

Become an expert in broad-based employee ownership and help to build an Inclusive and Sustainable Economy in Serbia

The current ownership landscape in the Balkan economies perpetuates economic and social inequalities, and, most importantly, the condition of our economy is socially and environmentally unsustainable. Trends are not positive. Governments in the region are subsidizing foreign ownership, exacerbating the problem. The aging demographic among owners in the SME sector is raising essential developmental questions – who should own the businesses embedded in local communities, providing material stability and economic opportunities to the local population?

Broad-based employee ownership may not be a panacea for the region's crises, but it is a practical policy that can address some of the challenges and help redefine the patterns of value distribution and power relationships in our economy.

From the economies of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, to Spain, Italy, France, and as of recently Slovenia, broad-based employee ownership is gaining recognition as a strategy to build a resilient, future-proof economy that benefits everyone.

One of the more recent initiatives toward that goal has been established by the Institute for Economic Democracy (IED) in Slovenia – it's called European ESOP. The European ESOP introduces a standardized mechanism for broad-based employee buyouts, facilitating easy replicability across diverse legal and cultural contexts. This innovative model, showcased in numerous international publications and reports, amalgamates successful features from existing employee buyout models while addressing common issues concerning sustainability, participation, and incentives. While gaining momentum within the European sphere, our current focus lies on its adaptation in Slovenia, primarily through pilot projects involving the conversion of Slovenian businesses, as well as upcoming legislative efforts for a Slovenian ESOP law.

In 2024, IED has initiated an ambitious new project - to establish sister organizations in Croatia and Serbia, which will work to bring broad-based employee ownership to their respective countries. We want to help local teams to create organizations, which will receive our expertise, mentoring, and opportunities for joint grant applications. This should help the new regional initiatives to catch-up with the current efforts in Slovenia. Based on the blueprints established in Slovenian IED, the expected activities of the sister organizations are:

- Technical assistance for company conversions (legal support, education, communication, financing etc.);
- Policy and research work (policy and academic research, developing policy proposals, offering legislative support, engaging in public tenders, shaping municipal policies, etc.);
- Advocacy (developing a communication strategy appropriate to a given cultural context, writing op-eds in media outlets, managing social media platforms, etc.).



The long-term objectives to create a strong regional network of organizations, starting with the neighboring countries but also moving elsewhere in Europe. The role of the network will be to research, lobby for, and participate in building a supportive infrastructure, which could help to bring broad-based employee ownership to the forefront of scholarly, political, and business practices.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking for the candidates to join the Serbian national team. The national team will consist of at least three members, comprising one leadership role (Team lead) and two supporting roles. These national teams will play a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for scaling broad-based employee ownership. While everyone is welcome to apply and we do not really expect specialized expertise on the field from the candidates, the following roles are most relevant:

- **1x Team lead:** We need a dedicated individual who will participate in the know-how transfer program, oversee and coordinate the Serbian team's work, collaborate closely with IED to establish the team's mission, vision, and strategy, spearhead efforts to transform the team into a fully functional organization capable of engaging with political parties across the spectrum, as well as with social partners, businesses, academia, etc. The Team leader should be prepared to act as the face of the team and to fully devote themselves to the project, potentially making it their primary focus starting in early 2025 if the program is successfully completed.
- **2x Supporting roles (preferably with a background in either law, economics, finance, sociology, philosophy, political communication, or political economy):** The selected supporting staff will also participate in the know-how transfer program and help build an operational Serbian team under the leadership of the Team leader. These roles will bolster the team's capabilities in policy areas and working with companies.

The selected candidates will be expected to work closely with members of IED in the following areas:

- Fundraising
- Developing a strategic plan for the next two years (2025-2026)
- Identifying a handful of Serbian companies interested in implementing the European ESOP model of employee ownership
- Promoting the ESOP model in Serbian media
- Building connections with social partners and institutional and political actors
- Developing a brand identity for the new organizations



What can you expect?

So far, we have announced the initiative and started to look for candidates for the Serbian team. We will follow by having conversations with the selected individuals to evaluate their motivation and competences.

The selected candidates will have the opportunity to attend a series of online lectures on economic democracy and employee ownership and where the work and strategy of the institute will be presented. We will invite the national teams from Croatia and Serbia to Ljubljana for a 4-day onboarding program organized by the Slovenian team in November 2024, where you will have the opportunity to go through an introductory IED course on theory, practice, and policy of broad-based employee ownership.

*Pending confirmation (the decision will be announcement in September): The team will also have the opportunity to participate in a dedicated **online incubation program** with **occasional in-person workshops in Berlin** (expected to run from November 2024 to March 2025). The aim of this program will be to assist the National team in establishing a fully operational organization.*

We want to be clear that **this is not a paid position!** We received some funds to engage with the project, but you need to perceive this as a “high-potential start-up NGO project”. We will help the Serbian team and, immediately after the team is set up, collaborate on identifying the funding opportunities for the Serbian branch of the Institute for Economic Democracy. The Slovenian IED will help with applications and collaborate as a partner, which will bring additional credibility to the applications.

When the time comes, we will establish the Serbian Institute for Economic Democracy, a sister organization (preferably a non-profit), where the founders will be the Slovenian IED and the national team.

In 2025 and 2026, IED might receive additional minor financing to continue with our support to the national teams in all relevant areas but especially with the continuous learning, collaborating on the local activities, and finding joint funding opportunities.

Are you interested in becoming an economic democracy leader in Serbia? Apply to the role by sending you CV and a motivational letter to info@ekonomska-demokracija.si.

For more details, do not hesitate to contact the Project Coordinator Kosta Juri at kosta.juri@ekonomska-demokracija.si.

