these years.

Our projects are oriented towards our beneficiaries, and supported by international standards of excellence, accountability, transparency, and implemented by highly skilled professionals. This modus operandi is our commitment, we seek collaborative partnerships, and promote ownership. For us, this is how sustainability is achieved, and it is fundamental for building the future.

When a country looks at the future, its profile must imply social cohesion, good governance, development at local level, as well as readiness for a prompt emergency response. In Serbia, national and local institutions, partners, the United Nations agencies, are all united in building a future that implies a better life for all.

In UNOPS, targets matter, but how we reach our targets is equally important. For instance, we amplify positive change in society by having all our project management approaches embedded with an attention to gender equality and environment. This method delivers a truly comprehensive response, and an inspiring one for future generations.

The results and benefits we create are a source of inspiration in UNOPS. Another important source of inspiration is the Serbia Office team, a composite group of motivated professionals whose expertise is valued and sought by other

UNOPS offices, and which allowed UNOPS to expand in other countries such as Montenegro, North Macedonia, Georgia, Ukraine. While reaching the end of this book, I am sure you will join me in giving them a round of applause.

This book contains many voices of colleagues, beneficiaries, national and international partners, all bringing their insight, concerns, expertise, ambitions, and, above all, their personal motivation for achieving a stronger human solidarity that needs to embrace us all at these present times as well as in the future. I look forward to building this future together.



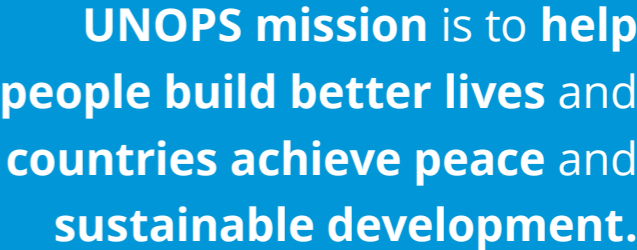
**Michela Telatin**

UNOPS Serbia  
Head of Office

# OUR MISSION, OUR CONTRIBUTION



Supporting Serbia's  
sustainable development  
and its priority agendas



# BUILDING BETTER LIVES

Our vision is a world where people can live full lives supported by appropriate, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure and by the efficient, transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.

Roma children in front  
of the newly-built social  
housing flats, Obrenovac

## 20 YEARS OF UNOPS IN SERBIA



It is with great pleasure that we mark the 20th anniversary of UNOPS' operation in Serbia. Your team of hard-working and dedicated professionals is one of the most important partners of our country on its path towards sustainable development and higher quality of life for our citizens. Over the course of challenging past years, UNOPS has sustained our people and institutions through local development, social cohesion and emergency response projects.

Serbia will not forget that it was precisely UNOPS Office which was among the first to help us take care of the people in need through major infrastructure undertakings, such as the 2014 post-flood recovery, the reconstruction of clinical centres or the construction of social housing blocks of flats for the most vulnerable groups. The projects which were carried out at the time have greatly contributed to better and safer lives of our citizens.

This year, when the whole world has suffered so much at the hands of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNOPS has demonstrated once again its commitment by assisting the country in public procurement of vital medical equipment.

Over the past twenty years, UNOPS projects have also served as incentives for economic activities, advancement of infrastructure, and better quality of life for all people, paying particular attention in the process to the most vulnerable population groups. Therefore, UNOPS projects are indeed the stepping stones to a better future, which we also aspire to, and our efforts to this end are reflected in all our activities focused on an overall country's progress.

I am looking forward to UNOPS' further work in Serbia and our concerted efforts to build our better future. As has been the case so far, Serbia will remain a reliable partner, always appreciative of your commitment and dedication in your work aimed at improving the quality of life for all our citizens.

**Aleksandar Vučić**  
President of the Republic of Serbia

# HISTORY, MISSION, CONTRIBUTION

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) origins trace back to 1973, when the Office for Project Services was established as a part of the United Nations Development Programme. On 1 January 1995, by the decision of the UN General Assembly, UNOPS became a separate, self-financing entity within the UN system.

Since 1995, through resolutions and decisions, Member States have evolved UNOPS mandate, particularly with respect to the nature of our project services and the types of partners we engage with.

By 2017, the legislative basis for UNOPS contributions had been firmly established through many resolutions and decisions of the UN General Assembly and the Executive Board.

Currently, UNOPS is mandated to expand its implementation capacity across peace and security, humanitarian, and development efforts. Within the areas of its mandate, including infrastructure, procurement, project management, human resources, and financial management, and the implementation, advisory and transactional services, UNOPS supports governments, the United Nations, and other partners in achieving Member States' Global Goals and local objectives for people and countries.

In the course of its two-decade-long presence in Serbia, UNOPS has provided support to the country and its people in all areas of its mandated project services. It has executed complex projects contributing to the country reforms, implemented large-scale infrastructure interventions, conducted public procurements for a variety of purposes, and managed human resources and finances, making sure in the process its mission always comes to the fore: to help people build better lives and the country achieve sustainable development.



Post-flood road rehabilitation implied building back better: engineers overlooking one of the drainage channels constructed to prevent landslides



“I’m really glad to see UNOPS celebrating its first 20 years of operation in Serbia. This United Nations organisation has produced in past years concrete results and had a tangible impact on people's lives, through support provided to those parts of the country and those sectors that needed it the most. UNOPS was also part of emergency response in the country: in the aftermath of 2014 floods, and now, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Back then, UNOPS was building resilient infrastructure to help restore lives and public services, and this year UNOPS has been procuring life-saving medical equipment. UNOPS has been and is helping us implement our national plans and strategies. I’m looking forward to the continuation of our cooperation, and I hope UNOPS shall remain a part of Serbia’s future.

**Ivica Dačić**  
Speaker of the National Assembly  
of the Republic of Serbia,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister  
of Foreign Affairs 2016-2020

# SUPPORTING SERBIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Two decades of UNOPS presence and activity in Serbia have been the time of profound changes for the country. After embarking on the path of the European Integration in 2000, and embracing the sustainable development concept championed by the United Nations, Serbia has come to grips with a myriad of challenges of a rapidly evolving political and economic environment, strongly supported in the process by the international community. In 2020, with its population of seven million, this is a candidate country for accession to the European Union which has undergone significant structural and institutional reforms in order to not only earn this status, but also improve the lives of its citizens.

With launching an ambitious political, institutional and economic reform programme in 2001, the pace of transition was stepped up, as well as cooperation with international institutions and organisations, thereby paving the way for faster development. Support to the country has been provided through concerted efforts of donors and implementing partners, guided by the Government and relevant priorities and programmes, be in times of progress or crises, such as the hard-hitting global economic recession in 2008 or the devastating floods of May 2014.

What UNOPS has been trying to achieve throughout is to take part in coordinated efforts to support the country on its path of sustainable development, and produce a tangible beneficial impact on people. We have accomplished this goal by expanding the implementation capacity of our partners and managing a vast portfolio of projects: from infrastructure and procurement, through sustaining small businesses and en-



hancing local governance, to providing technical assistance, supporting environmental projects, and responding to national emergencies.

We remain committed to supporting Serbia in its efforts to shape a strategic approach to its own development, and investing our resources and capacities to help establish a system which will bring about a transformational change in the country and better lives for its people.

Visit of UNOPS Executive Director to a family that received a durable social housing solution, Obrenovac



“ We are proud of the cooperation that the Republic of Serbia has with the UNOPS Office. They are our reliable and long-term partner who meets our needs and with whom we create conditions for a dignified life for all citizens of Serbia and especially vulnerable groups in our society. UNOPS is here to implement our projects together, but also to help in this difficult and challenging year. A unique characteristic of UNOPS is its ability to respond quickly.

I'm particularly proud and I keep pointing out that UNOPS has brought a new, different, higher standard to project management. We learnt a lot from UNOPS, and this helped us become more efficient in everything we do. We are out there, in the field, together 24 hours a day; following projects from start to finish, and doing our best to make things better.

**Zorana Mihajlović**  
Deputy Prime Minister  
and Minister of Mining and Energy  
of the Republic of Serbia,  
Minister of Construction, Transportation  
and Infrastructure 2014-2020

# SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY IN ITS EU ACCESSION PATH

The membership in the European Union (EU) is the foremost strategic foreign policy priority of the Republic of Serbia. The membership itself is not only Serbia's strategic goal; it is, at the same time, a means for the country to enhance and modernise its legal, economic and institutional system.

Following the 2007 Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, the European Commission recommended in 2011 that Serbia should become an official membership candidate. Having been granted the candidate status in 2012, the Council of the European Union gave a green light for the opening of negotiations on Serbia's accession to the EU in 2013. Since the launch of Serbia's accession negotiations in January 2014, eighteen out of a total of thirty-five negotiating chapters have been opened, two of which are now temporarily closed.

UNOPS has been a reliable partner of the Government of Serbia on its EU accession journey since 2010, when a programme designed to bolster local development, funded by the EU and Switzerland, marked the beginning of what

would subsequently turn out to be a decade-long series of initiatives aiming to introduce the principles and values underpinning European societies into the lives of Serbian citizens.

Together with our national and local partners, and in collaboration with multiple partners from the international community, we have been infusing the values such as pluralism, tolerance, solidarity, non-discrimination, rule of law and strengthening of democratic institutions into the reality of people's everyday lives. We have acted as a silent partner tasked with bringing tangible solutions to the table designed to serve as a guarantee that these values will be further cherished and enhanced, be it in social housing, competitiveness or healthcare.

The country's EU accession process will remain at the top of Serbia's agendas in future. Given the role the organisation has had so far, as well as its contextual knowledge and operational capacity, UNOPS remains firmly committed to continuous support for Serbia on this complex journey towards the EU membership, crucial for improvement of the quality of life of its citizens and maintaining the stability of the country.

**We have been contributing to Serbia's EU accession, influencing the Chapters:**

**19 Social Policy and Employment**

**20 Entrepreneurship and Industrial Policy**

**23 Judiciary and Fundamental Rights**

**24 Justice, Freedom and Security**

**26 Education and Culture**

**27 Environment**



“The Ministry of EU Integration has been collaborating with UNOPS through a very specific and extensive cooperation instrument, i.e. the European funds programming and overall bilateral donor development. Our job is to be accountable with regard to the quality of projects and transparent spending of funds.

This is precisely why we need a trustworthy partner capable of meeting such high standards and criteria that we've set. I may say our collaboration has yielded quality. I'd even say we've established a sort of a benchmark.

With UNOPS, we've worked together on crucially important projects for the future, such as local economic development programmes in undeveloped and less developed municipalities in Serbia.

I believe UNOPS will continue to be a responsible implementing partner in our joint work to further enhance already high standards.

**Jadranka Joksimović**  
Minister of European Integration  
of the Republic of Serbia

University students' discussion within "Europe, that's You" campaign in southern Serbia's Bujanovac



# BRINGING UN VALUES

The United Nations (UN) has maintained its presence in the Republic of Serbia since the outbreak of a crisis which engulfed the region in the early 1990s. The UN Country Team has been working in close collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Serbia since the early 2000s.

Together with 18 UN agencies, funds and programmes, UNOPS works to support Serbia's progress in advancing its national development priorities, fully aligned with the ongoing EU accession-related reform processes and five core principles of the Agenda 2030: universality, leaving no one behind, integrated agenda, human rights and national ownership.

Within the framework of the UN Team's road map for strategic cooperation with Serbia, UNOPS provides meaningful and tangible contribution for further promotion of good governance and the rule of law, development of social and human resources, economic development, growth and employment, environmental protection, combating climate change, building resilient communities, and integrating culture into the overall process of sustainable development in the country.

More often than not implementing the projects in partnership, with funding and in collaboration with other members of the UN family over the course of the past two decades, such as UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organisation (WHO), UN Human Security Trust Fund (HSTF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and Office of the UN High Commissioner for

Human Rights (OHCHR), we have been striving to bring the UN values into our work, and succeeding in achieving the results required to meet the pressing needs.

While the UN has been changing the world for the past 75 years, UNOPS marks the 25th anniversary of efforts made to accomplish the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the 20th anniversary of efforts invested in helping Serbia come closer to achieving its targets in this respect. This triple anniversary comes at a time of great disruption for the whole world, further compounded by an unprecedented global health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, producing severe economic and social impact on societies worldwide.

Milestone anniversaries serve not only as reminders of the purpose behind the establishment of our organisation; they are here to remind us that the times of struggle may well turn into opportunities for a positive change and transformation, with a vital role in the whole process for international organisations and international collaboration. UNOPS stands ready to grapple with challenges and seize opportunities, together with its partners, and press on with its work towards a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

**We have been contributing to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, all in line with the Development Partnership Framework between the Government and the UN United Nations Country Team:**



“The core UN values are integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity, and UNOPS ticks all the boxes here.

When it comes to professionalism, UNOPS aims for excellence and is constantly trying to come up with best practices, constantly looking for innovation, and working on boosting efficiencies. It's a very agile organisation that keeps tackling different situations and different contexts, and I think it's particularly useful here, in Serbia.

In terms of integrity, UNOPS is to be commended for accessibility and transparency of data in its systems and for the way in which it operates. UNOPS coordinates with all UN agencies, and it's a great addition to the UN system.

Françoise Jacob  
UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia



UN Country Team meeting UNOPS Executive Director and UN Under-Secretary-General during her visit to Serbia in 2017



“As a team, in Serbia, we’ve made every effort over the years to earn and maintain trust of the state and national partners, as well as donors funding the projects we implement effectively, while respecting local standards and the context, as well as introducing the highest international standards.

We’ve also identified areas where national capacities require support. We’ve been recruiting experts who have, relying on UNOPS capacities, helped build a stable and sustainable structure of state institutions, local governments, and SMEs; we’ve championed women’s entrepreneurship and youth employment.

We have endeavoured to make every segment of development sustainable and relevant.

**Daliborka Kolar**  
UNOPS Serbia Head of Support Services



Deputy Mayor of Svilajnac showing the post-flood reconstructed kindergarten to UNOPS Directors during their 2019 mission to Serbia



“The purpose of UNOPS existence is to help people build better lives. Through our mandate in infrastructure, project management, procurement, human resources management and financial resources management we translate our mission into reality.

In Serbia I saw that UNOPS was successful in building this reality. Each of the projects I visited during my mission to the country - be it a post-flood reconstructed kindergarten, an industrial business zone or a culture centre in a small rural settlement - is indeed creating better lives for the beneficiary communities.

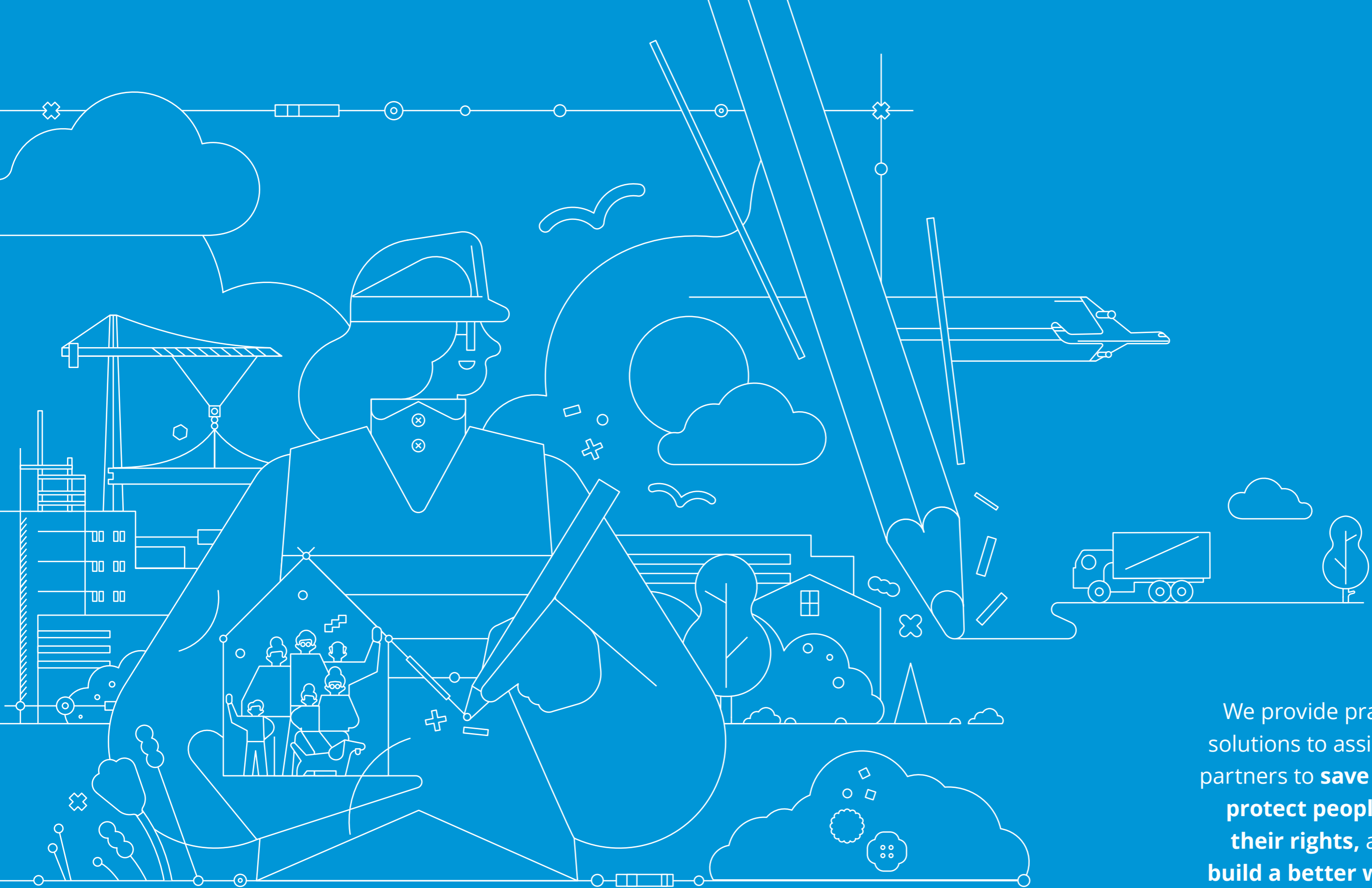
The UNOPS Serbia team has implemented hundreds of such projects during the last 20 years keeping its focus on people’s quality of life and its sustainability. We are committed to continue working in Serbia building a better life for all.

**Honore Dainhi**  
UNOPS Director of Regional Portfolios



# OUR MANDATE, OUR IMPACT

Project Management,  
Infrastructure, Procurement,  
HR and Financial Management



We provide practical solutions to assist our partners to **save lives, protect people and their rights**, and to **build a better world**.

A team meeting under protective masks due to COVID-19 pandemic, Belgrade 2020

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**180** million euros

**20**  
projects

**1,600**  
sub-projects



Team consultations  
complementing  
papers and books

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

UNOPS is driven by the belief that better projects can improve the lives of people in need and ensure more efficient and sustainable use of resources. Relying on project management expertise and local knowledge, UNOPS develops individual solutions to meet partner needs, providing efficient management services and increasing the impact and sustainability of projects and programmes around the world.

While applying tailor-made methodologies and approaches, and simultaneously enhancing the capacity of our partners, we bring agility and technical expertise to the table to get the project done – on cost, schedule, and meeting quality requirements.

Over the past two decades of its operation in Serbia, UNOPS has managed an exceptionally diverse range of projects. Its post-bombing clean-up project upon its arrival to Serbia and un-stinting corporate-driven support to the process of political and administrative decentralisation in the first decade paved the way for UNOPS to become a resident UN organisation and an important actor in the development landscape of Serbia.

In the latter decade of its operation in the country, in addition to the implementation of projects aimed at local development, UNOPS has been developing both its portfolio and capacities in the areas of social cohesion, good governance, and emergency response, as well as bringing its project management expertise to bear on these spheres.

Our project management mandate has enabled us to implement a diverse span of projects. We have witnessed ourselves the improvements in the lives of people that these projects brought - a testament to the quality of UNOPS project management.

We have been  
implementing  
projects in:

- economic development  
and competitiveness
- social inclusion  
and cohesion
- governance and  
public administration
- disaster response  
and risk reduction
- environment and  
climate change
- internal affairs
- media and civil society
- healthcare  
and education
- youth, sport and culture
- gender mainstreaming



“UNOPS mandate in project management has enabled us to be present in numerous areas of our society's development. Our active participation at various levels and our long-term partnerships have made a positive contribution to the Republic of Serbia's development.

If I had to choose something that makes UNOPS project implementation unique, it is the fact that we have been on the ground and in the field practically all these years. Our proximity and close cooperation with our beneficiaries, combined with high standards of project management, have enabled us to understand and respond well to their needs, and together achieve many results.

**Marko Vujačić**  
UNOPS Serbia Head of Programme

Continuous  
improvement of  
knowledge in project  
management



# TO BE, OR NOT TO BE... PERFECT

## Aleksandra Radetić

Head of Programme Management Office (PMO) Ukraine,  
former Serbia Office PMO Supervisor

One of my key responsibilities, as the Project Management Office (PMO) Supervisor in UNOPS Serbia, was to promote excellence in all aspects of project management. This included, very often, long discussions with colleagues about how to improve the quality of

our work, and the quality of products we deliver to our partners. There are UNOPS standards, and then there is vast knowledge and experience we brought along when we joined the organisation.

At the end of 2017, under a very tight schedule, we were getting ready to start with implementation of the EU PRO programme. Following the best practices of stakeholder engagement, we decided to prepare a letter and announce the new initiative to a wide range of beneficiaries.

I asked Marko Vujačić, then Deputy Programme Manager, to send me the letter we had used for the previous iteration of the programme, European PROGRES. Having read the document that had been drafted in May 2014, I stormed into Marko's office (I bet those who know me are laughing now).



**Did you share with me the right letter?**

I was in panic.

**Who on good Earth wrote this letter?**

I was in panic.

**I made one hundred alterations, and it still doesn't make any sense.**

I responded.

**Marko, don't beat about the bush! Just tell me! I want to know: who wrote this letter?**

I was becoming impatient.

**Yes.**

Marko said calmly.

**Why do you ask?**

Marko replied, ever so diplomatically.

...

He smiled. Then, after a long pause...

**You did!**

Marko finally spoke.

Funnily enough, when we wrote the letter, it was just perfect. Three years on, UNOPS has grown, and so have we. We've been learning from the organisation, we've learnt from each other, we've learnt from our partners. We have replicated best practices and we have always striven to exceed our stakeholders' expectations.

Given the talent and capacity of its personnel, personal commitment and great leadership, I am confident that UNOPS Serbia will continue to be the partner of choice for many years to come.



“ We have a very long practice and experience in project management. It is a long-term and continuous effort to continually improve the quality and consistency of applying the highest world standards in project management.

Years of evolution have led to the fact that today we have more areas within project management with which we have reached an enviable level of maturity and quality. These are, above all, a serious approach to risk management, concern for quality. Much attention is focused on external, internal communication and reporting and a careful and systematic approach to planning.

**Milica Radović**  
PMO Associate



One of almost 100 road structures built or reconstructed in the aftermath of the floods: Bajina Bašta, western Serbia

# INFRASTRUCTURE

**168**  
public infrastructure facilities

**522**  
houses and social housing apartments

**91**  
regulation plans

**19**  
water and waste systems

**91**  
road structures

**222**  
designs

# INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure plays a critical role in society. It is a foundation for development and has a long lasting impact - positive or negative.

UNOPS stands behind the point that developing and managing sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure can enable positive development.

With such an influence of infrastructure, UNOPS mandate in this area carries twofold responsibility: to approach its implementation abiding by the highest international standards, and to constantly search for and be finding the ways to make it better: better planned, better managed, better constructed.

In order to meet this responsibility, we implement a wide range of infrastructure solutions through planning, designing, construction and maintenance. In addition to the five traditional infrastructure sectors – transportation, water and sanitation, energy, ICT, and solid waste management – we implement social infrastructure projects in other sectors such as the rule of law, health, and education, for the benefit of local populations and national development.

Benefit of the communities and country development has been guiding us in Serbia in implementing our infrastructure mandate. Thanks to the team of qualified engineers, managers and specialists, we have been building schools, reconstructing hospitals, monitoring locally implemented projects and providing advisory for national projects of priority.

The infrastructure we managed has frequently served local development and brought about positive changes in local communities. The projects UNOPS has conducted in Serbia have regularly contained a good governance and social component, be it a reconstruction of a kindergarten, construction of a green market or building a social housing block of flats. This part of our mandate has been crucial in post-disaster rehabilitation, and was showcased after the 2014 floods in Serbia when we provided essential support to the country's recovery.

Infrastructure is built to last. We invest efforts to ensure all the positive effects it brings last, too.

IPMG visit to one of the project sites around Valjevo



“Infrastructure is so much more than mere construction works. Rather it is a key tool contributing to all the Sustainable Development Goals - from building small houses and improving the lives of families to strengthening capacities of ministries and local governments to help social, economic and environmental protection on a larger scale.

**Dragana Novaković**  
UNOPS Serbia Senior Project  
Officer for Infrastructure

Major interventions on reconstructing roads in 2017 included remediating the landslides between Kremna and Mokra Gora



# HOUSING THE HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EVEN HIGHER GOALS

In Bujanovac municipality, a structure worth almost a million euros, built in accordance with the highest international standards and housing the country's first higher education bilingual programme, is now a beacon of hope for its ethnically divided community.

In November 2015, after nine months of construction, a new, higher education building, housing the Bujanovac Department of the Subotica Faculty of Economics was officially opened. Previously, the Bujanovac Department, established in 2011, had been located in rented premises at the Cultural Centre and supported in various capacities by the Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa, Municipality of Bujanovac, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and European Union (EU). In 2015, when the fourth generation of students enrolled and the number of students grew, the lack of space became obvious.

With the EU and the Swiss Government allocating 800,000 euros through the UNOPS-implemented European PROGRES, and the Government of Serbia contributing additional 180,000 euros, UNOPS constructed the new faculty building in a record-breaking time. The result of this partnership endeavour is a beautiful structure covering a surface area of 2,300 square metres, and featuring, among other facilities, six modern well-equipped classrooms, a library and a career centre.



“Project design started in 2014, and the construction followed in February 2015. It was completed in October, the same year. Five years on, the structure itself is in excellent condition.

This part of Bujanovac developed after the faculty's construction so that a new town centre came into existence.

The faculty's bilingual character has enabled better communication among young people from different communities in Bujanovac, be it Albanian, Roma or Serbian.

**Ivan Mladenović**  
UNOPS Serbia Project Engineer

The faculty building not only introduced high construction standards and enabled bilingual education, but triggered development of the part of Bujanovac where it is located



Students in the amphitheatre, one of the Faculty's facilities tailor-made to their needs

This is why the Bujanovac Faculty introduced bilingual classes, unique in South Serbia, are now attended by almost 400 Albanian and Serbian students. The students can choose among four study programmes: Finance, Banking and Insurance, Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics, Accounting and Audit and Marketing. The importance of this institution for young people's academic and professional advancement, as well as for overall development of the region, is indisputable. It provides students with opportunities to make the most of their education, and rely on their persistence and unity to break down all the prejudices that way too often constrain this region from unlocking its full potential and taking its rightful place on equal footing with other regions in the country.



“The conditions are perfect in every way. We're all learning together, we're hanging out. Our goal is to stay here. That's better than to go to another city or another country.

**Sulejman Fejzulaj**  
Bujanovac Faculty student



“We've got great conditions for studying at this college. Having bilingual instruction is very important, and we do presentations and seminar papers together to improve communication so that we learn to speak Albanian, and that they learn to speak Serbian.

**Jelena Đorđević**  
Bujanovac Faculty student

This is not a story about bricks and concrete only. In the multiethnic settings of South Serbia's Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa, the rift between the two often-clashing communities runs deep, and is perpetually fueled by the language divide. Since the conflict of the 1990s, the Albanian population have been offered few, if any, opportunities to study Serbian as a second language which has effectively rendered whole generations unable to attend classes at Serbian universities. As a consequence, ethnic Albanian students were seeking higher education opportunities in Kosovo\* and Albania, resulting in an ever-growing ethnic distancing.

The building of the Bujanovac Faculty



# SUPPORTING STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS FOR THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

After nearly a decade of implementing infrastructure projects in Serbia, UNOPS embarked on a critical national project - the Reconstruction of Four Clinical Centres - to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Health in its management.

The reconstruction, funded by the European Investment Bank and the Government of Serbia, with the contributions from the European Commission, the World Bank and bilateral donors, and implemented by the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Health (PIU), entails modernisation, development, expansion and extension of the clinical centres in Serbia's capital Belgrade and three regional centres: Novi Sad, Niš and Kragujevac. The overall project aims to contribute to the reform of the tertiary healthcare system and provision of efficient healthcare services to Serbian citizens tailored to their needs.

The technical assistance UNOPS provides since 2019 is designed to enhance strategic and efficient implementation, as well as monitoring of the project results. The advisory coming from UNOPS specifically strengthens the capacities of the PIU in project management, at the same time being directed to the reconstruction of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac facilities.

Working together with the Ministry and its PIU, as well as other partners, ensures national ownership and helps develop national capacities in implementing a project of this size, complexity and importance for the people of Serbia.



“ I have been a part of the UNOPS Serbia team for ten years now, delivering infrastructure projects for our partners, assisting them to solve practical problems, build sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and support development of communities.

Being a member and leading a team of qualified engineers, architects, project managers and specialists, I have seen the value of a quality infrastructure that leads to better lives.

**Jasmina Ilić**  
former UNOPS Serbia Infrastructure Advisor and Project Manager a.i.



“ Linking up experiences, knowledge and requirements of international institutions and organisations, such as UNOPS and EIB, with those of the Serbian Government implementing the projects is crucial for getting things done efficiently and on time, as well as ensuring better communication and coordination among all project stakeholders.

This bridge of capacity, know-how and experience built by UNOPS is helping the project implementer - the Ministry of Health – make more progress and meet all the EU standards and requirements in the process. This is crucial for achieving the ultimate goal – the completion of all projects of vital importance for all the citizens living in this country.

**Dubravka Negre**  
Head of European Investment Bank  
Regional Representation for the Western Balkans



Belgrade Clinical Centre  
under reconstruction



Delivery of 800,000 COVID-19  
protective masks in April 2020  
© EU Delegation to Serbia

# PROCUREMENT

**2,174** tenders

---

**52** million euros

# PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Procurement, as one of the UNOPS mandate pillars, does not represent a simple acquisition of goods, services or works. For UNOPS, it is much more than a mere procurement of a vehicle or IT equipment. It is an opportunity to help various stakeholders determine the exact needs, and ensure the purchase of high-quality items in the most efficient manner possible.

This entails following closely the principles of best value for money, fairness, integrity and transparency, effective competition, and the best interest of our partners and organisation. This means opting for the most effective procedure that will result in selecting a sustainable solution for their immediate needs. This also means finding new and innovative ways to help our partners, or finding ways to effect procurements in the most challenging environments and circumstances.

Hardly has there ever been a time in which the importance of public procurement is more conspicuous than in 2020. With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the global market of medical supplies was severely disrupted by multiple challenges: supply-demand disbalance, lack of cargo space and bans on exports. This was the time which showed what the role of public procurement really was: it is not a back-office purchasing, but strategic sourcing exercise which may, at times, be life-saving.

This global crisis was the situation when the UNOPS Serbia Office managed to procure all the items required by the governments and donors, and help save lives. We had also managed to procure necessary works and ensure post-disaster recovery after the catastrophic floods.

Over two past decades, we have been procuring specialised items and goods, and providing advice to our partners. We have been conducting less cumbersome but equally demanding and important procedures because everything we procured - be it a device for artificial ventilation, a didactic set for child education, or reconstruction works - has always been strictly intended to help the people in need.



Unloading medical supplies,  
Belgrade International Airport  
© EU Delegation to Serbia

100 containers have been procured and installed throughout Serbia, to ensure triage of COVID-19 infected patients  
© EU Delegation to Serbia



“With my 20-year-long experience in procurement, I've witnessed myself improvements in UNOPS has been introducing in this part of its work, and am well aware of their significance.

Regardless of the environment - regular conditions or crisis situations - all our procurements and processes are designed to meet our beneficiaries' needs.

What's additionally important, though, is that our public procurement unit has been very successful in emergencies, such as flooding and COVID-19 pandemic.

**Božidar Radivojević**  
UNOPS Serbia Procurement Officer

# GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

No matter how demanding procurement tasks may at times prove to be, we are always prepared to go the extra mile if need be. Going the extra mile can sometimes make a vital difference.

The Procurement Unit in Serbia has frequently been grappling with challenging, and often compelling, tasks such as: purchasing tonnes of anti-mosquito biocides in a post-disaster emergency; obtaining hundreds of diverse and non-mergeable items to enable project beneficiaries to start their businesses; purchasing vehicles and equipment for prompt diagnosis of communicable diseases to ensure healthcare services at the peak of the migrants crisis; or, procuring vehicles and containers to transport and store intercepted and seized illegally trafficked drugs.

Regarding the last procurement cited above, “Support of the Kingdom of Norway to the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia” project was supposed to help establish a systemic mechanism to tackle handling and storage of seized illegal drugs in compliance with the European standards, as well as develop the transportation and storage capacity. Following a needs assessment, it became clear that an adequate facility for storage of seized illegal drugs was a necessity so as to ensure appropriate



“Project cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the UNOPS Office has strengthened the Serbian police’s capacity to fight crime.

We’ve established a mechanism to combat illegal drug trafficking in line with the EU standards, as well as a system in forensics.

In particular, I’d like to highlight the UNOPS support for improving operational police cooperation with Europol colleagues, and support to our emergency sector officers during and after the floods.

**Zoran Lazarov**  
Assistant Minister, Head of Sector for International Cooperation, EU Affairs and Planning at the Ministry of Interior of Serbia

health and safety requirements are met at work for police officers handling these hazardous substances, as well as to build the organisational capacity, improve control and registration of evidence, and strengthen regional and local ministries of interior’s capacities and cooperation.

The project was modified not only to develop specific rules and procedures, but also to enable exchange of experiences with other countries, and implement the lessons learnt regarding procedural guidelines and further improvements.

Instead of originally planned purchase of transport vehicles and simple containers, the idea evolved to cover the entire drug handling procedure: from seizure, through storage, to incineration. To this end, several purchases of necessary secondary equipment for safe handling and storage of seized illegal drugs (acclimatisation and ventilation, drying chambers, anti-theft and video surveillance system, fire protection) were added to the initial plan.

The project has exceeded the planned targets, as well as beneficiary’s expectations. It has evolved from an interesting procurement procedure into a process of gaining new knowledge, and building capacities and procedures for an important national institution. This indeed has been the extra mile worth going.



Medical personnel in one of the ambulances procured within a Joint UN “Open Communities, Successful Communities” project



“Following study visits and exchange of experiences with reputable police administrations in EU member countries, we designed a procedure for which the Ministry of Interior said it had been waiting for 20 years.

This has been one of the most memorable experiences for me since I joined UNOPS. And it gives you motivation to continue striving to respond to all requests from end users and beneficiaries.

**Nenad Šučurović** UNOPS Serbia Procurement Associate



Additional equipment of a drugs transportation vehicle

# HR AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



At UNOPS, we pride in prudent  
use of available resources |

# HUMAN RESOURCES AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

UNOPS has a mandate to provide human resources and financial management services, focusing in the process on prudent use of available resources.

UNOPS offers specialist human resources support in a variety of contexts, and offers scalable, flexible and made-to-measure human resources solutions to our partners. These encompass large-scale solutions, such as those provided within the UN system, as well as smaller-scale solutions for on-time contract and payroll management and expert recruitment, all designed to bring the best people on board and get the job done right.

On the financial management side, UNOPS manages grants and pooled funds, and provides advice and oversight for project and

programme budgets. UNOPS manages global multi-donor funds that support eradication of infectious diseases across the world, while disbursing and supervising grants in a variety of contexts, including peace and security. Managing portfolios worldwide, UNOPS blends private sector efficiency with UN values.

Building on our excellence in delivering quality, UNOPS tailors its management support services to provide efficient integrated solutions for our partners, including UN agencies and governments, and offers specialised context-specific solutions to country needs. In Serbia, we have also been providing the solutions in support to the Government and members of the UN family, either to ensure our support to the temporary needs, or to ensure temporary support for founding long-term institutional setups.



Forestation efforts in Kraljevo, implemented via multiservice support to UNEP Vienna Programme Office



“Over the past ten years, since I joined UNOPS, we’ve witnessed a series of changes that had a positive impact on financial management of the projects’ funds.

In 2012 the organisation adopted the International Public Sector Accounting Standards - IPSAS, followed by the launch of its own ERP in 2016. This all resulted in the improvement of the organisation’s transparency, accountability, and data integrity.

**Emina Jonuz**  
UNOPS Serbia Finance Officer

Reconstruction managed by Serbia’s Office for Reconstruction and Flood Relief, established with the support of UNOPS HR management services

# TEMPORARY SUPPORT FOR A LONG-TERM INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

In 2014, in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods in Serbia, the Government of Serbia had to establish an entity which would ensure the most effective response to the disaster, especially with the assistance provided by the state and international community.

Therefore, UNOPS supported the establishment of the Flood Affected Areas and Assistance Office through recruitment of core personnel and management of their service contracts. With the EU funding, the administrative structure of the Office was strengthened enabling assessments, coordination and monitoring of recovery support and state assistance, while engineers managed and verified the process of reconstruction in the field. This contributed significantly to the efficiency of the emergency recovery process.

With the technical capacities to manage and monitor the recovery process in the flood-affected municipalities sustainably developed, the mandate of the Office was extended to include public investment management, with

the task to lead the process of reconstruction of public health, education and social welfare facilities which were not only affected by floods but also plagued by other issues.

The Public Investment Management Office, founded in late 2015, still operates as an organ of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in charge of coordination and implementation of public facilities reconstruction and improvement. The expertise the Office gained in the post-flood-ing period has enabled it to perform a variety of roles and tasks, ranging from data collection and prioritising to feasibility assessments and coordinating public procurements - all serving the purpose of sustainable development of the country.



Valjevo Medical High School  
reconstructed to ensure good conditions  
for its students and employees



“ If I had to summarise the importance that UNOPS had in the establishment and development of the Office for Reconstruction and Flood Relief, and then the Public Investment Management Office, in one word, it would be - huge. UNOPS provided essential support to us in the first days when the organisation's virtues shone through: mobility, flexibility, efficiency. UNOPS assistance was particularly important in providing human resources.

People make up UNOPS, and we've developed much more than just a professional relationship with them as we were together in the times of crisis when we had to work 24 hours a day. These are the people you can rely on, responsible, hardworking, and they know what they're doing.

**Marko Blagojević**  
Public Investment Management Office of Serbia Director

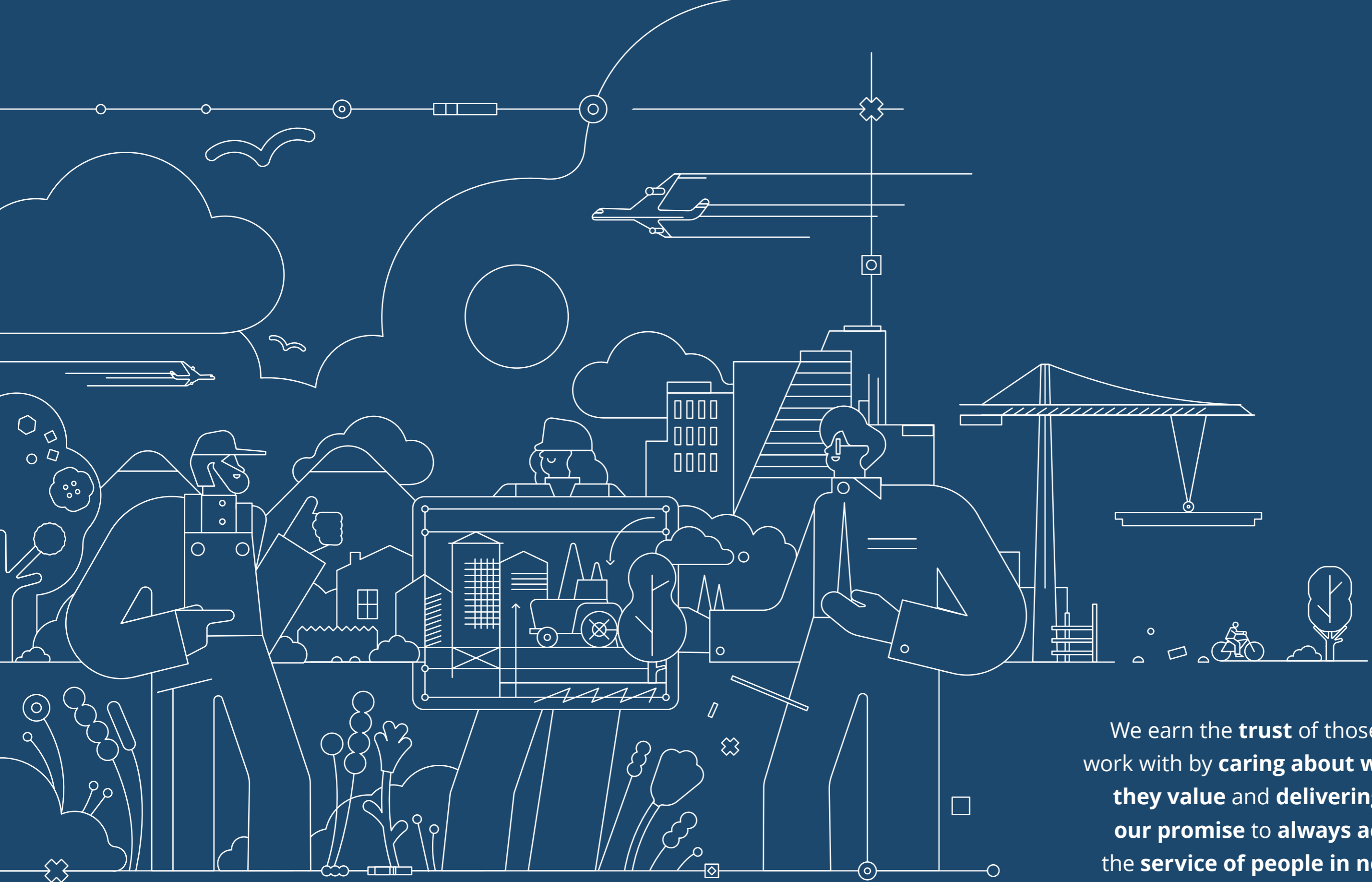
Constructing a  
bridge in western  
Serbia's Mionica



# OUR COMMITMENT, OUR TRUST- WORTHINESS



Building Partnerships,  
Nourishing Ownership,  
Striving towards Excellence



We earn the **trust** of those we  
work with by **caring about what**  
**they value** and **delivering** on  
**our promise** to **always act** in  
the **service of people in need.**

# PARTNERSHIP, OWNERSHIP, EXCELLENCE

UNOPS is a unique United Nations agency. It is entirely demand-based and need-driven, focusing on the partners' demands and the needs of people and countries. It is anchored in the UN values and responsibilities, but also conceptualised by the narrative of public institutions' accountability, and efficiency and effectiveness of the private sector.

Presence and activity of UNOPS in Serbia is grounded in our values, our understanding of the context, and our results. These results, and the impact UNOPS achieves for the country and for its people, are affected by many factors. Were we to identify the core pillars, these would be: building and nourishing partnerships, caring for local and national ownership, and striving towards excellence.

Our collaborative partnerships, built with the Government and its institutions, international donor community, UN family, local actors from public, private and civic sectors, have been the platform and the trigger for our work.

Support and respect for national and local ownership, always combined with developing national and local capacities, have set the foundation for the impact we create, and are the cornerstone for sustainability of our achievements.

Striving towards excellence, keeping focus on the quality of our work and understanding the importance its outputs have on people's lives, have been our driver, and have, over time, become our culture.



Families at the balconies of the building constructed to provide housing for the vulnerable population after the floods in Obrenovac



“I was once asked to say one word which describes UNOPS Serbia. My word was - dedication. It was not only because of the team's commitment to work and professionalism in its operations. It was because our team is truly dedicated to the core of our mission, and enthusiastic about bringing about better lives.

It is with this genuine feeling that we approach our partners and beneficiaries, adding to it the quality, excellence and understanding of local priorities, national strategies and international landscapes. It is with this sentiment and knowledge that we are creating the results not only for those in need, but together with them.

Our dedication to what our partners value has earned us their trust. Our mutual trust has been a cornerstone of our past successes, and is a cornerstone for building the future together.

**Vera Jovanović**  
UNOPS Serbia Communications and Partnership Specialist

The representatives of 96 local self-governments with the then Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and the Head of Swiss Development Cooperation in Serbia

# PARTNERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP



EU Ambassador with a young researcher in Čačak, during the visit to the Science and Technology Park which with the EU support assists local SMEs in digitalising their businesses.



## BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE **EUROPEAN UNION**

UNOPS and the European Union in Serbia have built a strong partnership over the past ten years, with projects focusing on a range of areas: providing continued backing of local economic and social growth, housing for families from vulnerable populations, equal access to labour market for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, harmonising healthcare and health services with the EU norms and standards, and rapid response in emergencies during the floods, migration and the pandemic.

Since 2010, the European Union's committed support to the Government of Serbia through UNOPS has secured ten projects and programmes worth 114 million euros. The cooperation which began with a project intended to foster socio-economic development in southern Serbia soon expanded to introduce an integrated information system into Serbia's healthcare institutions. After jointly embarking on supporting the Roma and other vulnerable communities, and having initiated yet another local development programme encompassing southern and western Serbia, UNOPS and the European Union joined forces to ensure swift response and recovery in the aftermath of the 2014 disastrous floods in the country. Immediate post-flood relief efforts, which provided housing and restored public services, was followed by a major rehabilitation of road structures throughout the country.

With an already excellent track record and the results to show for it, after 2018, the European Union and UNOPS launched large scale projects in local development and social housing. Relying on good practices and results from its predecessors –the EU PROGRES and the European PROGRES, the EU PRO programme has

been contributing to overall economic and social growth in 99 local self-governments in the regions of Šumadija, Western, Southern and Eastern Serbia. The EU Support to Social Housing and Active Inclusion draws upon the practices and lessons from two "Let's Build a Home Together" projects to provide housing solutions along with active-inclusion measures for the excluded groups.

The EU-UNOPS partnership has lately produced another emergency response: procuring critical medical and non-medical equipment, and items necessary in the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as recruiting nearly 200 members of medical staff to make sure sufficient capacities and adequate human resources be in place to meet the needs of the country's healthcare system.

This successful partnership has bolstered the Government's efforts to carry out demanding socio-economic reforms; helped facilitate the European integration process; promoted national ownership and engagement of beneficiaries; placed an emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women; and advanced human rights protection and good governance.



EU Ambassador, UNOPS Serbia Head of Office and EU PRO team visiting the Niš Cluster of Advanced Technologies that supports IT companies to develop and expand the market with the EU funds



“Working with partners and in a team is always rewarding. This is certainly true for the strong partnership between the European Union Delegation to Serbia and UNOPS. It's a partnership built and developed over the past two decades. A partnership that allowed UNOPS to implement some of our most complex projects, particularly to strengthen social infrastructures.

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, this long-standing cooperation proved essential to deliver a flexible and targeted response. This is the reason why we chose UNOPS among the trusted partners to deliver the EU's support to Serbia during the epidemic. I am confident we'll continue to work together in the same spirit of mutual trust and close cooperation.

**Sem Fabrizi**  
Ambassador of the European Union and the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia



## BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE **GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND**

The Government of Switzerland has been cooperating with UNOPS Serbia over the past 10 years, forging a strategic partnership in implementing and promoting good governance, social inclusion and gender equality locally, thus contributing to the country's sustainable growth.

This partnership has been tried and tested through projects whose value is almost 14 million euros. Our joint initiatives have helped improve performance of local governments as well as people's lives in 99 cities and municipalities in southern, western and eastern Serbia.

All this had started back in 2010 with EU PROGRES, the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme, implemented together with the European Union and encompassing 25 municipalities in southern and southwestern parts of the country. The Swiss supported the activities worth 3.23 million euros focusing on good governance, which was a cross-cutting issue underlying the whole scheme.

Successful collaboration continued in 2014 with the inception of European PROGRES, yet another UNOPS Serbia's project jointly funded by the EU and Switzerland. This initiative helped boost sustainable development in 34 municipalities in southeastern and southwestern Serbia. The Swiss backed the activities worth 4.86 million euros designed to enhance good governance and social inclusion.

The partnership grew further in 2018 resulting in the Swiss PRO – Enhancing Good Governance and Social Inclusion for Municipal Development Programme. Funded by the Government of Switzerland with 5.8 million euros, this project focuses on providing support to 99 cities and municipalities in the regions of Šumadija, Western, Southern and Eastern Serbia. The scheme is designed to help improve the quality of life of Serbian citizens, particularly those belonging to excluded groups.

The goals jointly accomplished by enhancing the rule of law locally, strengthening social cohesion and gender equality, and increasing responsibility, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of local self-governments, as well as citizen participation in decision-making have created fertile ground for furthering out cooperation in helping Serbia's citizens build better lives for themselves.



Representatives of local self-governments from across Serbia at a ceremony with the Ambassador of Switzerland and UNOPS Head of Office

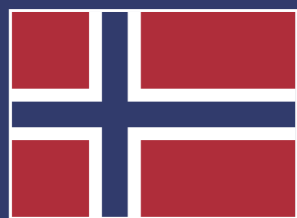


“Switzerland, at a strategic level, has an important partnership with UNOPS. We have the same goals and strategy as a key to help the Republic of Serbia be an even better country and accomplish the transition, so we're helping the Republic of Serbia through UNOPS projects by implementing our strategy in the municipalities.

When I think about UNOPS, I think about the people. I've seen project beneficiaries who were often really grateful. In those 20 years of UNOPS presence in Serbia, I think we have to thank the UNOPS staff for their engagement, and we will continue, hopefully, to cooperate with UNOPS.

**Jean-Luc Oesch**

Deputy Head, Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Serbia



## BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE **KINGDOM OF NORWAY**

For years, UNOPS and the Kingdom of Norway have grown a fruitful partnership in Serbia. The projects resulting from this cooperation, worth around 15 million euros, have been contributing to the national priorities and dealing with a range of issues in various areas, and yet always focusing on putting people first.

This partnership, implemented through cooperation between the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE) in Belgrade and UNOPS Serbia Office, was formed following the catastrophic floods in Serbia in May 2014, when UNOPS supported emergency relief actions. With the funding of the Kingdom of Norway worth 4.2 million euros, 23 public facilities, including kindergartens, schools, clinics, healthcare centres and cultural institutions, were reconstructed and restored to their previous use.

The partnership further expanded in 2018 in the area of local development. The 'Norway for You - Serbia' project worth 6.18 million euros, aiming to increase access to employment, enhance social inclusion and improve infrastructure, provides support available in 91 underdeveloped municipalities in the country. At the same time, the project supports the Government of Serbia to strengthen cybersecurity and step up the EU integration process.

Serbia's accession to the European Union, and in particular the prevention and fight against crime, is a focal topic of yet another project UNOPS implements with the funding of the Kingdom of Norway. Supporting the Ministry of Interior with 3.35 million euros helps contribute to meeting the requirements of Chapters 23 and 24 in the accession negotiations.

Finally, the partnership between the Kingdom of Norway and UNOPS ensured swift response in another emergency in Serbia - during the public health crisis in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Devices for mechanical ventilation and intensive care monitors, worth two million euros, were procured at an early stage of the epidemic and delivered to medical institutions across the country to save lives, strengthen ICU capacity, and help bolster the healthcare system in Serbia.

Through the UNOPS Serbia Office, the Kingdom of Norway has also been providing support to North Macedonia and Montenegro. To help the countries achieve a balanced socio-economic development in the less developed regions, two projects are implemented: "Norway for You - Montenegro" worth 1.4 million euros and "Nordic Support to the Progress of North Macedonia" funded with 4.45 million euros.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, life-saving medical equipment worth over half a million euros has been provided to these two countries.



Launching the "Norway for You-Serbia" project at an event in southern Serbia's Aleksinac, attended by the President of Serbia, Ministers for Public Administration and Labour and Employment, and the Ambassador of Norway



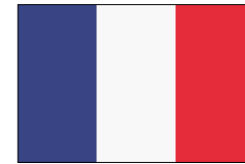
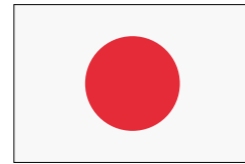
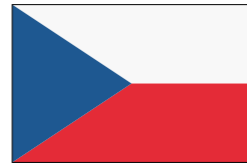
“The partnership of UNOPS and the Kingdom of Norway in Serbia, implemented through cooperation between the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade and UNOPS Serbia Office, has been yielding significant results since its beginnings. This partnership was formed after the catastrophic floods that hit Serbia in 2014 and expanded through projects aimed at achieving balanced socio-economic development in Serbia, but also in Northern Macedonia and Montenegro. Moreover, the partnership between the Kingdom of Norway and UNOPS ensured a swift response during COVID 19 outbreak in all three countries.

In the coming years, Norway hopes to see progress in economic development, environmental protection, media sector, the rule of law and gender equality in these three societies. With UNOPS as a reliable, consistent, and efficient partner, I have no doubts that we will succeed.

**Jørn Eugen Gjelstad**

Ambassador of Norway to Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH BILATERAL DONOR GOVERNMENTS



Two decades of UNOPS' operations in Serbia and a multitude of areas where the country needed and received support from UNOPS have produced a vast portfolio of diverse projects implemented by the organisation, entailing in the process cooperation with various countries providing ample backing on their part: Italy, Czech Republic, Japan, United Kingdom, France and Canada.

Italy was the first bilateral donor UNOPS in Serbia partnered with in 2001 to implement the City to City Programme worth four million euros and designed to support the ongoing process of political and administrative decentralisation, strengthening of local governments' planning capacities and entrepreneurship, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable population and creation of links between Serbian and Italian towns.

After cooperation with the Czech Republic, which made a contribution to a programme supporting local development in southwestern Serbia, UNOPS worked closely with yet another partner to help improve the quality of people's lives in local communities in that part of the country. With the support of the Government of Japan, from 2012 to 2015, UNOPS implemented a one-million-euro-worth project to improve human security for vulnerable groups.

The emergency arising from the 2014 floods in Serbia gave rise to our partnership with three additional countries focusing on post-disaster relief efforts: the United Kingdom, France and Canada. With each country donating approximately one million euros and excellent cooperation with their respective embassies, we made a significant contribution to the overall emergency rehabilitation efforts in the country by building houses, reinforcing river embankments and reconstructing infrastructure vital for restoring people's lives back to normal.

A 2001 conference on local economic development, hosted by the Minister of Social Affairs, organised within the City to City Programme implemented in cooperation between Italian and Serbian cities

With the UNOPS Serbia Office's operations expanding in the region, the circle of our trusted partners further widened to include the Government of Sweden. Thanks to its financial support, worth two million euros and channelled through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), we have been carrying out a project backing North Macedonia's reform agenda and the EU accession process.



# TURNING COOPERATION INTO SYNERGIES

Carefully listening to the needs of our partners, and highly aware of the priorities of recipient and donor governments, UNOPS in Serbia has often been placed in a position to liaise among different actors helping them complement one another's initiatives, giving a voice to beneficiaries, and implementing collaborative actions with synergistic impact.

UNOPS' unique profile and mandate pave the way for our activities and engagement in a variety of different areas. An added value to this engagement has been our capacity to create and nourish multilateral partnerships, which, in turn, reinforces the impact of our joint work. UNOPS has always striven to engender collaboration that would exceed expectations by either getting two or more donors to cooperate on a single initiative or getting the UN agencies involved with specific technical mandates.

Some of the most prominent examples of our projects embodying such a practice in Serbia are the EU PROGRES and the European PROGRES projects, both funded by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland and contributing to enhanced stability and socio-economic development in southern and southwestern Serbia from 2010 to 2018. This practice of liaising with donors to reinforce the effects on local development was later replicated in our work in North Macedonia, when, in 2018, the Kingdom of Norway and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) were brought together to fund the Nordic Support for Progress of North Macedonia project in support of balanced socio-economic development and the national institutions in the EU accession process.

Another major synergetic initiative pertained to the post-flood efforts in Serbia where UNOPS not only implemented five projects funded by the EU, Norway, UK, France and Canada, but also acted as a communication coordination agent for seven implementing partners - the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. (Help), the World Bank (WB) and UNOPS itself - within the EU Assistance for Flood Relief Project.

We, at UNOPS, however, do not produce these effects only at the level of our projects. This has become our hallmark, clearly showing in our sub-projects and regular activities as well. The reconstruction of the Obrenovac Grammar School exemplifies how such initiatives can make genuine changes in people's lives.



The school provides optimum conditions for its 500 pupils and employees

The Ambassadors of the EU and the Kingdom of Norway opening the reconstructed Grammar School

After the floods in 2014, Obrenovac Grammar School building was damaged to the extent that its reconstruction was highly uncertain. The European Union, which was funding relief efforts, gave a green light to UNOPS only to develop a geomechanical study, geodetic survey and main reconstruction technical design in order to define the scope of works required, and an initial estimate implied that the cost of the reconstruction would be exceptionally high, and the structure was beyond repair.

Having consulted and agreed on the issue with the national partners, UNOPS suggested to the Kingdom of Norway to finance the reconstruction of the building's interior and help pay for the procurement of furniture, which would all amount to a considerable deduction from the available reconstruction budget, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy gave its consent. Still, the structure's façade and roof necessary for a complete reconstruction of the building that would ultimately create quality conditions for studying and working was still to be arranged. With the reconstruction well under way, on UNOPS' advice, the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) approved additional funding for the reconstruction of the structure's exterior, thereby making the second component for our building-back-better endeavour possible.



“The whole building was reconstructed in such a way that the working conditions are now phenomenal. Everything is customised to serve the interests of students. In 2016, when we moved in, this was a completely renovated, new building inside and out.

Today, the conditions in this building are ideal. When you're working in conditions where everything's clean and tidy, where you've got a healthy environment, and new equipment in every classroom - well, all this has raised the instruction to a much higher level.

**Ivica Protić**  
Obrenovac Grammar School Principal

# OWNERSHIP

Ownership is a key guarantee for success of any project or initiative, as well as its follow-up and expansion in the long run. A project's sustainability and long-term impact is best achieved by ensuring relevant stakeholders or communities involved have ownership.

UNOPS is always striving to promote local and national project ownership, along with necessary local and national capacity building, as one of its ultimate goals. Understanding that development support needs to respond to the needs of people, as well as be aligned with national priorities, we have adjusted our global organisational approach to suit Serbia's context and took action never losing sight of the importance of local ownership.

Our cooperation with the Government and local self-governments, as well as with civil society organisations and communities, has always entailed setting up mechanisms required to sustain the initiatives we have been jointly working on. Each initiative starts with thorough and extensive consultations with partners and beneficiaries persisting throughout the process, while aligning our actions with national priorities. We want to make sure we have identified the needs by both listening carefully to the communities and painstakingly carrying out needs assessments. We also make sure our partners and beneficiaries are consulted in all the stages of project development, and participating in project management structures and implementation.

In parallel, we have been continuously upgrading the capacities of our collaborators so that national and local actors more readily assume ownership of the initiatives built to mirror their visions, strategies, and frameworks.

Myriads of initiatives lasting for years after having received temporary support – local community services, citizen participation practices, social housing, governance awards, etc. – are a testament to the value of such an approach. The idea has always been to help the country, cities, municipalities, associations and people help themselves by way of moving beyond temporary external assistance and preparing them to rely on their own resources and face the challenges that they are bound to overcome, having received support which has helped them acquire ownership of their own development.



A ceremony marking the completion of a school reconstruction in Novi Pazar



“ Novi Pazar has had successful cooperation with UNOPS for over a decade and I have experienced the impact of this partnership both as a citizen and the part of local administration for the past four years. This partnership is not only about financial assistance. UNOPS personnel also provided training and technical assistance, and when problems would arise, they were there with necessary services and advice on how to overcome them.

The projects we implemented together are versatile and have addressed the outstanding issues Novi Pazar faced in the environment, education, health and economy sectors. I can say with certainty that individually and combined these interventions significantly improved the quality of life of our fellow citizens. I believe this to be true for every municipality UNOPS has been working with.

**Nihat Biševac**  
Mayor of the City of Novi Pazar



Handshake at the rooftop of the Novi Pazar City Hall, overlooking the landscape where UNOPS has been present for a decade

# WOODEN SPOONS AS THE WEAPON OF SOCIAL CHANGE

A story with the aroma of nana's kitchen has a fairytale quality to it, but in the small municipality of Lebane ten women and tonnes of fresh pepper are turning this 'homemade progress' into a tasty reality.

Unemployment is one of the biggest issues facing Serbia today. Only in Lebane municipality, home to some 19,500 people and once renowned for its textile products, the unemployment rate reached 61.4% in 2015 following a bankruptcy of the last remaining of its large companies.

Still, amid the bleak statistics and defunct facilities of closed plants, buds the first social enterprise established in this part of the country giving us all hope for the future - "Radan Mountain Rose" (Radanska Ruža).

While already renowned for its tasty homemade preserves, at the very beginning an attempt at establishing a social enterprise in Lebane seemed far removed from developing a generic business venture. This endeavour required a

rather carefully crafted approach to address the intertwining issues of gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and discrimination.

The European Union and the Governments of Switzerland and Serbia, respectively, recognised the potential of this idea and initially supported the project with 20,000 euros through the UNOPS' area focused, local development project - European PROGRES. The grant allowed the "Rose" to renovate and equip the kitchen and launch production of various winter preserves - tomato juice, pickles, ajvar and the award-winning Rosehip Jam. In addition, they received support to start organic production in rural households mainly located in the nearby Radan Mountain. Seven local suppliers have now received support to grow organic products.

High-quality products are now exported to some of the EU countries.

The support continued through the EU PRO Programme when both the social enterprise and the Association were granted 35,700 euros to purchase necessary equipment, including the cooling chamber, pasteurizers, electric stoves and packaging machines, as well as to improve the overall production. Members of this association of rural women also received training in primary agricultural organic production and the ways to collect and process forest fruit into finished products.

Now the project employs twelve women and fifteen subcontractors which is far more than five that was initially planned in 2015. Most of these employees are grappling with social disadvantages ranging from living with disabilities to being single mothers, and those over 50 years of age are particularly vulnerable on the job market.

The growth has been slow, but steady, with a few bumps on the road. Luckily, persistence and hard work have prevailed, and now these high-quality products are conquering European markets. Following presentations at local and international trade fairs, as of recently the "Radan Mountain Rose" has started exporting to Austria, Germany and France.

The enterprise has become a flagship project of grass-roots local development, and has since been supported and promoted by national and international organisations helping it grow into a recognisable brand.

The founders never imagined that a couple of women with wooden spoons could make such a difference. And yet, they very much did so.



“ Our mission was to solve the issue of women's unemployment. I was one of them. By solving my problem, I wanted to solve that problem for others, and then my team and I ventured into this social enterprise business.

Women from Lebane finally have their own income to support their families, and this was crucial for them to regain their self-confidence.

Even today, our mission is employment. We won't give up on quality, whatever happens on the market.

**Slobodanka Pavlović**  
"Rose" Association President and Founder



The women from Lebane prepare tasty jams, ajvars and pickles in a traditional manner.

# EXCELLENCE

UNOPS Executive Director preparing to cut the ribbon in front of the Belgrade premises - UNOPS Serbia central office since 2016





I have watched the Serbia Office grow and develop for years now.

Along with the maturity of the organisation as a whole in our excellence journey, the team in Serbia has always demonstrated professionalism, commitment and strong leadership, which has gained the trust of our partners. The growth and diversification of the portfolio, and turning one small project centre into an office operating now in three countries is testament to our partners trust in helping them deliver for impact

Along this path, Serbia's team always kept its focus on the importance of the quality of their work, setting high standards, and always keeping at the forefront of their work the understanding of the importance of the project outputs to our partners sustainable results, and peoples lives.

During the 20 years of their work, the UNOPS Serbia Office has been consistent in keeping this excellence and quality agenda at the top of its priorities when designing and implementing projects.

Now, and throughout the years, UNOPS Serbia has been a great example of the UNOPS' ability to provide real solutions, drive for quality and deliver meaningful projects that have a positive impact on people's lives.

**Nicholas O'Regan**  
UNOPS Implementation  
Practices and Standards Director

## EXCELLENCE



Excellence for all: inclusive education for Roma providing for excellent marks for children from this community

We, at UNOPS, believe that continuous improvement of our knowledge, skills and processes is conducive to the best possible results for communities in need. The better we are, the better the results we achieve are.

We - our organisation and our people - keep striving towards excellence. We see it not as our destination, but a journey in the course of which we keep improving and applying our knowledge and experience for the benefit of our partners and our beneficiary communities. It has, over time, become our DNA.

Excellence has been driving us in Serbia over the past two decades, and our operations have developed and grown thanks to it. We have been improving our processes, our working conditions and our capacities, and we still do. We use corporate resources to invest in people, and follow internationally recognised standards in our work, but also supplement these with our local best practices, knowledge exchange and quality.

Quality standards would not be enough without a dedicated and professional team. For the past 20 years by now, this team has ensured that organisational excellence is translated into everyday work, and that it brings positive impact to the country and its people.

# STANDARDS, CERTIFICATES AND MEMBERSHIPS

UNOPS continuously benchmarks against external bodies, striving for relevant certifications and adopting internationally recognised best practices. This ensures our processes enhance the effectiveness of our partners' projects – again, helping donors and developing countries stretch their limited budgets further and cover more ground.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

UNOPS is both internationally recognised and accredited for its expertise in managing, and providing training for, sustainable projects. We are proud to be awarded four of the most prestigious global project management certifications available from: APMG, PeopleCert®, Project Management Institute (PMI) ® and AXELOS.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

To ensure that the implementation of our infrastructure projects are in accordance with international best practices in sustainable design and construction we collaborate with industry leaders, including: DLA Piper, WSP, Sweco, the International Federation of Consulting Engineers, Arup, and research institutions, including the University of Oxford, the Danish Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame and the University of Manchester.

## PROCUREMENT

UNOPS is the first UN organisation and only one of five organisations in the world to achieve gold level in the Sustainable Procurement Review by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS). Being a central procurement resource in the UN system, our processes are underpinned by the principles of fairness, integrity, transparency and effective competition, ensuring the best interest of our partners and the best value for goods, services and works we procure.

## HSSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

UNOPS commitment to occupational health and safety and social and environmental aspects across all UNOPS projects and facilities is outlined in our Policy on Health, Safety, Social and Environmental (HSSE) management. UNOPS has implemented an environmental management system since 2013, and a health and safety management system since 2014. Our headquarters in Denmark is certified under both ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001.

# PEOPLE

One of the biggest strengths of UNOPS in Serbia is its people. The team working in Serbia counts 84 dedicated people, who, when joined with the colleagues from our teams in North Macedonia and Montenegro and with the retainers, compose our most valuable asset. Our people bring with them a wealth of expertise in international organisations, private, public and civil sectors, and are highly skilled and professionals able to implement complex projects and manage stakeholders at different levels and in different contexts and environments.

Skills, high level education and international certification of excellence are not enough without commitment, hard work and professional integrity. This is making the difference and ensuring that the commitment to make positive developments for better lives of our beneficiaries is fulfilled.

**90%**  
personnel with high  
or higher education



**60%**  
holding PRINCE 2  
Foundation certificate



**50%**  
engineers and relevant personnel  
possessing FIDIC Certificates



All personnel meetings as opportunities to compile the lessons learned, draw conclusions and introduce further improvements to our work

# OUR PAST AWARDS, OUR FUTURE RESPONSIBILITY

Every year since 2012, UNOPS celebrates the achievements and results delivered to its partners. UNOPS Awards presentation serves as an annual reminder of the need for reflection on our organisational and personal commitment to serve people in need, and to recognise individuals, teams and projects that have demonstrated excellence.

Excellence of Serbia’s team and its performance has been recognised several times as part of the UNOPS Project of the Year Award (POTYA), bringing our people and our projects under the spotlight of our global community, and acknowledging our hard work and dedication, as well as our projects’ quality and impact.

UNOPS Serbia has had three individual winners, three project finalists and one project winner that have demonstrated quality in project management and integrated UNOPS mission, vision and values throughout their work and implementation. These are not only the testimonies of our past successes that we take pride in, but also a reminder of our future responsibility to keep always striving for excellence.

“ Every organisation is made up of people, and their skills and qualities are a prerequisite for organisational excellence. This is precisely what is recognised by donors, clients and users, and this makes UNOPS one of the leading UN agencies in the country.

Tanja Rakonić  
UNOPS Serbia HR Associate

## AWARDED INDIVIDUALS



Olivera Kostić, 2015

Executive Director’s Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to UNOPS emergency response to the devastating floods in Serbia during 2014



Aleksandra Radetić, 2016

The Quality and Standards Award in recognition of achievements in leading the Serbia Project Centre change management process and in raising the standards in terms of quality and risk management



Daliborka Kolar, 2017

The Quality and Standards Award in recognition of dedication in the provision of high quality services to UNOPS teams in the region

# UNOPS PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS



<p>2012</p> <p>European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES</p> <p>July 2010 – March 2014 20.9 million euros</p> <p>Donors: European Union 14.1M euros, Government of Switzerland 3.2M euros, Government of Serbia 3.6M euros</p>	<p>2017</p> <p>Serbia Floods Rehabilitation Support</p> <p>August 2014 – October 2017 4.2 million euros</p> <p>Donor: Kingdom of Norway</p>	<p>2019</p> <p>EU Support for the Reconstruction of the Road Structures Affected by the Floods in Serbia</p> <p>January 2016 – October 2019 10.47 million euros</p> <p>Donor: European Union</p>
--	---	--

## UNOPS PROJECT OF THE YEAR 2018

European PROGRES

May 2014 – March 2018  
24.46 million euros

Donors: European Union 19.6M euros, Government of Switzerland 4.86M euros

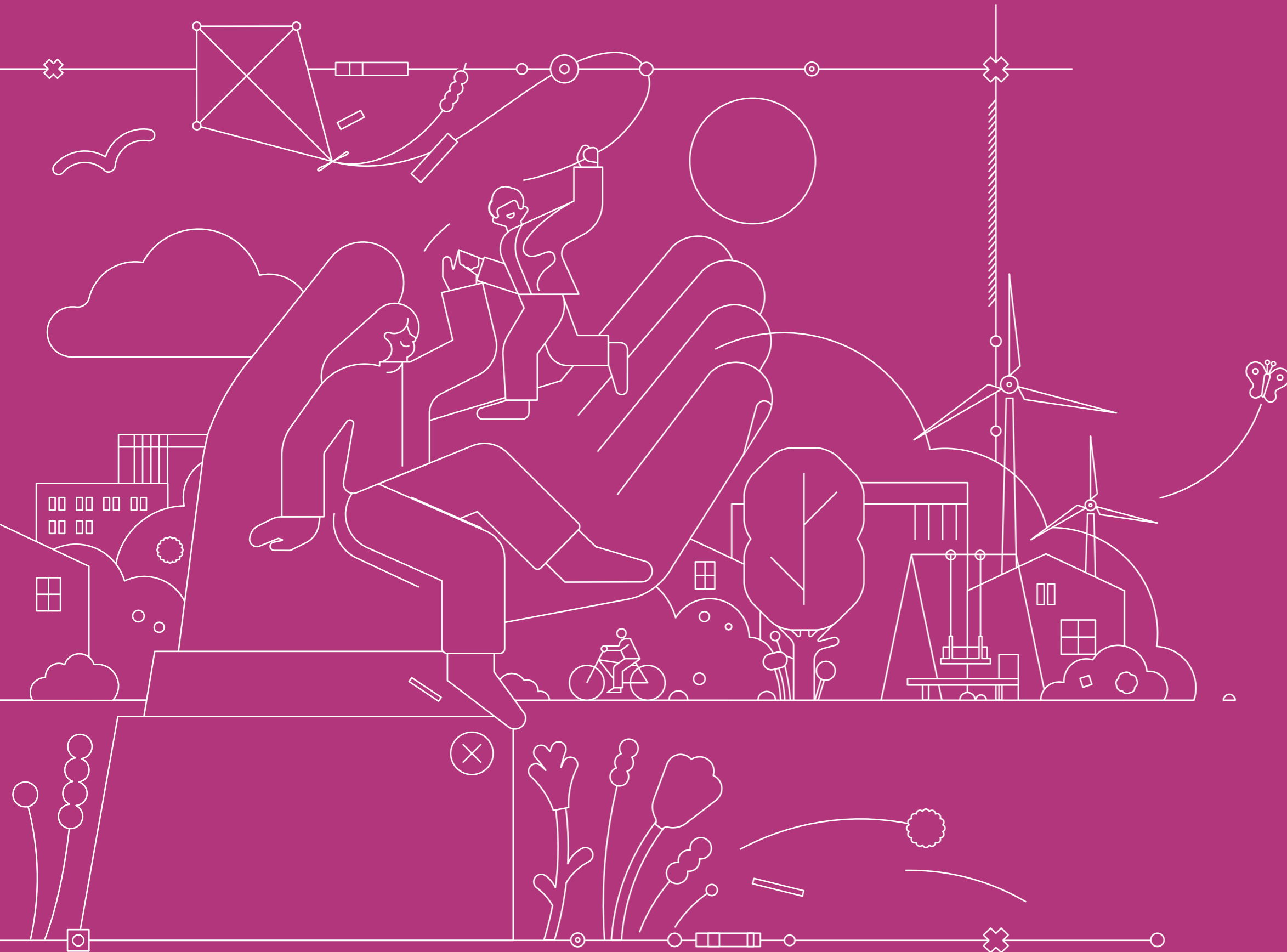


UNOPS Serbia team upon receiving the news about POTYA winning




# OUR PROXIMITY, OUR ACTIONS

Local Development,  
Social Cohesion,  
Good Governance,  
Emergency Response



What drives us is a **passion** to **fight inequalities** and to provide **opportunities** to **those most vulnerable**.

We often work in the most **challenging environments**, **building foundations** for **communities** to function and **people** to live with **dignity** and **respect**.



A representative of the  
EU Delegation to Serbia  
visiting Leskovac enterprise,  
supported to introduce  
GLOBAL G.A.P. standard

## LOCAL DEVELOPEMENT

**5** projects      **1,100** sub-projects

---

**450**  
competitiveness  
sub-projects      **300**  
infrastructure  
sub-projects

---

**1,000**  
businesses and  
entrepreneurs  
supported

**1,400**  
jobs created

Detailed regulation  
plans for over  
**8,000**ha

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Local development is a process of developing a territory by actors who belong to it, a process of area based social and economic growth perpetuated primarily by the local stakeholders. This process implies formulation of strategies, decision-making and governance, as well as actions providing for civic participation. Not only has UNOPS Serbia been supporting such actors develop their respective territories, it has also become a driver for success of those territories, seeking to understand the land and its people better, empowering them and giving them a voice by fostering local development and bringing international standards to local communities.

When UNOPS started rolling out local development projects, funded by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland

and under the guidance of the Government of Serbia, regional disparities in the country were among the greatest in Europe. The unemployment rate was very high, and some parts of the country with conspicuous clusters of particularly underdeveloped municipalities were struggling more than others.

Opportunities for sustainable economic growth were severely hampered by stagnant local regulations, inadequate capacities of local administrations, run-down infrastructure, and a number of other factors painting a bleak social and economic picture.

Since 2010, UNOPS has been striving to change such a challenging environment for the better. With its central office based in Belgrade, but

Textile production factory located at the country's South, in Blace, stimulates local economy and women employment



nonetheless continuous presence and direct support the most deprived local self-governments in the country via three field offices - Niš and Vranje in southern Serbia and Novi Pazar in southwestern Serbia, UNOPS helps national and local institutions step up the pace of social and economic development in the country.

Over the past decade, UNOPS' holistic approach has centred on gaining synergies from a variety of developmental factors.

When dealing with infrastructure, our interventions would range from catering for immediate needs, through facilitating large-scale investments, to drafting technical documentation and applying good-governance principles. When dealing with good governance, we would make sure all available administrative, social and economic resources at different levels of decision-making are employed. When reinforcing these all-important processes, ranging from gender equality, through social inclusion, to human rights, we would always focus on helping strengthen capacities of local communities and all the sectors involved. Finally, we have been encouraging and stimulating interaction and exchange between institutions in public and private sectors, as well as between governmental and civil society organisations, providing ample opportunity for their respective representatives to join forces and bring about changes together, bridging the gaps between them in this process.

Locally produced fruit and vegetables can now be bought at the Aleksinac Green Market, reconstructed with the EU funds through EU PRO



“ If you want to contribute to local development, it is not enough that you understand its concept and mechanisms for achieving progress.

You also need to understand the communities, their issues and their dreams, their limitations and their capacities.

This is, along with knowledge and dedication, a precondition for engaging local communities in their own development.

**Bojan Kovačević**  
UNOPS Serbia former Programme Manager





Volunteers of a festival organised in Ivanjica to trigger local community engagement and culture development, supported even before being awarded with “Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe” label



“Over the past decade UNOPS in Serbia has been assisting the regional development agencies to accomplish their mission more efficiently. This support was essential to forge communication channels between the agencies, the government and international organisations present in the country and it helped us develop into competent organisations. Together we continuously work on strengthening local capacities and I can say with certainty that without UNOPS we would not be where we are today.

**Nenad Popović**  
Serbian Association of Regional Development Agencies President

**We have facilitated or enabled:**

**pipeline of 188 million euros**

**investments of 125 million euros**

**projects worth 130 million euros**

Before and after the construction of the outdoor sports fields in central Serbia's City of Kragujevac

UNOPS embarked on area based development a decade ago with the EU PROGRES project which supported 265 sub-projects that facilitated investments of 30 million euros, enabled employment of 300 people, built infrastructure to boost local economy, and created an enabling environment for citizen participation in decision-making. Building on the success of its predecessor with the continuous support of the EU and Swiss donors, the successor project, European PROGRES, gave us the opportunity to further sharpen our focus on local development. Starting with expansion of the intervention area we also managed to optimise our approach to infrastructure development and job creation and helped attract more than ten million euros in investments, which in turn spawned nearly 100 new businesses and created over 700 new jobs, improving in the process the lives of over 9,000 individuals from vulnerable groups.

In 2018, the European Union and Switzerland were joined by yet another country keen to sup-

port Serbia's development efforts together with UNOPS: the Kingdom of Norway. This was the year in which three local development projects kicked off: the EU PRO, focusing on attracting investments and creating jobs, making companies more competitive and improving local self-government services, and promoting social inclusion; the Swiss PRO, focusing on good governance, social inclusion and gender equality; and, “Norway for You – Serbia”, focusing on creating employment opportunities, in particular for vulnerable and marginalised groups, supporting social cohesion and improving local infrastructure.

Tangible results of our local development endeavour have earned UNOPS not only national, but also regional recognition and acknowledgment. Our two projects – in North Macedonia and in Montenegro – have been designed drawing upon our know-how and a wealth of experiences gained together with our partners, and are now being implemented to help people have better lives – one step at a time.



# MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM SUPPORT FOR BIG CHANGES

UNOPS is well aware that strengthening of local and regional competitiveness is a catalyst for lasting local development. In the past decade, five projects worth over 70 million euros were carried out with a view to creating a stronger and more resilient business-enabling environment locally, along with other priorities and areas of focus.

While some of UNOPS-implemented projects were specifically aiming at increasing competitiveness, others tackled job creation and business support among their priority spheres. We have been building or supporting economic infrastructure, and can pride in over 300 sub-projects, ranging from regulation planning to construction, implemented to facilitate or enable business activities at local level, and attract further investments or facilitate new projects.

At the same time, UNOPS strove to support entrepreneurship and boost competitiveness of SMEs by introducing international quality standards and innovation, and providing business startup grants, as well as donating necessary equipment. Fifteen million euros were invested to improve local businesses’ competitiveness which in turn resulted in creating over 1,400 new jobs and enabling thousands more.



Before the fields became a business zone

In Vranje business zone, thanks to the European PROGRES project's efforts to facilitate completion of Detailed Regulation Plans (DRPs), three commercial, manufacturing and business service areas sprang up. The project supported the development of Vranje, attracting 16 million euros in investments and creating 1,800 jobs. Promotion of Vranje as an investment friendly environment and further development of the Geographical Information System (GIS) made Vranje investment potential more visible, offering a one-stop-shop to prospective investors as they would be only a click away from all the investment information needed.

A Paraćin furniture factory, producing sophisticated parts and exporting to Denmark and Singapore



Support for close to 1,000 micro and small enterprises (MSEs), either directly or via Business Support Organisations (BSOs), did not only bring benefits to the owners and their families. It has had a significant impact on local communities, as the beneficiary MSEs invested their own funds into corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, directly benefiting close to 29,000 mainly vulnerable individuals. This is what our work is about: not only catering for those in need, but ensuring a wider circle of actors care for them.



“The added value of UNOPS as the implementing partner is the extra mile it is willing to go in terms of dedication and efforts to ensure successful implementation of the projects but also its overall impact on the ground. This shared focus has taken our partnership beyond simple achievement of project goals and has resulted in the optimised approach which since had synergistic effect for other activities of the Ministry, agencies and other implementing partners and donors.

**Katarina Obradović**  
Assistant Minister, Sector for Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Economy of Serbia

Taking good care of the equipment in a Novi Pazar factory



Quality check in a Blace  
textile factory



“ Guided by the national priorities and the EU standards, UNOPS applied an integral approach to energise Serbia’s economic growth. Our holistic interventions have ensured vital and lasting impact. The local governments are supported to attract infrastructure investments through enhanced planning and improved economic infrastructure, which already created a pipeline worth tens of millions of euros. In addition, business competitiveness is supported through direct assistance to entrepreneurs and enterprises and interventions implemented by the business support organisations. Prioritising support to those in greatest need, we boosted employment of women, youth and marginalised groups while all citizens benefited from corporate social responsibility activities.

**Olivera Kostić**  
UNOPS Serbia Project Manager



“ UNOPS strives to enable its partners not only to implement projects efficiently but to achieve sustainable results with a multiplier effect in the long run. We see this in companies we backed in their initial stages that have since grown from a couple of employees to a 15-20 strong workforce in just a few years.

There are two sides of this equation: a hardworking beneficiary and a team of competent professionals who believe in their success and can enable its transformation to reality.

**Enis Ujkanović**  
UNOPS Serbia Senior Project Officer for SMEs and BSOs

Support for modern local  
businesses: Novi Pazar  
wood processing



# SOCIAL COHESION

**10**  
projects

**500**  
sub-projects

**93**  
new  
businesses

Creating equal chances for all: southern  
Surdulica's association supporting the  
education and inclusion of Roma from  
their childhood days



# SOCIAL COHESION

Every project UNOPS in Serbia implements has a trait of social cohesion to it. However, the projects contributing to improved cohesion of the society - its capacity to ensure well-being of all its members, solidarity among groups and minimising disparities - have over time become one of the distinctive issues UNOPS deals with in the country.

We see social inclusion as one of the major factors contributing to better cohesion of a society. Social inclusion, as a process, makes it possible for all members of a society, regardless of their characteristics, to gain equal access to resources such as social activities, income, public institutions, social protection and other programmes and services for assistance and care.

Another aspect of social inclusion implies equal participation in economic, social, political and cultural life, and a standard of living that is considered normal in the society where they live which should also ensure their equal participation in decision-making.

## Our contribution to social cohesion spans the areas of:

- inclusion
- economic empowerment
- employability
- vocational trainings
- healthcare
- education
- citizen participation



The initiatives for improving the quality of life for people with disabilities have included support to a Leskovac association helping people with muscular dystrophy



“The work of UNOPS in the field of social inclusion and cohesion primarily relates to the first phase of creating programmes for supporting the needs of vulnerable groups. That first step is crucial.

We came to define the programmes adequately thanks to the consultations with local communities, organisations, local governments, national partners, relevant institutions, and international organizations.

**Biljana Kerić**  
UNOPS Serbia Social Cohesion Associate



## Citizen Involvement Fund supporting over 100 community projects in 29 local self-governments

Music for social change: southern Serbia's young music talents gathered around the “El Sistema” programme originating from Venezuela, serving the inclusion of vulnerable groups



Ensuring access to healthcare services at times takes engagement of different actors and wider communities



“ I’ve known UNOPS for over ten years, back when I’d worked in the Government, and for the last five years, I’ve been in an NGO. We collaborate on programmes to help the poorest and most vulnerable, which bring about incredible changes in these communities.

When you first set up a community service, citizens expect it to continue to be funded by the municipality. That’s what UNOPS brings - the expectation that something will persist in the future. One of the main characteristics of UNOPS is efficiency, but what adds quality is the level of flexibility and cooperation with partners, which is why this activity is here to stay.

**Žarko Šunderić**  
Center for Social Policy Director,  
former Social Inclusion and  
Poverty Reduction Unit of the  
Government Director



Sowing the seeds of hope in Babušnica, where rural women were supported to sustain their living



Families waiting to be moved in one of the social housing buildings

For this reason, ten major projects we implemented or are still carrying out have all played their part in improving social cohesion of the country. With our national and local partners, and the European Union, Switzerland and Norway, we have been empowering vulnerable groups by providing them access to services, employment and housing.

We have been developing inclusive policies, supporting better social services, and ensuring involvement of vulnerable groups in decision-making. Each infrastructure project we have implemented has been tailored to meet the needs of excluded groups, and each of our business support actions has called for corporate social responsibility.

If a society is as strong as its weakest links, we want to see a society of as equally strong links as possible.



A young boy moving in a social housing building with his family, one of 140 receiving durable solutions through "Let's Build a Home Together" projects

# SOCIAL HOUSING

**91** social housing apartments

---

**71** houses for the Roma

# BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY, ONE HOME AT A TIME

UNOPS has been at the forefront of the efforts to create a society that will take care of and lift up everyone, especially its most vulnerable members. Social housing is one of the most significant, if not the most significant, aspects of social cohesion and ways of getting vulnerable men and women, girls and boys, out of the vicious circle of poverty.



“The greatest value of cooperation is precisely UNOPS team's readiness to provide support to every person in need, and the biggest recommendation for working with UNOPS is its personnel, their dedication, enthusiasm and innovation, willingness to cooperate and solve problems in project implementation. The exceptional quality of UNOPS is its ability to recognise the needs of the most vulnerable categories of population, as well as to be where it is most needed.

**Mirjana Čojbašić**  
Assistant Minister for International Cooperation, EU Integration and Projects, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of Serbia

Partnering with the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia and the City of Belgrade, UNOPS launched what would later turn out to be a series of social housing initiatives: the project 'Let's Build a Home Together', worth 5.1 million euros. The purpose of the Project was to provide durable housing solutions for Roma families affected by resettlement actions in Belgrade. Over seven years, 140 Roma families with 670 family members got new homes in newly constructed social housing apartments, purchased village houses or reconstructed properties.

To strengthen social cohesion, the housing solutions were complemented by social inclusion measures: provision of personal documents and access to education, health, employment and social welfare services, laptop computers for schoolchildren, construction material for house repairs, furniture and household appliances, food and hygiene kits, equipment, tools and machines for income generation.

The end of 2019 marked the beginning of the implementation of another EU-financed project - "EU Support to Social Housing and Active Inclusion (EU SHAI)". This project, worth 27 million euros, will provide sustainable housing solutions and implement complementary social inclusion measures for the most vulnerable population across Serbia.

After showcasing success with housing Roma community members, the groups targeted with the project were expanded to include also women

victims of domestic violence, children and youth without parental care exiting foster, kinship or residential care, persons with disabilities, and others who live in inadequate housing conditions. It will, through a competitive Call for Proposals, support at least 20 local-self governments to provide housing for 500 families with at least 1,500 members.

To ensure the sustainability of the housing solutions, the project also entails complementary social inclusion measures, such as employment, education and training, acquiring qualifications and improved access to public services, for 1000 beneficiaries. Institutional sustainability actions envisage strengthening the capacities of national beneficiary institutions - the Ministries of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure, Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and European Integration and also benefit local self-governments and social inclusion service providers from the public and civil sectors.

Adequate housing is a basic human right, and a need that directly affects the quality of life. With these programmes, we are helping the communities build infrastructure to support housing of the most vulnerable, and helping the most vulnerable build better lives.



“We have achieved significant results in projects providing durable housing solutions for Roma families, and are proud that relocation procedures have been implemented to the highest UN standards. After several years, these solutions are still sustainable, and many families now have decent lives.

Vulnerable social groups require a special approach, great knowledge and understanding so that serious expertise and experience of UNOPS personnel are crucial for this process.

**Dragana Milošević**  
UNOPS Serbia Project Manager



# A LITTLE BIT OF SUNSHINE GOES A LONG WAY

In five years' time, the Daily Centre "Sun" in Ivanjica has grown from a weekend care provider for children with disabilities to a full-time daycare centre, remote service provider and training facility of specialised staff to support beneficiaries in their daily activities. But what is its greatest achievement so far? The children are so happy that they are over the moon.

The limited budgets of local self-governments and institutions often restrict the care provision for special needs of people with disabilities. In such cases civil society organisations (CSOs) are invited to step in and bridge the service provision gap.

In Ivanjica, a municipality situated in the lap of five mountain ranges, where many people live in remote areas, the Cerebral Palsy Association took this task upon itself. Founded in 2002, and accredited by the Ministry of Labour, it has evolved into one of the main providers of social services in the municipality and beyond.

The European Union (EU) and the Government of Switzerland, through the UNOPS regional development EU PROGRES project, started supporting the organisation in 2011 when a "Respire" project was established to provide two

activity-packed days with round-the-clock care and supervision for children with disabilities.

"The programme allowed children to socialise with their peers for the first time, while allowing their parents to enjoy some well-earned rest," says Svetlana Glavinić, President of the Association.

The results of the projects were such that, when the financial support from the donors ended, the Ministry of Labour took over funding of the project.

In 2012, the Association once again received support from the EU PROGRES- this time to organise occupational therapy workshops in the Daily Centre "Sun" (Sunce), and enable individuals with disabilities to express themselves creatively through various artistic mediums.

When the project proved its sustainability and took root in the community, the Association extended its reach out to beneficiaries in more remote areas. To this end, in 2015, through the UNOPS European PROGRES project, the EU and the Swiss Government supported the purchase of a new vehicle adapted for wheelchair users and training of 18 unemployed individuals to become personal care assistants for daycare service.

Additionally, the project was supported in acquiring a modern device for neurofeedback



Creative workshops  
for every child

therapeutic services, which was at the time only available in Belgrade. The device has proved useful for attention, concentration and focus exercises, while also providing a complete physiological picture of the user.

In 2018, through UNOPS' Swiss PRO project, the Daily Centre "Sun" extended provision of these services to include an Institution in Čačak, western Serbia's regional centre, and,

as a result, another 20 children with disabilities improved their psychosocial abilities through neurofeedback therapy, while 25 professionals underwent the training in this innovative therapy.

With all of this accomplished, more is in store for Svetlana and her team – we just have to wait and see what the Ivanjica "Sun" will cast its shine on next.



“The greatest value of cooperation is precisely UNOPS team's readiness to provide support to every person in need, and the biggest recommendation for working with UNOPS is its staff, their dedication, enthusiasm and innovation, willingness to cooperate and solve problems in project implementation. The exceptional quality of UNOPS is its ability to recognise the needs of the most vulnerable categories of population, as well as to be where it is most needed.

**Svetlana Glavinić**  
Association President and "Sun" Centre Director



In the centre's sensory room, children relax and  
improve their tactile kinesthetic perception



One of the trainings for good governance contact persons, capacitated over years to become lasting human resources stimulating the application of good governance principles all around Serbia

## GOOD GOVERNANCE

---

**300**  
local policies  
and regulations

**50**  
LSGs

---

**1,300**  
public servants  
trained

**147**  
LSGs

# GOOD GOVERNANCE

According to former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” Good governance is an important requirement and essential element in efforts of all societies to achieve sustainable socio-economic development, based on democracy, rule of law and human rights. UNOPS Serbia strives to interweave the five principles of good governance – accountability, transparency, participation, non-discrimination and efficiency, in all of its activities, wherever it was meaningful and relevant.

We, at UNOPS Serbia, understand good governance as a continuous process, underpinned by a set of normative principles that are shaping the way in which public interests are being identified, defined and served, as well as the manner in which public authority is being exercised and public duties - discharged.

The ultimate objective of this process - which involves public and private sectors, citizens and their organisations - is to improve the quality of citizens’ lives, by creating an enabling environment for strengthening



Numerous workshops, training sessions and seminars organised to help introducing good governance principles served not only for gaining knowledge, but for networking of colleagues from across the country

## Annual Award for Best Practices in Applying Good Governance Principles at the Local Level established under the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government



“ We’ve focused from the beginning to make good governance, as a process, management and structure, stand out, and to link projects to good governance. The regulations we’d come up with in our work were not a goal in themselves.

This was a process where users should understand that if the law does not expressly prohibit something, then you’re allowed to regulate it. Changing ways of thinking – well, that’s UNOPS’ added value.

**Dragan Mladenović**  
UNOPS Serbia Good Governance Advisor

and improvement of accountability and rule of law, transparency in discharging public duties, citizen participation in public policies and decision-making processes; as well as an environment ensuring respect for human rights, providing anti-discrimination and equality mechanisms, and fostering efficient and effective execution of public duties and responsibilities.

Following the Swiss theory and experience in the matter, UNOPS Serbia Office provides support for local self-governments through a whole range of projects in application of the principle of good governance; encourages development and enforcement of local regulations and policies; stimulates establishment of local e-government services; and contributes to raising awareness of the benefits of applying the good-governance mechanism.

With infrastructure as our mandate and good governance as our guiding principle, we also apply a unique approach of interconnecting these two areas - infrastructure and good governance. This is how we additionally ensure that we do not build only structures, but also institutions that will meet the needs of local communities and serve public interests.

**76 LSGs**  
supported in linking  
good governance with  
infrastructure

# TAILOR-MADE GOVERNANCE FOR PUBLIC INTEREST

For the last ten years, one of the key advantages of UNOPS Serbia approach to delivering change was its focus on both achieving the assigned objectives and adding value by embedding the good governance principles and practices into the overall intervention outcomes. Good governance has become such a UNOPS Serbia brand that we have elevated it from a cross-cutting theme of all our projects to a key component of one of the projects we implement - the Swiss PRO.

This UNOPS good governance flagship project, worth 5.8 million euros, was launched in 2018, and represents a continuation of successful cooperation with the Government of Switzerland and our joint work with Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, and Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities as key partners.

Through this intervention, UNOPS aims to enhance good governance at the local level,

increase social inclusion of vulnerable groups and improve gender equality, whilst working closely with national partners, local self-governments and civil society organisations.

The Swiss PRO uses a tailor-made approach to transform a theoretical concept of good governance and ensuing principles, such as accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, participation and non-discrimination, into practical content, useful to local governments and other actors.



Swiss PRO personnel with the colleagues from local self-governments identifying paths towards good governance



Contact persons for good governance in 23 local self-governments in Serbia have been awarded certificates for successful completion of the Training of Trainers organised within the Swiss PRO Programme



“ Together with UNOPS, we support 60% of local governments in Serbia to improve their governance through the Swiss PRO Programme. For example, the local government in Veliko Gradište got the citizens, civil society, and the business sector involved in local decision-making on investment priorities. Thirty-six projects made it to the local budget, and eight have been implemented in 2020. The projects were about simple things, such as pedestrian crossings, road maintenance, footpaths, water supply network, public lighting... But with all this, the citizens could see directly that they’re getting something very specific back in return when they decide to get more involved in local public affairs. We remain committed to promoting good governance in partnership with UNOPS in Serbia.

**Sascha Muller**  
Head of Governance Domain, Swiss Cooperation Office,  
Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Serbia

**65 LSGs**  
enhanced eGovernment  
and eServices

**59 LSGs**  
permanent human  
resources for good  
governance

**27 LSGs**  
anti-corruption,  
efficiency and citizen  
participation packages

Outcomes of the Swiss PRO contribute to systemic changes at the local level. For example, we work with local governments to identify which aspects of a particular infrastructure project need to be addressed in order to enhance governance and provide citizens, especially those from vulnerable groups, with improved conditions for the use of public facilities and better access to public services.

Also, through capacity building for integration of good governance principles in development of local policies and regulations, as well as project implementation, we are supporting municipalities to establish permanent human resources and structures within local administration.

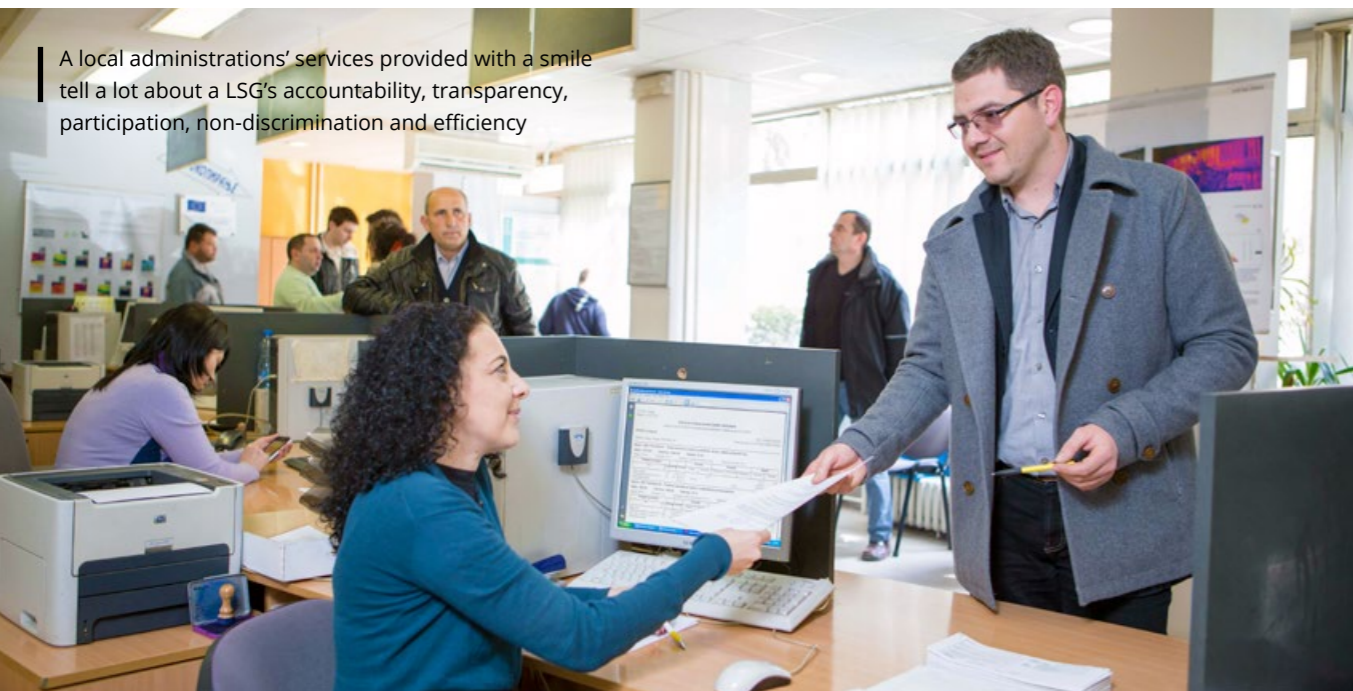
In addition, the project focuses on increasing institutional, technical and human capacities for the enhancement of eGovernment, establishment of eServices and greater use of open data locally. Also, Swiss PRO supports local governments to develop and implement processes and tools for strengthening citizen participation and voice in planning for and delivery of public services, thus contributing to an increased level of public administrations' responsiveness to citizens' and private sector needs.



“ The key to success of the entire public administration reform are the employees, and that's why the focus on employees at the local level is so essential. They need to have as many opportunities for quality professional development as possible. UNOPS has significantly contributed to strengthening their capacities, their mutual interconnecting and their ability to respond adequately to citizen needs. UNOPS' approach to project implementation is characterised by a high level of professionalism, commitment, and perseverance.

**Sanja Putnik**  
Assistant Minister, Ministry of Public  
Administration and  
Local Self-Government of Serbia

A local administrations' services provided with a smile tell a lot about a LSG's accountability, transparency, participation, non-discrimination and efficiency



## GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR ALL

Southern Serbia's municipalities were grappling with a problem of abandoned dogs roaming the streets, and threatening local residents' safety, but also incurring a high cost to local budgets through injury compensation claims filed by the citizens. They needed support to not only build a shelter facility, but also establish its management structure. This is exactly what UNOPS is helping LSGs to achieve through linking good governance principles with infrastructure projects.

The Municipality of Vlasotince, where the facility was built within the project jointly funded by the EU and Switzerland, was additionally supported and guided through a process in the course of which a number of decisions (Free of Charge Use of Public Land, Construction of a Building of Public Interest, Zoo Hygiene Services Provision) and the Rulebook on Catching Stray Dogs were drafted and adopted. Initially, two municipalities of Vlasotince and Bojnik adopted a common local policy, i.e. the Stray Dog Population Reduction and Control Scheme and signed the Agreement on Joint Utility Services related to the dog shelter facility.

The project's impact was felt very quickly as the number of abandoned animals in the streets significantly decreased, and the number of local residents' injury compensation claims slumped considerably. Almost 400 stray dogs passed through the shelter in two years, whilst the cost to the local budgets was significantly reduced as the incidence of stray dog bites dropped off the cliff.



In Vlasotince, dogs are provided medical care along with food and shelter

This facility soon grew into a regional project since additional five local self-governments (Crna Trava, Lebane, Babušnica, Gadžin Han and Bujanovac) joined the action by signing contracts regulating their respective use of the dog shelter and financial contributions to its operation.

“ Since there is an inter-municipal agreement in place, this project initiated cooperation in other areas. Namely, we cooperate with neighbouring municipalities, particularly in the implementation of projects contributing to joint problem solving and improvement of life and work in local communities.

Additionally, after the construction of this facility, we received calls from a number of local self-governments throughout the country for consultations on how to resolve the same problem in their communities.

**Marinko Đorđević**  
Vlasotince Municipality Office of  
Local Economic Development Coordinator

After the disastrous floods that hit Serbia in 2014, some rivers needed to be returned to their riverbeds, and the riverbeds rehabilitated to a newly required resilience level



**EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE**

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

UNOPS often operates in crises and post-disaster environments, supporting structures underpinning local peace and security arrangements. Trust between UNOPS and its partners has been earned and built on its timely, robust and, at times and when needed, extraordinary response to particularly challenging circumstances and emergencies.

A crucial element of UNOPS' success in this respect is the ability to quickly and efficiently adapt its procedures and practices to the issue at hand. Moreover, UNOPS always makes every effort to not only meet the immediate emergency needs, but also ensure resilience, enhanced capacity or disaster-prevention capability in the post-emergency period.

UNOPS has been helping governments and development partners around the world build disaster-resistant infrastructure, and increase the resilience of communities against disasters,

designing and managing construction of buildings and transport, power, and utility infrastructure. UNOPS is also working closely with the UN family, governments, and other partners to support mitigation and efforts in responding to the rapidly evolving and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, now affecting even the remotest corners of the globe.

In Serbia, UNOPS has provided vital support in the unprecedented emergencies which the country had to come to grips with in the past decade: the devastating floods of 2014 and the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak in 2020. In both crises, we responded in record-breaking time, and managed to build, procure and deliver all that was requested of us by the Government, needed by the people and supported by the international community.

These were tough-to-accomplish, but nonetheless rewarding actions - of the kind that we hope will not be required any time soon again, but for which we always stand ready and prepared.



Two workers overlooking the hall of the Obrenovac sports and culture centre - the last public facility in this Belgrade City Municipality which was reconstructed after the floods, to mark the closure of relief efforts



Delivery one part of of food and hygiene packages to Roma communities after the COVID-19 outbreak ensured meeting basic needs of more than 10,000 members of this community



“ The moments when we feel accomplishment are the moments when we are able to genuinely help people and communities. In challenging contexts, this feeling gets amplified, together with the impact of the support we provide. These are the moments when realising our mission becomes tangible.

Our motto in two major emergencies we found ourselves together with our partners was to make the best of the situation. After the floods, it was to build back better - to help people improve the quality of their lives and to unlock the society's aspirations for development. In the COVID-19 outbreak, it was to procure what was needed efficiently - to help the healthcare system protect and save lives.

**Ivana Komnenić**  
UNOPS Serbia Site Engineer



A part of the road between Knić and Kraljevo in central Serbia was reconstructed along with a number of sections throughout the country, all seriously damaged due to the floods

# POST FLOOD RECOVERY

32 million euros

462  
housing  
units

38  
public  
facilities

17km  
of roads

71  
landslides

20  
bridges

20  
river  
embankments

# BUILDING BACK BETTER, FOR BETTER LIVES

A major emergency that befell Serbia in 2014 was the catastrophic floods. Subsequent recovery efforts highlighted the value of UNOPS' contribution. In Serbia, UNOPS has been one of the key actors in its rapid relief initiatives benefitting hundreds of thousands of people.

The unprecedented May 2014 rainfall in Serbia triggered flooding and landslides wreaking havoc and forcing about 32,000 people out of their homes. The damage inflicted within the span of only a few days was estimated at 1.7 billion euros.

Several months after the catastrophic May floods affecting 119 local self-governments throughout the country, another inundation caused by yet another heavy rainfall hit the eastern part of the country in September 2014, inflicting another round of misery and damage.

Thousands of family houses were destroyed and laid to waste, whilst hundreds of public buildings, road sections and bridges were damaged. Farmers' and businesses' operations were disrupted, and so were the public services.

UNOPS was one of the key partners to the Government of Serbia and donor governments in the implementation of emergency response. Through the projects worth in aggregate 22 million euros and funded by the EU, Kingdom of Norway, United Kingdom, France and Canada, UNOPS in Serbia brought back life and hope to the affected areas.

Emergency relief interventions encompassed construction and reconstruction of hundreds of houses, and rehabilitation of almost 40 education, healthcare and cultural public facilities. We were repairing roads affected by landslides and river embankments, building torrent barriers, reconstructing sections of telecommunication and sewage networks, and a rain collector, as well as other vital infrastructure.

In addition, we procured and delivered biocides required to help diminish the risk of propagation of an infectious disease -



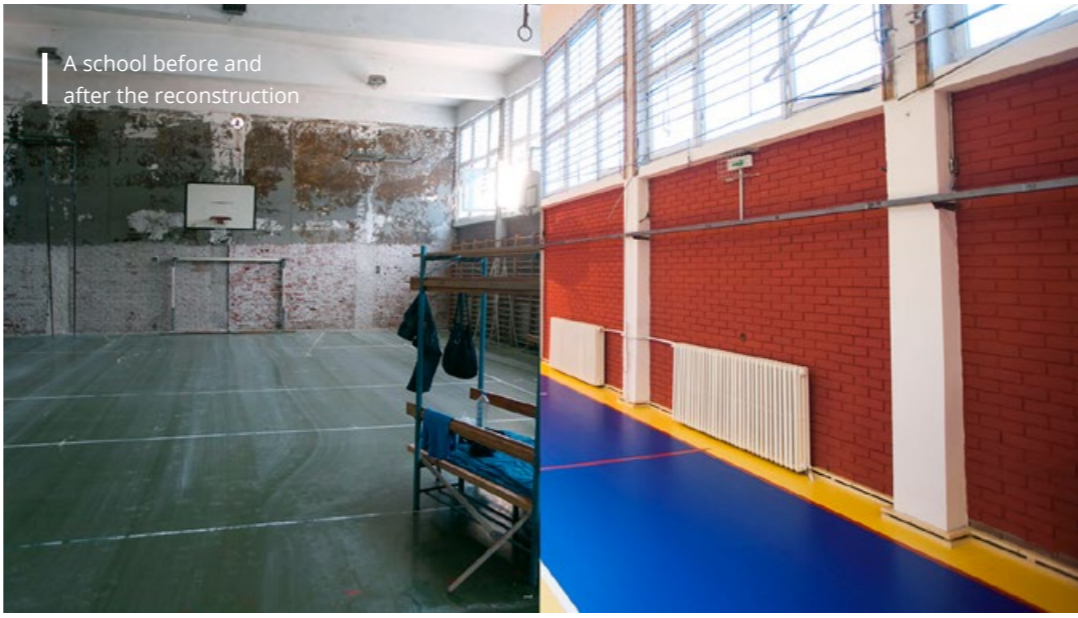
“The project in Obrenovac was the biggest challenge for you and us. We could’ve ended up as a city of broken windows, abandoned houses, a city of ghosts... Were it not for your support, this would be so.

We were completely underwater. The flood destroyed thousands of households. All facilities were demolished, including primary schools, secondary schools and kindergartens.

Today, our city looks like this thanks precisely to our joint efforts, and because everyone did their bit and played their part. The lasting benefit is the protection of Obrenovac from future natural disasters.

UNOPS staff established a humane, warm rapport with everyone affected by the disaster. UNOPS gave us a shoulder to lean on in our darkest hour and helped us heal our wounds. We will never forget it.

**Miroslav Čučković**  
City Municipality of Obrenovac Mayor



Western Nile Fever - by reducing mosquito population, and provided equipment and raw materials to help micro and small enterprises restore their business operations.

UNOPS also helped the Government of Serbia improve the national disaster prevention and response system, and establish the Office for Flood Affected Areas Assistance and Rehabilitation, to be subsequently transformed into the Public Investment Management Office.

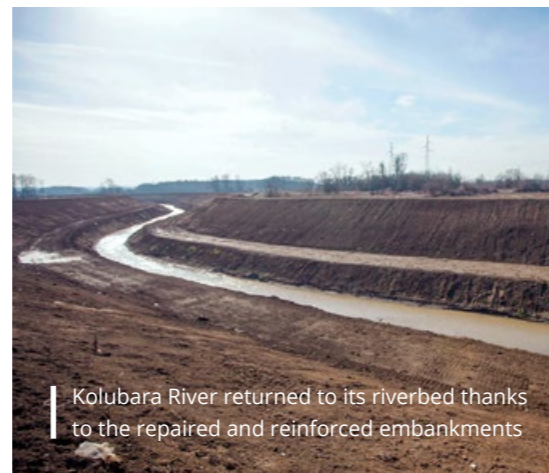
After the first phase, with additional solidarity contributions from the European Union in the aftermath of the floods, UNOPS embarked on a

major road reconstruction initiative. The 10-million euros-worth project resulted in remediation of dozens of landslides, as well as rehabilitation of nine and construction of another five bridges. The reconstructed state road network enabled normal transport and traffic for people in 22 municipalities.

Our role in flood recovery efforts in Serbia was the first of a kind for UNOPS. Our aspiration was not only to build back across the devastated country - houses, schools and roads, but to build back better, and restore and even improve the lives of people.



Building gabions, sustaining walls...



Kolubara River returned to its riverbed thanks to the repaired and reinforced embankments



...and drainage systems to remediate existing and prevent future landslides in western Serbia



Road reconstruction in the Valjevo mountains under the supervision of a local



A bridge in eastern Serbia's Knjaževac - one of 20 built or constructed after the floods - does not only provide for transport and mobility, but socialising of local population as well

# NEW HOMES FOR NEW HOPES

After devastating floods in May 2014, one of the primary goals was to build and reconstruct houses for the families that had lost their homes. The floods left thousands of houses soaked and muddy, unfit for people to live in. The owners of multiple-floor houses most often organised their lives on upper floors, while the families with ground-floor homes had to find temporary accommodation, and wait for reconstruction to be completed.

After devastating floods in May 2014, one of the primary goals was to build and reconstruct houses for the families that had lost their homes. The floods left thousands of houses soaked and muddy, which are conditions unfit for people to

live in. The owners of multiple-floor houses most often organised their lives on the higher levels, while the families with ground-level homes had to find temporary accommodation and wait for their property reconstruction to be completed.



The Despotović family in front of their new house

“Now we have a beautiful new house, not far from the old one that was destroyed, so we can carry on in peace.

Only heaven knows how grateful we are.

**Radenko Despotović**  
The owner of the house constructed after the floods

Unfortunately, many houses were beyond repair and new houses had to be constructed. The heavy rainfall in Krupanj caused the landslide in the village of Tomanj, which completely ruined the home of the Despotović family of four. The father Radenko with his wife and two children was at home when the walls started cracking, leaving gaps that you can see through. In addition to the home, they lost their field where they were growing corn, raspberries, blueberries, etc.

“There have been rains, but the floods and landslides like this have never happened in Tomanj before. Suddenly the hills started right at us. The house was so damaged that we were afraid to get inside. We only managed to save a few things”, Radenko Despotović remembers.

All the new houses built by UNOPS Serbia were equipped with basic home furniture and appliances, because most of the families had lost all their possessions in the floods. For many of them, the life in the new houses marked the beginning of a living under considerably better conditions than before.

With the European Union funding, UNOPS Serbia constructed 87 new houses and enabled reconstruction of 335 homes throughout Serbia, providing conditions for families to continue with their lives.



One of innumerable cracked walls appearing due to overflowing waters or landslides



Building or repairing houses was a post-flood priority, aimed to ensure people enter their homes before winter

**After the devastating floods, we constructed 98 and reconstructed 335 houses**

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

8 million euros

**50**  
devices  
for ventilation,  
anesthesia  
and monitoring

**100**  
stationary  
oxygen  
concentrators

**100**  
triage containers  
with furniture  
and equipment

**75**  
devices for  
mechanical  
ventilation

**100**  
intensive  
care monitors

**300**  
contactless  
thermometers

With a huge gap between supply and demand of medical items, export bans and overburdened transport services, arrival of protective equipment at the Belgrade International Airport was an event in its own right © EU Delegation to Serbia

# LIFE-SAVING PROCUREMENT

With the spread of a novel strain of coronavirus, reported first in China on 31 December 2019, the entire planet’s population was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Medical and personal protection equipment became the most sought-after goods globally, and given the skyrocketing demand, were extremely difficult to procure. UNOPS in Serbia managed to successfully carry out procurement of everything that was requested by the Government, and thus support the country’s efforts to make sure the healthcare system provides for every citizen in need.

National healthcare systems throughout the world were confronted with a formidable challenge posed by the COVID-19 outbreak and the breakneck speed of the contagion’s propagation globally. With the gaps between demand and supply deepening and further exacerbated by proliferating transport and export bans, the global market was severely disrupted, making procurement extremely challenging.

Following the declaration of the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic by the World Health organisation (WHO) in March 2020, UNOPS globally activated its Emergency Procurement Procedures to enable a faster response to requirements related to the emerging COVID-19 crisis.

UNOPS Serbia mobilised its team in parallel to this initiative at the corporate level, and, in response to the Government’s requests for support. Our strength lay in our capacity to quickly implement a multipronged strategy encompassing simultaneous dialogues with the governments of the three countries where our office was operating, thereby enabling us to pinpoint their urgent needs, mobilise donors, apply quick-to-deploy technical instruments to make necessary funds available, and carry out market research and contact suppliers. This effectively made it possible for UNOPS Serbia to launch response plans with lightning speed within days.



Medical personnel engaged to support Serbia’s healthcare system’s response expressed gratitude to the EU Ambassador during his visit to Valjevo © EU Delegation to Serbia



“When the COVID-19 epidemic started on Serbia’s territory, I could only express words of praise for the cooperation that is still going on with the UNOPS.

UNOPS’ name is quite telling as it’s a proper, very efficient organisation which has implemented all the activities required to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak control in Serbia.

According to healthcare institutions in Serbia, and in my own view, UNOPS activities helped deliver various types of donations, necessary equipment, and materials on time and where needed. Thanks to its wealth of experience, UNOPS carried out all the tasks and achieved the goals set in partnership with us in a highly professional and quality manner, and within the shortest time possible.

**Verica Jovanović**  
Institute of Public Health "Dr Milan Jovanovic Batut"  
Acting Director

## 200 medical professionals engaged to support the country’s COVID-19 response

One of 100 containers for COVID-19 emergency care, which have allowed for the triage of patients while preventing the access of potentially infected persons to healthcare facilities © EU Delegation to Serbia

In Serbia, thanks to the support and funding of the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway, and in coordination with the UN Country Team, we procured medical and non-medical equipment worth seven million euros: triage containers, devices for mechanical ventilation, devices for ventilation, anaesthesia and monitoring, stationary oxygen concentrators, intensive care monitors, protective masks, PCR instruments, laboratory kits, and reagents for tests. In addition to the prompt delivery of life-protecting and life-saving equipment, we made sure food and hygiene packages reached 2,000 Roma families.

Our sustained efforts to support Serbia in the time of public health crisis did not stop there. Funded by the European Union, UNOPS Serbia carried out another major initiative. Through one of our projects, 200 medical professionals, including doctors, nurses, microbiologists, lab technicians and administrative staff were hired to provide additional support to the country's COVID-19 emergency response. In the upcoming months, these newly recruited medical professionals will be combating the contagion at the frontline in public health institutes, hospitals, healthcare centres, and laboratories across Serbia.

Efforts to boost healthcare capacity will be crucial in the months and years of uncertainty ahead of us. Sudden surge in demand for medical supplies and other related equipment has exposed global inequalities in access, but also prompted consideration about procurement procedures extending beyond the fulfilment of immediate pressing needs. The pandemic has shown that putting in place a sustainable healthcare infrastructure and procurement procedures over the long haul will be crucial for the future, and, to this end, UNOPS, as a trusted partner, will always stand ready to support Serbia.

April 2020 event marking deliveries of life-saving medical items funded by the EU and the Kingdom of Norway, attended by the President of Serbia, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassadors of EU and Norway and UNOPS Head of Office  
© EU Delegation to Serbia

**800,000**  
protective masks

**2,000**  
food and hygiene  
packages for  
Roma families

laboratory kits and  
reagents for  
**25,000**  
tests

**2**  
real-time PCR  
laboratory  
instruments



# OUR ASPIRATION, OUR ENGAGEMENT



Gender,  
Environment



We pledge to ensure that **every project and programme**, wherever possible, **integrate gender and environmental** considerations, striving to deliver **equal benefits for all**.



A young entrepreneur from Serbia's South - one of hundreds of women directly supported with our projects, and one of thousands feeling positive effects of our gender equality initiatives

## GENDER

**268**

sub-projects  
improving  
position of  
women

**146**

women-owned  
enterprises

**50**

local gender  
equality  
mechanisms

**45**

gender equality  
policies in LSGs

**10**

local women  
councilor  
networks

**9**

health centres  
equipped  
for female  
medical care

# MAKING EQUALITY A REALITY

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming has long been an important component of UNOPS work, and also a key component of the projects implemented by UNOPS on behalf of our partners. Working on strengthening gender equality in a society directly contributes to the improvement of its overall well-being. It contributes to its economic development and strength, to its cohesion, as well as to a more balanced political functioning, especially in public policies and decision-making.

Gender equality is at the core of sustainable development. Proven to be a success formula in any society or organisation, it serves as a major supporting process in achieving a societal change. This concerns the society as a whole, and aims for achieving equal future for all. This is why UNOPS Serbia is working hard to promote diversity and gender equality as a development potential within the organisation itself as well as among our projects and partners.

UNOPS Serbia mainstreams gender equality across all stages of project implementation to improve the lives of women, men, boys and girls. Through technical assistance or grants to national and local institutions, we strive to provide institutional framework, structures and ownership of processes to make gender equality a priority for the society at large and local communities.

Women's empowerment and equal participation with regard to economic independence and enjoyment of human rights, as well as gender-responsive infrastructure and procurement, are all part and parcel of our standard practices and constitute the main elements of UNOPS' operation in Serbia. Working directly with decision-makers to improve the position of women in local communities, contributing to gender equality at the workplace, gender balance in governance structures and decision-making, as well as improving healthcare and access to basic rights and public services at the local level, are only some of the activities designed and undertaken over the past years by UNOPS to bring about lasting results.



“Gender equality is at the heart of development projects and, as such, a priority for UNOPS. We strive to contribute to the advancement of women, men, girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable ones in the society. We aim to achieve this through a proactive approach in our field work, identifying local communities' needs, and responding to them.

Our greatest success is when we see changes happening, and it is a particularly great pleasure to know you're a part of those changes.

**Ana Nedeljković Belja**  
UNOPS Serbia Gender Focal Point and Project Manager



We bring gender mainstreaming to all aspects of our work, and do not miss opportunities to have our say.



“Support and partnership of international institutions are essential during a long-term and challenging process of getting women more involved in the social, political and economic life of the country. UNOPS has recognised that, as well as our efforts and the importance of grass-roots work which is what we champion.

Therein, perhaps, lies the greatest value of our work with UNOPS. We can take measures and decisions at the national level, but failing to implement them locally would devoid them of any impact. UNOPS is highly sensitised to gender equality, vulnerable groups protection and strengthening of gender-equality mechanisms, which is a particularly important value it brings to the table.

**Gordana Gavrilović**  
Advisor to the President of the Government  
Coordination Body for Gender Equality

Such a complex issue presents many challenges per se, and requires an extensive dialogue with beneficiaries and partners. Women in Serbia still make up a vulnerable group. Their representation in political life and decision-making is scarce; their contribution to socio-economic development leaves a great deal to be desired; and their role in local communities is still very much traditional. However, with the support of the international community and thanks to the acknowledgement of this issue as a problem at the national level, the tide seems to be turning in favour of gender equality becoming ever more prominent in Serbia.

# COURAGE, KNOWLEDGE AND SMILES

Strengthening women entrepreneurship is a part of a UNOPS' effort in Serbia to support gender equality in all walks of life. By providing opportunities, it actively encourages women to lead the efforts to improve their own social and economic position and to take ownership of their contribution to social cohesion.

With the support from the European Union, the Swiss Government and the Government of Serbia, through the UNOPS' area-based development European PROGRES project, forty-five women from the municipalities from southeastern and southwestern Serbia started their own businesses contributing to economic empowerment of women in the country.

The women entrepreneurs involved in, among other activities, dentistry, clothing manufacturing, jewellery, tailoring, processing and preserving fruits and vegetables, received equipment in order to start their businesses. Furthermore, through these activities, they also mastered the knowledge of marketing, sales, taxes and legal aspects of doing business. These 45 female business owners obliged themselves to strive to create more jobs, a better life for their families, and to make a positive impact on the local economy.

Making a smile for everyone possible, Maja has every reason to smile herself



This support also brought back a smile on the face of a young dentist Maja Ostojić from Aleksinac. After six years of diligent studying, and no business opportunity in sight, she decided to enter the world of entrepreneurship with the EU and Swiss support, and open her own dental clinic.

"A Smile for Everyone" modern clinic, equipped with the grant of 8,300 euros, opened its doors in 2016, where Maja also employed her husband, a dentist just like her who had lost his job earlier that same year.

The Ostojić family have learnt it is important to be informed about the national and international support provided to young entrepreneurs, and they have received another donation from the Norway Embassy extended through the "Norway for You – Serbia" project. Namely, through a call for provision of support for the existing small enterprises, "A Smile for Everyone" was awarded a grant to acquire a dentist's chair and equipment necessary for oral surgeries, making them the only ones in their community capable of providing such a service, while resulting in creating three new jobs.

“ If I had not received money for the equipment, the question is whether we would have decided on this step since the equipment is extremely expensive and pays off for several years. This support is even more important for me as it is in a way my first job since I had volunteered for two years before. This is a great opportunity for me in a professional and family manner, as my husband works with me.

Maja Ostojić  
"Smile for Everyone" clinic owner

**"Time for Successful Women" grant**

**"Find the Time" campaign**

Being a transversal theme of all our projects, environmental responsibility and climate action are spheres which require our ever growing attention

## ENVIRONMENT

**5,5** million euros

---

**60** infrastructure sub-projects

# ENVIRONMENT

Environment and environmental management have become key components of economic, social and human development. The issues such as climate change, air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity or land degradation require coordinated responses, and, often, international cooperation.

UNOPS is dedicated to supporting environment protection in all aspects of its work. Climate-neutral since 2012, UNOPS understands the importance of environment protection, and translates that understanding into effective action. We support our partners to mitigate the adverse impact on the environment and improve biodiversity and ecological resilience, while increasing the resilience of countries and communities to withstand the shocks of natural disasters.

In Serbia, we have been applying our corporate culture and standards, and translating them into the local context in order to achieve positive impact for the communities. We have been applying eco-friendly solutions in our infrastructure, supporting energy-efficiency, raising awareness among our partners and beneficiaries, introducing environment criteria in our grant schemes and encouraging corporate environmental responsibility. The infrastructure we reconstructed in the post-flood period was built back better, to resist future natural disasters.

Being a priority at all levels - global and local - environment remains a transversal theme of all our projects, and facilitating environmental protection remains our responsibility.

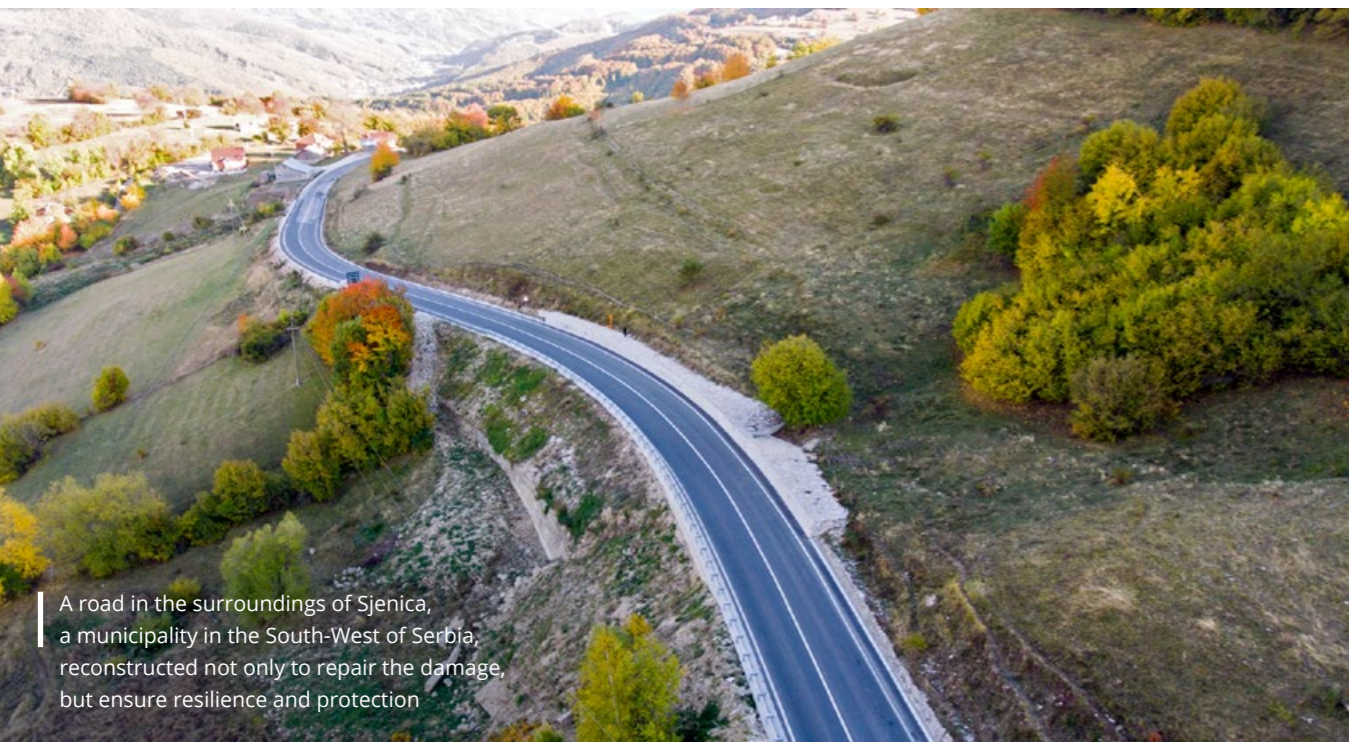
Preparatory works for reconstructing a kindergarten in southeastern Serbia's Babušnica, to ensure energy efficiency of the building



“UNOPS environmental interventions in Serbia stem back for two decades and in the process wherever possible, we introduced innovative concepts. A model of public-private dialogue at the local level to identify potential conflicts was established to curb environmental impact of the biggest industrial polluters. The strategic environmental impact assessment was also introduced as a mandatory element in development of all types of urban planning documents. As a result limitations are now in place for the targeted areas in order to identify and avoid potential environmental challenges.

**Viktor Veljović**  
UNOPS Serbia Project Associate  
for GIS and Urban Planning

The new design of a Bela Palanka factory tailored it to meeting the needs of its new purpose and all European environmental standards



A road in the surroundings of Sjenica, a municipality in the South-West of Serbia, reconstructed not only to repair the damage, but ensure resilience and protection



# SAVING LIVES, PROPERTY AND INVESTMENTS

The construction of anti-erosion barriers to reduce the risk of torrential flooding in the Raška River basin has proven its seven-fold return value within five years while efficiently protecting the citizens and their property from flooding and significantly improving their quality of life.

Even before 2014 unprecedented floods throughout Serbia, in Novi Pazar each rainy season had already been a dreaded time of a year. In the city alone, seasonal flooding would cause annually material damage of up to a million euros, and in 2011 it had exceeded two million euros and seriously endangered the lives of 3,000 people.

As a part of a larger, integrated response financed by the European Union, Government of Switzerland and Serbia, flood prevention and protection in southeastern and southwestern parts of the country was also included in the activities of the UNOPS-implemented projects.

The construction works started in 2013, when eight barriers, known as mini-dams among the local population, were built. In the last phase, another five barriers were strategically constructed to prevent the flooding of surrounding households, as well as regional roads.

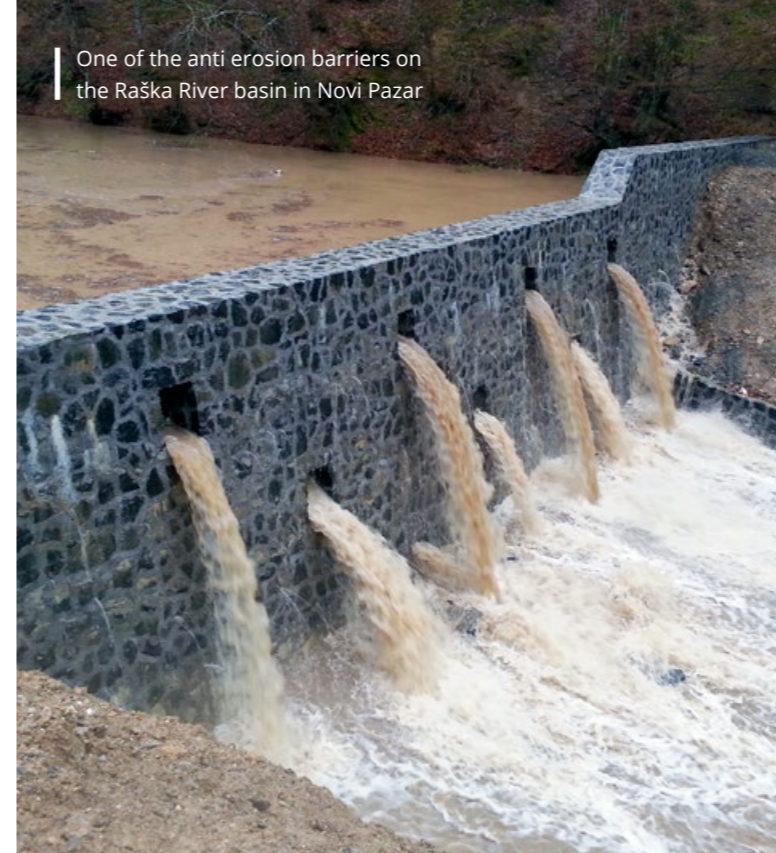
Successful flood prevention required a social synergy which was evident throughout the implementation of the project. In an act of true neighbourhood kindness, Delić Enver, a local resident of Selakovac, donated his land for the construction of a dam on Jusuf potok. In his words, even though his family and estate had never been seriously endangered by floods, his neighbours dreaded the overflowing every rainy season.

“ Every spring, the floods would inflict significant damage to the people in the area. Their fields, gardens, cellars and houses were flooded.

Now, with these dams, that problem is solved. At times the reservoir now fills up, but the dam retains water, which then slowly drains away. I'd say the locals, their houses and their lives are safe now.

**Enver Delić**  
Selakovac village local

One of the anti erosion barriers on the Raška River basin in Novi Pazar



The integrated approach soon reaffirmed its necessity as in 2016 Novi Pazar was sheltered from floods which befall one part of Serbia.

The donors recognised that investment in risk prevention pays off greatly and preserves the capacity for further socio-economic development. Success of Novi Pazar was then replicated through a similar anti-erosion project in additional three municipalities in Serbia: Bojnik, Lebane and Prokuplje.

In addition, UNOPS supported its local self government beneficiaries to develop technical documentation for protection from erosion and torrents in the Jablanica, Pčinja, and Vlasina Rivers watersheds, which was a prerequisite for works estimated at four million euros that included construction of 27 anti-erosion barriers to reduce the risk of torrential flooding in eleven municipalities.

Overall, the construction of the anti-erosion barriers has proved to be an efficient protection system against flooding, and more importantly, it has made sustainable development possible for the most underdeveloped areas in Serbia.



“ The anti-erosion barriers have already returned the investment many times over. In the areas where these simple constructions were built the floods were decelerated and as a result the damage to surrounding areas were minimised especially in the urban centres such as the City of Novi Pazar where millions of euros were saved in recovery efforts alone.

**Milan Kolašinac**  
UNOPS Serbia Project Engineer



# OUR KNOWLEDGE, OUR DIVERSITY



Establishing UNOPS Operations:  
Ukraine, Georgia,  
North Macedonia, Montenegro





“Broadening horizons of our operations was both interesting and challenging at the same time. With significant experience in local development and emergency disaster response until then, we were opening a new chapter for the UNOPS Serbia office, transferring our knowledge to completely different settings and environments outside our country. With modest resources to implement projects and a lot to learn in new environments, these missions sometimes felt like a heavy burden on our shoulders, as our regular duties were awaiting us back home. But once you see for yourself that all our efforts have really made positive changes in the lives of common people, be it in Ukraine and Georgia or Montenegro and North Macedonia, the sweet taste of professional satisfaction is inevitable. This was indeed an opportunity for all of us to grow and mature as an office, but also individually.

**Petar Janjatović**  
UNOPS Serbia Communications Manager



The UNOPS Office in Serbia has developed its resources to successfully manage complex projects and programmes, but has not kept to itself. Under strong leadership from Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA), we have been sharing our expertise and supported establishing offices in other European countries, specifically Ukraine and Georgia, where initially incubated operations now function



Students of the Eastern Partnership European School Scholarship Programme with the European Commissioner for Enlargement, at the occasion of opening the dormitory in Tbilisi, Georgia

## OUR KNOWLEDGE, OUR DIVERSITY

independently, as well as North Macedonia and Montenegro, where UNOPS' operations are implemented under the umbrella of the Serbia Office.

After proving that the expertise, procedures and processes, established in full accordance with the corporate organisational rules and standards, and related to the project management, finances, procurement and infrastructure, were serving well people in need in Serbia, the Office was about to come to grips with an important mission: to transfer its knowledge and experience, and replicate successful practices in novel settings and environments.

This mission did not imply only supporting other countries and capacitating the teams elsewhere. This was also a good learning exercise and opportunity for UNOPS Serbia to expand its experience in working in different conflict and post-conflict environments with the funding from different donors. This was the first time that the work was undertaken directly with the European Commission and the Government of Japan.

Offices in Kyiv and Tbilisi were supported to the stage where they have become capable of operating as standalone units. These two offices grew rapidly, becoming independent and expanding their respective project portfolios. Both offices continued to support governments in these two countries to achieve their goals in security, health and education sectors by providing expertise in project management.

Offices in Skopje and Podgorica, established in 2017 and 2018, respectively, are operating under the UNOPS Serbia Project Office. The projects implemented in North Macedonia and Montenegro are predominantly focusing on local economic development, thus contributing to the European integration processes in these countries.

# HEALTHY AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

In a country undergoing changes and challenges, procuring necessary medical and security equipment can mean better lives and safer living. In Ukraine, UNOPS made sure its healthcare and security systems are provided with this kind of support, ensuring better treatment and safer work for hundreds of thousands of project beneficiaries.

In 2016 and 2017, Ukraine was facing a number of challenges, with the Government undertaking reforms and one part of the country still experiencing conflicts. Both the healthcare and security systems lacked capacities and funding, while available equipment used in the country was often woefully outdated. The institutions were in need of support, and the international community was there to provide it.

UNOPS was one of the actors that provided a part of this support. With the funding of the Government of Canada and the People of Japan, we helped the Ministries of Defence and Interior and State Emergency and Border Guard Services to improve their capacities, mainly in the area of healthcare and border control.



Operational pyrotechnic vehicles procured to improve operations of the country's security forces

To increase national capacities in safety, border control and demining, UNOPS procured and delivered valuable equipment to the Ministry of Interior, State Emergency Service and State Border Guard Services. Operational pyrotechnic vehicles, ground penetrating radar detectors, and different types of officer protection equipment were some of the items procured ensuring security, improved control and safer operations.

Thanks to a proactive and efficient procurement process, regional hospitals of the Ministry of Defence received new equipment ensuring improved examination and faster treatments for over 250,000 patients, as well as safer conditions for both patients and medical personnel who received training in its efficient use. An excellent example to illustrate the point is new X-ray systems which decreased the radiation levels while taking radiographic images of patients by 50 percent compared to the conventional equipment used previously. UNOPS also provided anaesthetic stations with air compressors and patient monitors, CT Scanner, endoscopy and other medical equipment.

An event marking the handover of medical equipment, attended by the President of Ukraine and other high-level officials

# STRONGER TOGETHER AND WELL EDUCATED

The Eastern Partnership European School Scholarship Programme, granting scholarships for 30 students from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, has not only provided recognised courses and quality boarding for these young people, but also offered them a distinctive European perspective.

In 2018-2019, UNOPS Serbia supported the launch of the Eastern Partnership European School Scholarship Programme, to ensure that, each year, some 30 scholarships were provided for students from the Eastern Partnership countries to study for an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme with a European studies focus at the New School in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The scholarship programme, designed and funded by the European Union, is implemented in partnership with the New School, hosting scholarship recipients as they complete their studies. The first cohort of this pilot programme

was enrolled in 2018, after a thorough selection process to ensure that the best students are awarded the scholarship.

This scholarship programme offers a comprehensive and rigorous two-year academic course of the IB Diploma combined with the unique opportunity to engage in the specialised study of Europe and European issues. Through guidance and support of the European Schools General Secretariat, courses in human sciences, languages and literature, arts and history, have been aligned with the European Baccalaureate (EB) studies.

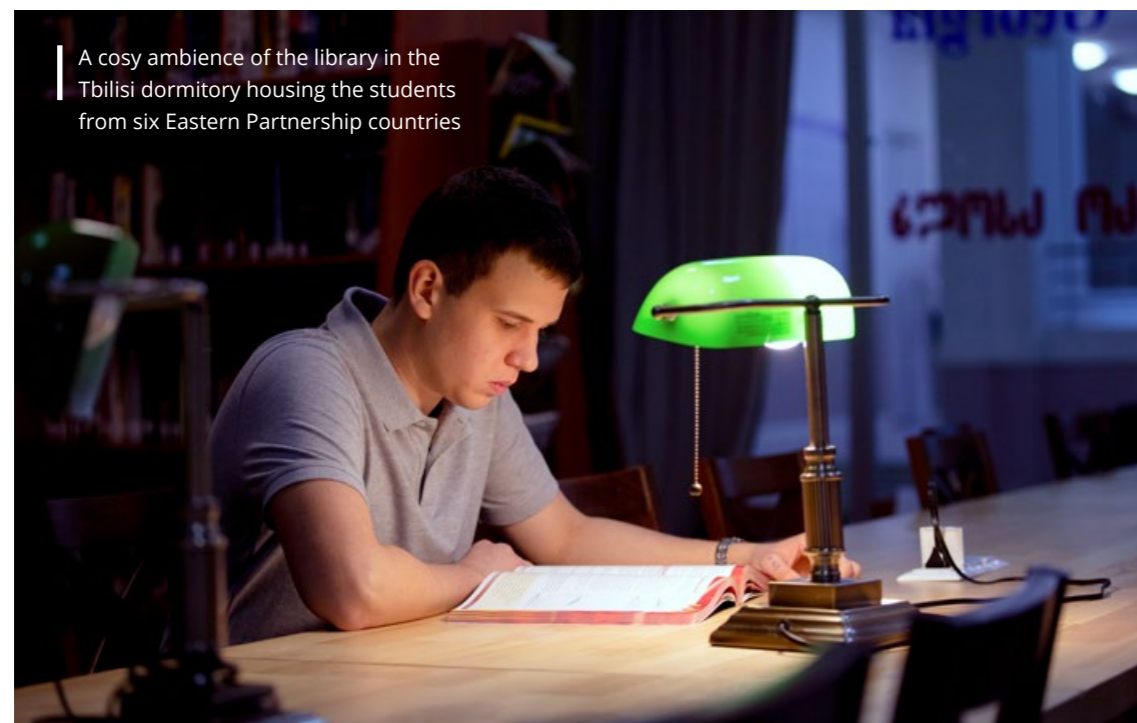
Extra-curricular activities further define the European angle of students' experience at New School, allowing them to attend conferences and events on European subjects by EU academics and senior officials, take part in study tours to EU countries and travel to different areas of Georgia, participate in different activities, including sports, Model United Nations, drama, cooking club, etc.

With technical assistance and guidance from the European Union and UNOPS, the New School funded and contracted local companies to build a dormitory to accommodate the students – a more conveniently located, cosier environment than two hotels which had previously served as their home away from home in Tbilisi. The newly built, on-site Johannes Hahn Dormitory, named for the EU Commissioner who supported the scholarship programme, has become the students' own little slice of home.

In June 2020, the first cohort successfully graduated, so 30 students – including 20 girls – received their high school diplomas as they prepared to continue with their higher education in Europe, the United States and their home countries.



One of the students in front of the mural painted on the side of the dormitory, writing out the motto embodied by the programme: Stronger Together



A cosy ambience of the library in the Tbilisi dormitory housing the students from six Eastern Partnership countries

“ Eastern Partnership European School Scholarship Programme is a beautiful programme giving chances to the students from low income families coming from EaP countries to receive a high level International Baccalaureate education. We receive around thousand applications per year, so we had the privilege to select the best students from these countries. In order to provide quality conditions for them, we constructed a dormitory in six months, it was very intense, the UNOPS engineer was with us day and night, and I really appreciate UNOPS' support.

**Marina Zhgenti**  
New School Tbilisi Directori

# REPLICATING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR REGIONAL BENEFITS

Apart from capacity and expertise in the areas of UNOPS mandate - project management, infrastructure, procurement, HR and financial management, UNOPS Serbia Office possesses strong capacity, experience and knowledge in the area of local socio-economic development gained over the past decade. It is this area in particular that triggered the Office's operations in and support for two Serbia's neighbouring countries: North Macedonia and Montenegro.

Regional expansion of the UNOPS Serbia operations in the Western Balkans started in 2017, with the opening of an office in Skopje. The first project implemented in North Macedonia has been the "Nordic Support for Progress of North Macedonia" aimed at enhancing the capacity of the country's institutions for EU accession, as well as including civil society organisations (CSOs) and media in all phases of the process.

The project, funded by the Kingdom of Norway with 4.5 million euros and the Kingdom of Sweden with another two million euros, contributes to a more balanced socio-economic development by strengthening local infrastructure of the less developed municipalities and by supporting new employment at the local level. Coupled with support to national institutions, local-level initiatives are designed to help create employment and self-employment opportunities by supporting the implementation of North Macedonia's Operational Plan for Employment.

The project, which is due to end by 2021, also enhances governmental professional and technical capacities for the EU integration process, supports establishing EU accession

negotiating structures, and enhances national capacities to communicate the process, while empowering active participation of the civil sector and media in pursuing related activities considered to be in public interest.



After excavating 170,000 cubic meters of waste near Tetovo, North Macedonia, the construction of a wastewater treatment plant, to overcome the pollution from industrial and communal water in the region, can begin

Promotion of the assistance for EU accession processes that North Macedonia's Parliament receives within the Nordic Support for Progress project, attended by the Ambassador of Norway and high level officials



“ Our engagement is wide-ranging and spans local development, infrastructure interventions, EU accession support, addressing social imbalances and environmental hot spots. With North Macedonia nearing the start of negotiations for EU membership, we can actually see how our work contributes in preparing the country for this challenge. The fact that we are able to successfully implement our project activities in so many different areas, after opening the UNOPS office in the country in 2018, only shows the enormous capacity and extensive expertise of the organisation and the people working for it.

**Sherife Ismaili Kasapi**  
UNOPS Serbia / Skopje, North Macedonia  
/ Project Manager



Supporting businesses is one of the pillars of our support to local development in Montenegro's least developed municipalities

## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Socio economic development initiatives require an additional component in order to yield optimum results: healthy environments. In North Macedonia, we are striving towards it through an initiative to clean up one of the worst environmental hot spots in the country.

At a site close to North Macedonia's capital of Skopje, on the factory grounds of former chemicals manufacturing company OHIS, around 50,000 tonnes of hazardous lindane waste deposits have lain buried for over 50 years. In December 2018, the Government of North Macedonia signed a memorandum

for cooperation with UNOPS and the Kingdom of Norway, to clean up underground basins with deposited lindane waste.

This memorandum set the framework for establishing the Multi-Partner Environmental Fund, tasked with providing financial means and expertise for this complex operation to be conducted in accordance with the European standards. With the Government contributing the first million of euros to the Fund, the first phase of the clean-up operation will launch in late 2020, or early 2021.



In late 2018, the "Norway for You - Montenegro" project began, marking a start of UNOPS presence and contributing to a more balanced socio-economic development in yet another country - Montenegro.

With the funding of the Kingdom of Norway worth 1.4 million euros, the project activities are helping increase employment opportunities, supporting social cohesion and improving local infrastructure in the least developed municipalities.

The methodology of the project implementation is based on the grant scheme support so that the funds are awarded through a competitive process of beneficiary selection in the areas of business, civil society and local self-governments, covering different communities and public institutions. Ultimate beneficiaries of the project, due to end in 2021, are the unemployed and vulnerable groups in the least developed municipalities of Montenegro.

All the activities undertaken in the two countries are implemented in coordination with and through participation of national and local institutions. Such an approach should ensure beneficiary's ownership and sustainability of results achieved, as well as a long-term positive impact in the interest and for the benefit of these countries' citizens.



Shortly after the office in Podgorica was opened in 2019, we were a completely new organisation in the well established international community environment, so we had to prove our competencies to the national partners. Through the preparation and implementation of the local development activities, we strongly involved relevant ministries and institutions in the process, thus giving them ownership over results. From creating new jobs and increasing competitiveness of the businesses to the improvement of the local infrastructure, we managed to contribute to the developmental priorities of both the Government and the donor.

**Armen Čekić**  
UNOPS Serbia/ Podgorica, Montenegro  
/ Project Manager



An eastern Montenegro's Andrijevica mountain lodge before and after refurbishment

# NO BORDERS FOR SOLIDARITY

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak in March 2020, UNOPS Serbia Office placed its capacities at the disposal of the governments of Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro in order to ensure immediate response to the fast-developing healthcare crisis. Having joined forces with donors and national institutions, our quick mobilisation of resources and emergency procurement ensured fast deliveries of life-saving equipment in this part of the Western Balkans.

In the spring of 2020, devices for artificial ventilation were the most in-demand items on the global market. They were prioritised by each and every country severely affected by the relentless surge of COVID-19 contagion, including Montenegro and North Macedonia.

The immediate repurposing of a part of the ongoing projects' funds provided by the Kingdom of Norway enabled UNOPS to procure and deliver these life-saving artificial ventilation devices to both countries: ten to Montenegro and another twenty to North Macedonia. This equipment ensured respiratory support to patients suffering

from acute distress, spasm or obstruction in the days when entire healthcare systems were challenged, but also helped strengthen medical capacities in the countries in the long run.

Coordinated efforts of the governments and the United Nations country teams to identify and meet the countries' needs showed that North Macedonia was still lacking equipment and items to respond to the surging contagion and the ramifications of this rapidly spreading infectious disease. To provide additional aid to the country, UNOPS joined forces with the European Union which designated 4 million euros for emergency

“With the help of UNOPS, the European Union was the first donor to secure ventilators for the country at a time of high demand and short supply around the world. In this challenging context, the EU showed it values the lives and health of the citizens of North Macedonia as those of EU member countries.

**Samuel Žbogar**  
Ambassador of the EU  
to North Macedonia (2016-2020)



Deputy Prime Minister and EU Ambassador to North Macedonia at the medical equipment delivery

“We’ve been trained to cope with infections, and fight against these types of diseases. Though, I may confidently say we’ve never faced an epidemic of this magnitude, and fought a disease surrounded by so many unknowns.

**Dr Biljana Petreska**  
Infectious Disease Specialist with the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions in Skopje, North Macedonia

procurement of priority medical equipment and items identified by the Government.

This initiative managed to ensure major assistance to the country. We procured and delivered 25 devices for mechanical ventilation, 20 intensive care monitors, 10 stationary oxygen concentrators, kits for 25,000 tests, over 35,000 specialised medical equipment items such as catheters, infusion pump systems and syringes. The project also enabled delivery of over 1.6 million items of personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, coveralls, goggles, shoe covers and protective gowns, to healthcare institutions in the country, as well as 4,000 litres of disinfectants and cleaning agents to help protect medical personnel and patients.

To reach as many people in need as possible, the aid was distributed to special hospitals, general hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout the country in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

The provision of much needed supplies to the healthcare institutions has not only served the purpose of treating patients suffering from COVID-19, but also boosted the countries' healthcare capacities, staying as a reminder and testimony of solidarity.



“In extremely challenging market conditions, with limited availability and high demand for specialised medical equipment and supplies, UNOPS proved able to deliver the life-saving goods. It was a challenging task that we are proud of having completed it in record-breaking time.

**Venelin Rangelov**  
UNOPS Serbia / Skopje, North Macedonia/  
Project Management Support Advisor



## OUR VOICE

The story of **Vera Kovačević**  
UNOPS Serbia  
Administrative Senior Assistant

The office of UNOPS in Serbia was established when the implementation of complex projects could only be executed with a permanent presence in the country. It started operating in modest condition, with only two employees, and Vera Kovačević was one of them. She had come to UNOPS with a years-long experience in working for other UN agencies and international organisations.

From the very inception of her engagement, Vera has been UNOPS Serbia spiritus movens, looking after and catering for everyone and everything.

She's had a kind word for each and every colleague, as well as a beaming smile. That's how she's earned her nickname: Mum.

Vera is a witness and a chronicler of everything that has been happening for over a decade. "At the very beginning, I was practically a one-woman band, covering it all myself - from HR to procurement. Working hours would stretch from 7 a.m. to as late as 11 p.m., day in, day out. I've done it all except work as the head of the office," she says with a smile.

Sitting in a big, bright office overlooking a park and the National Library, Vera recalls the beginnings. "It was so different back then. I came to UNOPS in 2009. There were only two of us – my boss and I. We found some office space in the archdiocese. There were two bedrooms which belonged to nuns who'd left. Furniture in our offices was second-hand, and each room had only one socket."

"That was how we started," says Verka, as the colleagues also call her, and continues to tell the UNOPS Serbia story. "And then we hired some phenomenal people and started developing. It was fantastic. It's incredible how many people have passed through so many projects over the past ten years or so... I'd say we got the best professionals from all over Serbia working on our projects, both full-time employees and consultants. That was what helped us become what we are today and gain this extraordinary reputation."

Today, UNOPS Serbia personnel work in a four-story building and an additional office in Belgrade, offices in Novi Pazar, Niš and Vranje, while operations are also covered from the offices in Skopje, North Macedonia, and Podgorica, Montenegro. The team is now big, but Vera says that it is still like one big family.

"We've not only developed good working relations within our team, but also with our colleagues from our partner organisations and other UNOPS offices, always taking good care about our organisation."

"I'd say this is exactly what makes UNOPS unique," Vera concludes, "the fact that all my colleagues and people from this Office make every effort imaginable to make it work. They're always investing in future projects, and they're always one step ahead".

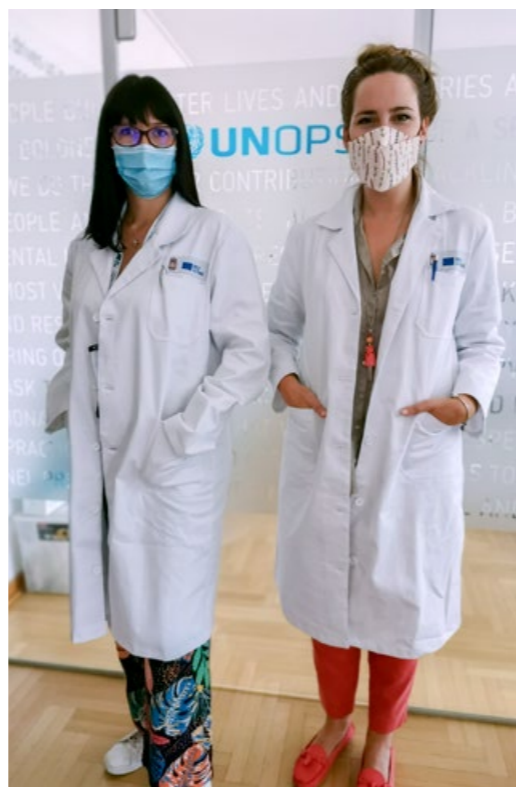


A part of the UNOPS Serbia team - or the family - in front of the Belgrade office, hosting UNOPS Executive Director and ECR Director during their visit in 2017

# OUR TEAM



Our people - one of our key strengths: a team of well educated and highly skilled professionals dedicated to the core of our mission to help people build better lives and countries achieve sustainable development



Abbreviations

<b>a.i.</b>	ad interim, temporary
<b>BSO</b>	Business support organisation
<b>COVID-19</b>	Corona Virus Disease 2019 caused by SARS-CoV-2
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate social responsibility
<b>DEU</b>	Delegation of the European Union
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECR</b>	UNOPS Europe and Central Asia Region
<b>ERP</b>	Enterprise Resource Planning
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU PRO</b>	European Support to Municipal Development Programme
<b>EU PROGRES</b>	European Partnership with Municipalities Programme
<b>FIDIC</b>	International Federation of Consulting Engineers
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>GLOBAL G.A.P.</b>	Good Agricultural Practice
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>HR</b>	Human resources
<b>HSSE</b>	Health, safety, social and environmental
<b>HSTF</b>	UN Human Security Trust Fund
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International organisation for Migration
<b>IPA</b>	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
<b>IPMG</b>	Infrastructure and Project Management Group
<b>ISO</b>	International Organization for Standardization®
<b>LSG</b>	Local Self-Government
<b>NFY</b>	Norway for You
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>PIU</b>	Project Implementation Unit
<b>PMO</b>	Project management Office
<b>POTYA</b>	UNOPS Project of the Year Award
<b>PRINCE</b>	Projects IN Controlled Environments
<b>RDA</b>	Regional Development Agency
<b>RNE</b>	Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE)
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium enterprise
<b>Swiss PRO</b>	Enhancing Good Governance and Social Inclusion for Municipal Development Programme
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

Stepping Stones for the Future  
UNOPS in Serbia 2000 - 2020

Editor

Vera Jovanović

Forewords and Introduction

Grete Faremo  
Michela Telatin  
Moin Karim

Design

Čedomir Cvetković  
Ivan Ćulafić

Illustrations

Bratislav Milenković

Photographs

Aleksandar Jocić  
Eleanor Church  
Igor Pavičević  
Keti Taleska  
Sanja Knežević  
Saša Đorđević  
Tomislav Georgiev  
Volodymyr Shuvayev  
UNOPS Serbia team - Aleksandar Čolović et al.  
UNOPS  
Delegation of EU to Serbia

UNOPS Serbia

Skerlićeva 4  
11000 Belgrade  
Serbia

Tel/Fax: +381 11 344 11 06  
E-mail: [rspc.registry@unops.org](mailto:rspc.registry@unops.org)

[www.unops.org](http://www.unops.org)


This publication has been prepared with  
the contributions and support of


Aleksandra Radetić, Aleksandra Živković,  
Ana Nedeljковиć Belja, Ana Sekulić Pribičević,  
Božidar Radivojević, Daliborka Kolar, Dejan Stojanov,  
Dragan Mladenović, Dragana Milošević, Elise Laker,  
Gordana Smuđa, Honore Dainhi, Ivana Komnenić,  
Ivana Popović, Jasmina Ilić, Marija Radulović,  
Marko Vujačić, Maša Mileusnić, Michela Telatin,  
Milica Davitkov, Milica Radović, Nicholas O'Regan,  
Nenad Šučurović, Olivera Kostić, Paul Mazza,  
Petar Janjatović, Peter Browne, Radomir Cvetković,  
Tanja Rakonić, Taraneh Dadar, Terra Robinson,  
Vera Kovačević


Many of its contents have been provided thanks to  
engagement of wider teams of UNOPS HQ and UNOPS  
Serbia Office


*UNOPS would like to acknowledge the contributions of the  
above named team members and other participants in the  
process of preparing the publication. The views expressed in  
this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the United  
Nations or UNOPS.*

*While every effort has been taken to verify the accuracy  
of the presented information, UNOPS cannot accept any  
responsibility or liability for reliance by any person on  
this publication or any of the information, opinions or  
conclusions set out in it.*

 /unops\_serbia

 /unops.org

 /company/unops

 /unops\_official

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

341.123:061(497.11)"2000/2020"

**STEPPING Stones for the Future** / [editor Vera Jovanović] ; [illustrations Bratislav Milenković] ;  
[photographs Aleksandar Jocić... [et al.]]. - Beograd : United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS),  
2020 (Vranje : Plutos). - 177 str. : ilustr. ; 27 x 21 cm

Tiraž 250. - Str. 8-9: Forewords / Grete Faremo, Moin Karim. - Str. 10-11: Introduction / Michela Telatin.  
- Abreviatons: str. [182].

ISBN 978-86-920977-8-2

а) Уједињене нације. Канцеларија за пројектне услуге -- Србија -- 2000-2020

COBISS.SR-ID 25800713



This publication is a narrative of 20 years of UNOPS working in Serbia. It is a compendium of its endeavours and successes, an anthology of its people and relationships.

It is the testimony to the commitment of fulfilling the entrusted mandate, the support of its partners and the trust of its beneficiaries. It reveals a unique identity of UNOPS as an organisation within the United Nations system, and the identity of UNOPS Serbia Office.