



APPLICATION OF **DESIGN THINKING APPROACH** IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND YOUTH

In May 2023, the Public Policy Innovation Group of the Public Policy Secretariat initiated a partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Youth through the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation. The objective of this collaboration was the implementation of the Pilot Project: **"Enhancing the Work of Tourist Organizations in the Field of Tourism Market Research to Improve Public Services."** The project involved the National Tourism Organisation of Serbia (NTOS), the Tourist Organization of Belgrade (TOB), as well as a large number of local self-government tourist organizations. Support in conducting the research was provided by the statistical data processing agency Pro Pozitiv.

During the workshops, the Design Thinking approach was applied to better understand the needs and habits of tourists. Additionally, pilot research was conducted in Kragujevac and Sokobanja, involving volunteer work by students from hospitality and tourism schools, who gained valuable practical experience. The results showed that tourists visiting Belgrade often lack predefined plans, arrive without high expectations, and explore the city spontaneously. They primarily find information online (Google, YouTube, social media) and organize their trips independently.

Furthermore, the most common motives for visiting Serbia include recommendations from friends, favorable entry conditions (the visa-free regime for Turkish citizens), destination accessibility (low-cost flights), and cultural proximity. However, it is concerning that many tourists are unaware of other destinations in Serbia beyond Belgrade, highlighting the need for better distribution of tourism information and content. The research also indicated that the perception of Serbia is often burdened by outdated or inaccurate information. Some foreign tourists even believe that the country is still in a state of war, pointing to deeper issues in communicating the country's image. On the other hand, those who do visit are often pleasantly surprised. Hospitality, kindness, and nightlife stand out as values that consistently exceed expectations. Following the data collection, an analysis was conducted which served as the foundation for creating new tourism services. The Kragujevac City Tourist Organization developed two new travel packages for families with children. The first is the **"Tradition Tour"** (educational and experiential activities such as learning calligraphy, kneading the traditional slava cake, working in a nursery, and folklore classes, in cooperation with the "Prota Stevan Popović" elementary school from Čumić). The second is **"ReCreative Afternoon"** (organized activities in the Adventure Park and Botanical Garden, including workshops for children). The Tourist Organization of Belgrade created a new service tailored to tourists traveling with pets. The official TOB website now features a dedicated set of information on dog-friendly facilities and locations, including parks, veterinary clinics, pet hotels, and equipment stores.

This Pilot Project concluded with the goal of redesigning and standardizing questionnaires that will be applicable for conducting future interviews with tourists across different cities. The results obtained will serve as the basis for creating new and redesigning existing services offered by tourist organizations.