Social Innovation Initiative

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SIMPLE

Social Innovation Models to Promote Learning and Employability

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Scaling Guidelines

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Executive Summary

These Scaling Guidelines – Guidelines for Transfer, Replication and Scaling of the SIMPLE Model – have been developed as the outcome of Work Package D4.4 of the SIMPLE project. Their aim is to gather lessons learnt from the pilot phase and translate them into practical guidance for organisations outside the consortium that wish to replicate, adapt or scale up the model. In line with the project's objectives, the document covers lessons learnt, practical 'Do's and Don'ts', Implementation Guidelines, a scaling strategy and guidance on sustainability. The guidelines are based primarily on the experiences of two SIMPLE pilot schemes: the employability, entrepreneurship and pre-incubation pathway implemented in Poland as part of the BSI_4Women project; and the SIREE-inspired pathway implemented in Italy, which focuses on employability, community-based support, co-design, labour market orientation and access to the local ecosystem of services. The material has been enriched with broader stakeholder feedback gathered during meetings and consultations with stakeholders representing the quadruple helix model.

The most important conclusion drawn from the SIMPLE model is that the subject of the transfer should not be a rigid package of services, but rather the underlying mechanism for change and the functions that make up the participant's integrated pathway. Replication should therefore take place in accordance with the principle *of 'replication with adaptation', which means that* the functions responsible for the model's logic should be retained, whilst adapting the organisational form, the intensity of support, delivery channels, partnership configurations and specific tools to the local context. The Polish pilot confirmed the usefulness of this approach, which retained, amongst other things, individualisation, phased work with participants, access to experts, networking and links to the local ecosystem, whilst adapting the delivery method to the group's current needs.

The experiences of both pilot schemes also indicate that the SIMPLE model should be implemented as an integrated and coordinated pathway, rather than a collection of independent training courses or services. Key factors here include an appropriate assessment prior to selecting support, varying the intensity of the pathway, combining group and individual activities, access to specialist services, active referrals, the role of the operator–navigator, the involvement of employers and other stakeholders, monitoring, and the ability to adapt the programme based on feedback. A particularly important resource is the local ecosystem, where the operator does not have to provide all services independently, but should be able to coordinate existing expertise and guide the participant through the successive stages of support.

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Scaling should take place gradually and must not be equated solely with an increase in the number of participants. It may involve successive cohorts, new locations, a wider reach, increased intensity of support, a network of local operators or international transfer. Experience from the Polish pilot project indicates that scaling can be facilitated by the modular nature of the intervention, ready-made tools, the use of partners' services, cohort-based work, common monitoring standards and the operator–navigator model. At the same time, a larger scale requires securing adequate resources and quality assurance mechanisms, as a broad range of services, along with monitoring and advanced follow-up, remain resource-intensive. Therefore, the Guidelines adopt a progressive, ecosystem-based scaling model. An organisation should first assess the context and its own readiness, then distinguish between core and adaptable elements, prepare the local ecosystem and governance framework, implement the model in a controlled manner, monitor its functioning, and only then, based on the data, make a decision on expansion. Scaling should be supported by checkpoints, stakeholder reviews, adaptation logs and metrics covering not only reach but also accessibility, fidelity to core functions, quality, intensity of support, the functioning of referrals, resources and sustainability.

Continuous improvement is a key part of this approach. Each subsequent implementation should generate new knowledge about what works, for whom and under what conditions. Monitoring should therefore serve not only for evaluation, but also for day-to-day management and decision-making regarding potential adaptations. Adaptations should be deliberate, and their impact on the model's core mechanism should be assessed before transferring the solution to a new context.

Sustainability, on the other hand, is understood more broadly than simply the continuation of project activities. It encompasses maintaining the value of the model by embedding its functions within the organisation's day-to-day operations, through lasting partnerships, active referral pathways, the retention of expertise, tools and coordination functions, and ongoing organisational learning. Not every element of the pilot needs to be continued in its original form. Sustainability should focus primarily on those functions that create real value for participants and the local ecosystem.

The Scaling Guidelines should therefore be treated as a practical, evidence-informed framework for decision-making, rather than a manual for mechanically replicating pilot schemes. The document helps future operators answer three fundamental questions: what should be retained, what can be adapted, and what conditions need to be created so that the model can be responsibly replicated and scaled up. Its core message is that

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the effective transfer of SIMPLE solutions requires a balance between fidelity to core functions, contextual adaptation, functioning local ecosystems and continuous learning.

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1. Introduction – purpose, scope and how to use the Scaling Guidelines

1.1. Purpose of the document

These Scaling Guidelines have been developed as part of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the SIMPLE project – *Social Innovation Models to Promote Learning and Employability* – as practical guidelines to support the transfer, replication and scaling up of the approach tested within the SIMPLE project. This document corresponds to deliverable D4.4 – Scaling Guidelines, which aims to collate the experiences and lessons learnt from the pilot phase and transform them into clear and useful guidance for organisations outside the consortium interested in implementing the model in other contexts. The document covers lessons learnt, practical 'dos and don'ts', implementation guidelines, a scaling strategy and recommendations for sustainability.

The purpose of the Scaling Guidelines is to translate the SIMPLE experience into practical knowledge that can be utilised by other organisations in different regions and local support ecosystems. The starting point is not the assumption that the solutions tested in Poland and Italy should be copied in their original form. On the contrary, the project's experience confirms the importance of an approach based on replication with adaptation, in which the model's core mechanisms are retained, whilst the organisation of services, the intensity of support, the resources used, partnerships and delivery channels are tailored to the needs of the target group and local conditions.

The document is therefore intended to assist the user not only in answering the question 'what can be transferred?', but above all 'under what conditions is it worth doing so, what should be retained, what can be adapted, how should implementation be prepared, and how can its scale be increased without compromising the quality and underlying logic of the intervention?'.

1.2. The role of the Scaling Guidelines in the SIMPLE project's learning process

The guidelines were developed as a result of the process planned under Activity A4.3 – Revise and amend the plan/guidelines for the transfer/scaling up of the approach/model (Lessons Learnt). In accordance with the Project Description, this process is not limited to simply compiling recommendations following the completion of the pilot phase. It involves, in sequence, the analysis of lessons learnt, the incorporation of stakeholder feedback, the updating of implementation guidelines, and the development of a strategy for the transfer and scaling up of the model. This means that the Scaling Guidelines are the product of a learning process based on implementation. The original pilot framework

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serves as a reference point , but the recommendations set out in this document stem primarily from what actually happened during the pilot phase – which elements of the models could be successfully transferred, where adaptation was necessary, which barriers only became apparent during implementation, and which solutions supported participants whilst others required adjustment or more comprehensive implementation.

Therefore, in the following sections of this document, a consistent distinction is made between solutions actually tested in SIMPLE, solutions tested in part, elements dependent on the local context, and solutions recommended for future implementations based on lessons learnt. This approach is particularly important from the perspective of the reliability of transfer. The aim of the Scaling Guidelines is not to present every originally planned component as validated, but to indicate what knowledge has actually emerged from the project's implementation and how it can be utilised in subsequent applications.

Linking the Scaling Guidelines to other SIMPLE outputs

The Scaling Guidelines form part of the mutually complementary outputs of the SIMPLE project, whose shared aim is to facilitate the use, adaptation and further development of selected social innovations following the completion of the pilot phase. The document should be considered, in particular, in conjunction with the Digital Toolkit for Scaling Best Practices and the Sustainability Plan.

D4.4 – Scaling Guidelines sets out the methodological and organisational framework for the transfer, replication and responsible scaling of solutions. Drawing on experiences from the pilot phase, it outlines the core functions of the interventions, the conditions for their adaptation, and the requirements regarding resources, institutional cooperation, monitoring and risk management.

D4.5 – Digital Toolkit for Scaling Best Practices complements the guidelines by providing practical access to SIMPLE's digital resources, including methodologies, educational materials, self-assessment tools, checklists and materials to support implementation planning. It helps organisations interested in utilising the project's results to familiarise themselves with the available solutions and adapt them to their own needs and operating conditions.

D5.5 – Sustainability Plan, on the other hand, addresses the potential for maintaining and continuing to utilise SIMPLE's outcomes once project funding has ended. It takes into account the perspective of partner organisations, their potential follow-up actions, the use of existing resources, the continuation of cooperation with stakeholders, and possible sources of funding for future initiatives.

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These documents therefore serve complementary functions: the Scaling Guidelines explain what can be transferred and scaled, and under what conditions; the Digital Toolkit provides tools to support the practical application of these solutions; whilst the Sustainability Plan outlines the opportunities and conditions for maintaining and further developing the outcomes in the long term. The combined use of these products can support future implementers both at the stage of preparing and adapting an intervention, and when planning its continuation, taking into account available resources and local conditions.

1.3. Transferability, scalability and sustainability – scope of concepts and their verification in SIMPLE

In the SIMPLE project, transferability, scalability and sustainability constitute three interrelated yet distinct dimensions of the use and further development of social innovations. Distinguishing between them is important both for interpreting the results of pilot projects and for planning future roll-outs.

Transferability refers to the ability to transfer and adapt the core functions and mechanisms of an intervention to a new social, institutional and organisational context, whilst preserving its fundamental logic of change. It does not require the recreation of an identical set of services, but rather the identification of which elements of the model are key and which can be modified in line with the needs of the target group, available resources and local conditions.

Scalability refers to the ability to increase the scope of the intervention, the number of participants, the number of implementers or the geographical area of application, whilst maintaining the model's core functions, an appropriate quality of service, the intended outcomes, and organisational and resource feasibility. Scaling up should therefore not merely mean an increase in the number of people receiving support, but rather the development of the system's capacity to deliver a valuable intervention on a larger scale.

Sustainability refers to the ability to maintain the value, core functions and outcomes of an intervention over time, even after the initial project funding has ended. It encompasses the preservation of expertise, tools, inter-institutional relationships, access to services, organisational capacity and the resources necessary to continue supporting the target group. Sustainability does not require the continuation of all activities in an unchanged form, but rather the maintenance of those elements that underpin the model's core mechanisms and value.

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The experiences of the two SIMPLE pilot projects, carried out in Poland and Italy, primarily provide evidence regarding the adaptability of selected social innovations to new conditions, the feasibility of specific organisational solutions, and the functioning of certain support mechanisms. They also help to identify factors conducive to future scaling up, including the importance of personalisation, service coordination, local collaboration ecosystems, resource availability and monitoring.

The Scaling Guidelines primarily present a framework for responsible transfer and gradual scaling, based on pilot experience, an analysis of implementation conditions and the identification of risks. The document indicates which functions of the model have been tested in practice, which elements require further refinement, and which conditions should be met before a decision is taken to increase the scale. In this context, the confirmed adaptability of the model serves as a starting point for further development, but is not synonymous with proven effectiveness in scaling it, nor does it guarantee the sustainability of the results.

1.4. Scope of the guidelines

The Scaling Guidelines integrate knowledge drawn from several complementary sources within the project. The primary empirical basis consists of two national SIMPLE pilot schemes carried out in Poland and Italy, along with their final reports. The Polish report includes implementation data, an analysis of transferability and scalability, and recommendations for project promoters, partner institutions, support providers and decision-makers. Among other things, it highlights the importance of maintaining a comprehensive support pathway, individual assessment, access to specialist knowledge, networking, and the role of a facilitator connecting participants with the local ecosystem. The Italian report contributes a particularly important perspective to the Scaling Guidelines regarding adaptation in practice. It documents the differences between the originally planned solutions and the actual method of implementation, and identifies which mechanisms were retained, which were scaled back, and what consequences this has for future roll-outs. This allows recommendations to be drawn not only from the achievements of the pilot scheme, but also from the constraints encountered. A key complement to the Scaling Guidelines is the more extensive feedback gathered from stakeholders. National and European meetings and consultations involving representatives from different parts of the quadruple helix have made it possible to distinguish between conclusions specific to an individual pilot and issues and needs that arise more broadly across various institutional and territorial contexts. The Scaling Guidelines also draw on operational solutions developed within the Piloting Framework,

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including an approach to the implementation of reference projects, which are reinterpreted in this document in light of the piloting experience and transformed into guidelines for future users of the model.

1.5. Target audience and how to use this document

The Scaling Guidelines are primarily intended for organisations considering the implementation or adaptation of the SIMPLE approach in a new context, i.e. for civil society organisations, public institutions (e.g. employment services), education and training providers, organisations supporting entrepreneurship, employers and business organisations, as well as research institutions, local and regional authorities, and other entities involved in developing local ecosystems for social and labour market integration.

The document has been designed as a decision-making and implementation guide, rather than as a rigid manual requiring the step-by-step replication of a single model. Individual chapters can be used depending on the organisation's stage of preparation. The Implementation Guidelines outline the sequence for preparing and carrying out a new implementation. The chapters on adaptation and scaling help to determine which elements of the model should be retained and which can be adapted. The Action Plan translates these decisions into roles, a timetable, resources and metrics, whilst the section on sustainability and continuous improvement supports the maintenance of the solution once a single implementation cycle has been completed. The Scaling Guidelines should therefore be treated as a framework for informed decision-making regarding transfer and scaling. Their purpose is not to create a single universal blueprint for all implementation sites and for all organisations, but to help the user retain what is essential to the logic of the SIMPLE model, whilst adapting the implementation approach to the actual needs of participants, available resources, the potential of partners, and the institutional and market conditions of the new context.

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2. What is being transferred and scaled? – The SIMPLE model

2.1. From replicating individual projects to the SIMPLE model

The SIMPLE project does not focus on the transfer and scaling of a single project or a fixed set of services that should be replicated in a new location in an unchanged form. SIMPLE has been designed as an approach that enables the use of proven social innovations, the identification of their key mechanisms, and their deliberate adaptation to a new target group, institutional environment and labour market conditions. For this reason, replication in SIMPLE does not mean a 'copy and paste' approach, but requires identifying which elements are responsible for driving change and should be retained, and which can be adapted to local resources and constraints. This understanding was already present during the pilot phase. The adopted principle of 'replication with adaptation' involved transferring key elements of the reference models whilst adapting them to conditions such as the legal system, the labour market, the availability of public services, cultural barriers and the profile of refugees and migrants from Ukraine in a given country. Another aim of the pilot projects was to gather knowledge enabling a clearer distinction to be made between core elements and those whose form may vary. In this sense, SIMPLE should be regarded primarily as a model for organising an integrated response to needs relating to employability, entrepreneurship and social integration, rather than as a single training programme. Its value stems from the combination of support directed at the participant with the active role of the local ecosystem, in which civil society organisations, public bodies, employers, and educational and expert institutions contribute complementary skills and resources.

2.2. Pilot pathways as the basis of the model

As part of the SIMPLE project, two adapted social innovation pathways were tested: one in Poland, based on the BSI_4Women model, and one in Italy, based on the SIREE model. The experience gained during the implementation of both pilot schemes, carried out in different national contexts, formed the basis for identifying common functions, mechanisms of change and implementation conditions, which were then used to develop the proposed SIMPLE intervention architecture, as set out in these Scaling Guidelines. In Poland, the starting point was the BSI_4Women model, focused primarily on developing the entrepreneurship and employability of women with refugee backgrounds. Within the SIMPLE framework, this was combined with counselling, networking and navigation through the support ecosystem. The Italian pilot, on the other hand, was based on SIREE, with a particular emphasis on co-creation, community work, employability pathways, systemic navigation and the complementary involvement

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of employers and other ecosystem actors. The experience of these two pilot projects shows that their national configurations as such should not be subject to scaling. What can be transferred are, above all, the functions and mechanisms, which may take different operational forms under varying conditions.

2.3. What constitutes the core of the transfer?

From the perspective of the Scaling Guidelines, the subject of the transfer is therefore, first and foremost, a specific operational architecture. This encompasses recognising the local context and the needs of participants, tailoring the support pathway to an individual's actual situation, combining group activities with individual counselling, utilising the expertise and services of the local ecosystem, ensuring access to relevant institutions and experts, and continuously monitoring the progress of the intervention and adapting it based on feedback.

The Polish pilot confirmed in particular that, in subsequent implementations, the functions responsible for the mechanism of change should be retained above all, whilst their operational form may be adapted to the needs of the target group, institutional conditions and available resources. Similarly, the Italian experience highlights the importance of distinguishing between the mere presence of a specific activity and the actual fulfilment of its methodological function. For example, a single group meeting may retain part of the mechanism for exchanging experiences and co-creation, but does not fully replicate the cyclical logic of a learning community. Therefore, when replicating SIMPLE, the key question should not be 'Does the organisation carry out exactly the same activities as in Poland or Italy?', but rather 'Have the same basic functions been ensured in the new context, and do the mechanisms on which the intended change is based continue to operate?

2.4. Scaling as adaptation

This approach has direct implications for further scaling. Expanding the reach of SIMPLE may involve supporting a larger number of people, applying the model in further regions or countries, involving new organisations, or integrating selected components into the regular services of existing institutions. However, it does not require the creation of a single, identical implementation structure in all locations.

What is scaled, therefore, is primarily the logic behind organising support, the set of core functions, the local operator's ability to coordinate them, and the mechanism for

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ecosystem-based collaboration. The specific form may vary. ’s support can be delivered in person, online or via a hybrid model; some services may be provided by the operator itself, whilst others may be delivered by partners; and the scope of entrepreneurship, employment, language skills development or advisory services can be tailored to local needs. Understood in this way, the SIMPLE model is therefore not a ready-made package requiring exact replication, but a framework for responsible replication – one that is sufficiently coherent to safeguard the model’s key mechanisms, whilst remaining flexible enough to function across different social, institutional and territorial contexts. It is precisely this balance between fidelity to core mechanisms and contextual adaptation that forms the starting point for the subsequent sections of the Scaling Guidelines.

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3. Evidence base and methodology for developing the Scaling Guidelines

3.1. Methodological approach

The methodology adopted for the Scaling Guidelines follows the logic that a review of guidelines on transfer and scaling should begin with an analysis of data from the pilot phase, identifying what worked as intended, recognising difficulties and limitations, and determining ways to improve the model before its wider application. First, the experiences of two national roll-outs and data on their actual implementation are analysed. These are then cross-referenced with the perspectives of participants, service providers, institutional partners and the wider group of stakeholders involved in the SIMPLE project. In the next step, these observations are related to the original implementation logic set out in the Piloting Framework and Blueprint, which makes it possible to distinguish between solutions that were planned, those that were actually applied, those that were partially implemented, and those requiring modification. It is only on this basis that recommendations regarding replication, adaptation and scaling up are formulated. This approach helps to avoid two opposing risks. The first would be to treat the original plan as a ready-made scaling model, regardless of implementation experiences. The second would be to derive universal recommendations solely from individual national observations. The Scaling Guidelines combine both levels, namely fidelity to the tested intervention logic and learning from implementation.

3.2. Basis for the Scaling Guidelines

The primary sources for the Scaling Guidelines are two national reports from the SIMPLE pilot projects – the Polish and Italian ones. These are of paramount importance from a methodological perspective, as they document not only the intended objectives but also the actual manner in which the models were implemented, participants' experiences, feedback on specific activities, and an assessment of the potential for transfer and scaling. In the case of the Polish pilot, the evaluation material covers the perspectives of participants, module deliverers and institutional partners. The participants' assessment utilised, amongst other things, questionnaires on the quality and usefulness of individual modules, whilst support providers assessed the appropriateness of activities, implementation preparedness, barriers and opportunities for improving future editions. The perspective of institutional partners complements this analysis with an assessment of the functioning of the local ecosystem, inter-institutional cooperation, scalability and the sustainability of the model. The report itself emphasises that this approach allows for the analysis not only of the individual effects of the support, but also of the broader capacity of the institutional environment to participate in the implementation of the

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model. The Italian report provides a similar database and information. Its evaluation utilised similar tools and an approach comprising self-assessment questionnaires, module evaluations, final participant assessments, and surveys of institutional partners and suppliers. The results therefore enable not only the collection of information on the course of the pilot projects, but also the gathering of information on the experiences of participants and partners.

Opinions and feedback from stakeholders gathered during meetings and discussions broaden the perspective beyond the two pilot sites and provide valuable feedback from the stakeholders' perspective. The significance of this 'base' of information for the Scaling Guidelines lies in the fact that it makes it possible to ascertain whether the problems observed in a single pilot are purely local in nature, or whether they correspond to broader challenges arising in other locations, contexts and types of organisations. The consultations carried out as part of building relationships with stakeholders utilised a set of common guiding questions concerning, amongst other things, the relevance of the model, opportunities and barriers to implementation, organisational needs, potential for collaboration and sustainability.

Another, additional element used in the development of the Scaling Guidelines was the Piloting Framework. Its role in this methodology differs from that of pilot reports. It is not a source of information on effectiveness, but rather a benchmark for assessing the alignment between what was planned and what was actually implemented. The Piloting Framework defines the basic and adaptable elements of the models, the sequence of procedures, the required tools and the implementation standards. It was designed as an operational translation of the models into practice and as a framework enabling their further use in other contexts.

3.3. Triangulation of perspectives and sources

The Scaling Guidelines are not based on a single type of data. Their methodology utilises triangulation, understood here as the comparison of several types of information relating to the same mechanism or solution. The participants' perspective allows for an assessment of the usefulness, accessibility and perceived effects of the support. The providers' perspective helps to determine whether specific actions were organisationally feasible, what barriers arose during their implementation, and what resources were actually required. Institutional partners provide information on the functioning of the collaboration, referral opportunities, access to specialist services, and the local ecosystem's capacity to sustain the model. In turn, feedback from stakeholders allows us to assess the extent to which observations from Poland and Italy correspond to the

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needs of organisations operating in other contexts. Such a comparison is particularly important in the case of the SIMPLE model. It encompasses the coordination of services, relationships between partners, access to external resources, the ability to tailor the pathway to the participant's needs, and the functioning of the local ecosystem. Assessing transferability therefore requires consideration of the individual, organisational and institutional levels. In practice, this means that a single positive assessment of a module is not automatically treated as evidence of the scalability of the entire model. Similarly, a problem encountered in one country is not automatically presented as a universal barrier. Greater weight is given, when formulating recommendations, to conclusions that are corroborated by several sources or perspectives, or which are clearly justified by the model's operating mechanism.

3.4. The analytical process leading from pilot experiences to guidelines

The process of developing the Scaling Guidelines can be described as a transition from evidence of implementation to recommendations for replication. The first stage involved determining what the pilot framework originally envisaged and what functions were assigned to individual components. Next, the actual course of the implementations in Poland and Italy was analysed, including the scope of support provided, the form of implementation, stakeholder engagement, barriers encountered, adaptations, and information derived from monitoring and evaluation. The next step was to determine whether the core function of a given component had been retained despite the adaptations. At this stage, it is particularly important to distinguish between adaptation and a limitation of the mechanism. Adaptation means a change in the form of implementation whilst retaining the component's function. A limitation, on the other hand, refers to a situation where an element has been implemented only partially, and it cannot be assumed that the entire intended mechanism has been tested. This is precisely why the experience of the Italian pilot project, in which some mechanisms were implemented to a limited extent, is a valuable source for the Scaling Guidelines. It allows us to identify both solutions that have been tested in practice and conditions that should be strengthened in subsequent implementations.

The conclusions from this analysis are then cross-checked against broader feedback from stakeholders. This makes it possible to assess whether the recommended solution also addresses organisational gaps, coordination issues or barriers identified outside the immediate pilot environment.

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3.5. Development, consultation and review of the guidelines by the consortium

The Scaling Guidelines were developed as part of Activity A4.3 of the SIMPLE project, the aim of which was to draw on the experience gained from the pilot projects and stakeholder feedback to prepare practical guidelines on the transfer, replication and scaling of selected social innovations. This process built on the work carried out in WP2, WP3 and the earlier stages of WP4, in particular the development of the Theory of Change and the Piloting Framework, as well as the implementation and evaluation of the pilot projects in Poland and Italy.

The work was based on reports from both pilot projects, containing information on the actual course of the interventions, the adaptations made, the results achieved and the implementation constraints. The experiences and information provided by the partners responsible for carrying out national activities, monitoring and evaluation, and cooperation with stakeholders also constituted an important source of knowledge. These enabled the report to take into account both the operational and methodological perspectives, as well as to distinguish between country-specific conclusions and mechanisms that may be relevant for future implementations.

A key element of the consortium's learning process was the review of WP4's progress. At that time, the partners discussed the status of preparation and implementation of the pilot schemes, implementation experiences, and the importance of monitoring and evaluation for the further use of the selected models. Feedback from pilot project participants, service providers and institutional partners was also utilised in the development of the guidelines, as were the conclusions drawn from meetings and consultations with stakeholders representing the quadruple helix. This material enabled the inclusion of issues relating to the availability of support, organisational preparedness, inter-institutional cooperation, employer engagement, the availability of resources, and the conditions for continuing and expanding activities. Their use is reflected in the recommendations concerning the role of the 'operator–navigator', the development of local ecosystems, the personalisation of support pathways, monitoring, and the sustainability of solutions.

Based on the data collected, a draft of the Scaling Guidelines was prepared, combining findings from the pilot projects and consultations with practical recommendations for future implementers. A further review of the document served to assess its consistency with the project's objectives, as well as to clarify the recommendations regarding transfer and scaling. The partnership's comments focused, amongst other things, on the

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clarity of the links between the evidence and the proposed solutions, the accuracy of the interpretation of scalability, and the completeness of the documentation.

During the final editing process, particular importance was attached to maintaining a distinction between solutions that had actually been tested, those that had been partially implemented, and those recommended for future use. This enabled the development of guidelines based on the project's experience, without equating the demonstrated adaptability of models with confirmed effectiveness in their large-scale implementation.

The documentation of the development and review process for D4.4 consists, in particular, of pilot project reports, monitoring and evaluation results, comments raised during the internal product review, and documentation of the successive stages of its editing. These materials form the basis for tracing the link between the project's experiences, the partners' involvement and the final recommendations set out in the Scaling Guidelines.

3.6. Limitations of the information and data base

The SIMPLE database and information base are sufficient for formulating practical guidelines on replication and scaling, but their scope should be interpreted in line with the nature of the pilot project. The pilots were carried out in two countries, under specific institutional conditions and with a defined target group. They do not constitute an experimental study or a representative analysis of all potential European contexts. The pilot reports highlight the small sample size and the self-reported nature of some of the measurements, and refer to the assessment of medium- and long-term effects, such as the sustainability of employment or economic activity, noting that these aspects would require further monitoring after the pilot's conclusion. For this reason, the Scaling Guidelines do not present the pilot results as proof that identical outcomes will be achieved in any other country or region. Their value lies in a different kind of knowledge. They indicate which mechanisms are worth preserving, which conditions need to be assessed prior to implementation, which barriers may arise, what organisational capacities are required, and how the adaptation process should be documented. This approach remains consistent with the underlying logic, which involves not only preparing a transfer and scaling strategy, but also taking into account adaptability, sustainability, roles, timelines, metrics, and mechanisms for continuous review and adjustment. Consequently, these Scaling Guidelines should be understood as an evidence-informed implementation and scaling framework. The document is rooted in the actual experiences of SIMPLE, whilst deliberately leaving scope for conscious adaptation to the conditions of a new environment. This balance between evidence,

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interpretative caution and practical utility forms the basis for all subsequent recommendations contained in the Guidelines.

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4. Lessons Learnt from the SIMPLE Pilots

4.1. How to understand 'lessons learnt' in the SIMPLE project

Lessons learnt stem from the results achieved in Poland and Italy, but their purpose is to highlight what the implementation of the two pilot projects has taught the consortium about the conditions for the effective transfer, adaptation and future scaling of the SIMPLE model. The analysis therefore covers not only positive results, but also deviations from the plan, slightly modified solutions, elements applicable only under specific conditions, and whether the measures were implemented to the extent possible under the pilot conditions.

The lessons learnt are thus treated as implementation knowledge, i.e. information on the relationship between the design of the intervention, the context, the method of its implementation and the conditions necessary to preserve the model's core mechanisms. Consequently, the conclusions presented below primarily concern feasibility, quality of implementation, the appropriateness of mechanisms, accessibility, the organisation of support, stakeholder cooperation and the conditions for transfer.

4.2. Lesson 1 – the mechanism for change should be transferred, rather than copying the package of measures

The most fundamental lesson drawn from both pilot projects is the confirmation of the validity of the 'replication with adaptation' approach. Neither BSI_4Women nor SIREE were transferred to SIMPLE in the form of an unchanged package of services. The transfer focused on the functions and mechanisms designed to bring about the intended change, whilst the organisational form, scope of modules, intensity of support and resources utilised were adapted to the current situation of the target group and the capabilities of the local ecosystem. In Poland, the key elements retained were the phased preparation of participants for entrepreneurial activity, pre-incubation, skills development, personalised support, access to advice and experts, networking, and linking participants to the institutional and business ecosystem. At the same time, the scope and intensity of individual services were adapted both prior to the pilot and during its implementation. In Italy, the adaptation was even more pronounced. SIREE, originally based on educational communities linked to schools and families, was reoriented towards the needs of adult women from Ukraine, employability, labour market orientation, access to services and individual referrals. At the same time, the fundamental principles of participation, co-creation and support tailored to participants' needs were retained. The conclusion for further transfer is therefore unequivocal –

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fidelity to the model does not imply that activities must be identical. In future implementations, it is essential first to determine which function of a given component is responsible for the mechanism of change, and only then to select a locally feasible form of implementation. Adaptation is appropriate if it allows this function to be retained; it becomes a problem when a change in form leads to the loss of the mechanism itself.

4.3. Lesson 2 – a single service is no substitute for an integrated support pathway

The Polish pilot project demonstrated particularly clearly that support for entrepreneurship or employability should not be interpreted as a single training course or a set of independent modules. It is recommended to maintain a comprehensive pathway encompassing assessment, pre-incubation, training, specialist consultancy, language support, institutional navigation, networking, individual plans and follow-up. At the same time, it is emphasised that the change observed in participants should not be attributed to a single component, but rather to the combined impact of various forms of support. This means that the basic unit for future scaling should not be a single training course, advisory session or workshop, but the participant's pathway, in which successive elements fulfil different but complementary functions.

4.4. Lesson 3 – an assessment should precede the choice of pathway, rather than merely confirming eligibility

Both pilot schemes show that the diversity of characteristics among the participants is too great for a single standard programme to suit everyone in the same way. In Poland, the recruitment process was also used for diagnostic purposes. Information on the participants' circumstances, needs, motivation and entrepreneurial potential was then used to plan support pathways that were more intensively focused on business development and on identifying professional and entrepreneurial potential. A common core of support was retained, whilst the intensity of more specialised components was adapted to the participants' level of readiness. This approach reduced the risk of directing women without a sufficiently developed business idea directly into intensive pre-incubation, which in turn would have led to a mismatch in support. In Italy, the participants' needs also proved to be highly varied. The predominant needs were language-related, labour market orientation, job seeking, recognition of qualifications and administrative difficulties. Some women also reported health and psychological

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needs, and an interest in self-employment did not always imply having a specific business idea. The lesson learnt is therefore not merely to recommend carrying out an assessment of resources and needs. It is crucial that the assessment leads to decisions regarding the intensity, sequence and combination of support. In future roll-outs, the application form, formal eligibility assessment and needs assessment should be treated as interlinked activities and functions.

4.5. Lesson 4 – the local operator should coordinate the pathway, but does not have to be the provider of all services

One of the strongest common conclusions is the importance of the operator–navigator role. In the Polish pilot, limited resources did not allow for the creation of a fully parallel system encompassing all potentially required services. For this reason, the operator was designed as the entity responsible for identifying needs, organising the core elements of the pathway, coordinating services, and connecting participants with experts, institutions and existing forms of support. This solution facilitates scalability, whereby a central operator can be responsible for assessment, coordination, monitoring, quality control and referrals without having to independently fund and provide every type of specialist service. A similar need arose in Italy. The operator did not have the resources to provide continuous language support, psychological support or other specialist services directly and therefore functioned largely as a coordination centre, combining the expertise of its own team with the services and referral opportunities of external partners. The experience of both pilot schemes therefore suggests that the scalable SIMPLE model does not require the creation of a large organisation providing everything ‘in-house’. Instead, it requires **a strong coordination function**, capable of identifying needs, managing the pathway, maintaining relationships with partners and verifying that the participant actually progresses to the next stage of support.

4.6. Lesson 5 – the ecosystem must be active, not merely depicted on a stakeholder map

Partners and stakeholders from various sectors – that is, the quadruple helix model – have proved to be a valuable framework for organising cooperation; however, experience from the pilot projects indicates that merely identifying stakeholders does not in itself create a functioning ecosystem. In Poland, the preparatory phase, during which the possible roles of organisations were defined, enabled the use of complementary expertise in recruitment, training, specialist consultancy, institutional

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cooperation and networking. At the same time , this structure highlights the need for more sustainable ecosystem management, with recommendations regarding the formalisation of partnerships and ensuring the continuity of cooperation after the funded project has ended – which, for obvious reasons, is difficult and demanding. In Italy, cooperation was largely bilateral in nature and was coordinated by the operator. Feedback from institutional partners indicated that inter-institutional cooperation needed to be strengthened, and that structured relationships between partners and public services should be significantly deepened. A broader assessment of stakeholders confirms that this is not a problem unique to one country. In various contexts, organisations often possess a high level of technical expertise, but cooperation remains fragmented, based on informal relationships and specific projects rather than on sustainable coordination mechanisms

The implication for scaling up is important. Partnerships must be designed as part of the implementation infrastructure, with defined roles, rules for cooperation, communication channels and responsibility for the continuity of support. Networking is necessary, but it is not equivalent to ecosystem governance.

4.7. Lesson 6 – co-design requires genuine participant influence and process continuity

The Italian pilot provided a particularly valuable lesson regarding the transfer of participatory methods. SIREE was based on small, safe and voluntary groups, facilitation, democratic prioritisation, joint problem definition, and a repeatable process leading from the identification of needs to the development and implementation of solutions. In practice, the Italian pilot project involved one-off small online groups. Some key functions were retained, such as the exchange of experiences, participants' influence on the agenda, the joint definition of problems and the submission of proposals. However, the time constraints of the pilot project affected the cyclical nature of the process and the monitoring of action plans. This is crucial for subsequent implementations. A one-off gathering of participants' views can be a valuable consultation, but it should not automatically be presented as a full implementation of a learning community or co-design. If co-creation is to serve as the model's core mechanism, participants must be able to influence not only the diagnosis of the problem, but also the selection of priorities, the development of solutions and the assessment of subsequent steps.

For subsequent implementations, it is recommended to hold several meetings of the same small group, facilitated by moderators, with the option of combining online and

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face-to-face formats covering the full range of activities – from diagnosis and co-design of the scope of support, through to action plans and monitoring of results.

4.8. Lesson 7 – a flexible and digital approach to implementation increases reach, but does not in itself ensure continuity

The Italian experience demonstrates a clear trade-off between **reach** and **continuity**. Delivering activities mainly online enabled a small team to reach women living in 12 regions of Italy. This was crucial given the geographical dispersion of the group and the limited availability of services in smaller towns. This therefore points to online delivery as a solution that has the potential to increase reach. At the same time, contact and participation in the support programme were not very intensive, which in turn undermined the concept of a continuous support pathway. The lesson, therefore, is not simply whether online works or does not work as a means of delivering programme support. The correct conclusion is more nuanced: namely, that a digital format can effectively increase the accessibility and reach of a support programme, but it must be complemented by mechanisms that maintain relationships, ensure continuity and facilitate the necessary follow-up actions. When scaling up a hybrid approach, it is necessary not only to design the platform or online sessions, but also to establish the frequency of contact, the channels of communication between support sessions, and to define the role of the coordinator and local points of contact for support within the outlined implementation programme.

4.9. Lesson 8 – language, administrative orientation and the recognition of qualifications are part of employability, not ancillary services

Both pilot projects indicate that barriers to employability cannot be reduced to a lack of professional or entrepreneurial skills. In the Italian case, as many as 88 per cent of female participants wanted to improve their knowledge of Italian in order to take up employment; 78 per cent identified language courses as a particularly useful form of support; and a significant proportion reported needs relating to job-seeking, labour market orientation, the recognition of qualifications and administrative difficulties. It was also noted that knowledge of the labour market, employees' rights and knowing where to seek help were among the most noticeable areas of change in participants' self-assessment. The Polish pilot project and the conclusions drawn from it similarly recommend maintaining practical language support related to dealing with the administration and institutions, e.g. when filling in forms or conducting correspondence. It follows that in future implementations, language, administration, qualifications and understanding of the system should be treated as enabling conditions for employability.

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Not every provider needs to run a language course or a qualifications recognition process themselves, but the model should provide participants with a realistic pathway to meeting these needs and expectations.

4.10. Lesson 9 – accessibility must be designed on the basis of participants' real-life circumstances

The pilot projects confirmed that the mere formal possibility of participation does not equate to the programme's actual accessibility. In Poland, a study of the needs and barriers to participants' involvement in the support programme took into account the importance of care responsibilities, time, mobility and the ability to balance development activities with work and family life. In Italy, the lack of dedicated childcare solutions remained one of the identified constraints, whilst family responsibilities were cited as one of the reasons for dropping out of the programme. Online sessions and flexible timings mitigated this barrier, but did not eliminate it entirely. For future roll-outs, this highlights the need to move beyond a general statement that 'the programme is accessible' to a practical analysis of accessibility. Factors such as the duration of the programme, the length of sessions, the option for hybrid participation, care responsibilities, digital access, language, place of residence and the level of commitment required must be taken into account. This is also an important lesson regarding equal access. The more rigid the form of participation, the greater the risk that the programme will be used primarily by people who are already in a relatively stable situation, rather than by participants facing the greatest number of barriers.

4.11. Lesson 10 – employer engagement should form part of the ' ' mechanism

The project's experience indicates that engaging employers remains one of the most challenging aspects of local ecosystems. The Italian pilot project provided direct contact with the labour market through collaboration with a labour market partner, PAL Day, training courses and access to job vacancies, but did not implement a more comprehensive approach encompassing, for example, work placements. A broader stakeholder analysis confirms that organisations supporting migrants often engage employers at a late stage and in a manner based more on general messages than on an understanding of their actual needs and operational barriers. The recommendation for future replication is to shift the employer's role from that of the final 'recipient of the participant' to that of one of the key players co-creating the local pathway to

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employability. Employer engagement may include consulting on the skills required by the labour market, providing information on recruitment processes, giving feedback on participants' training materials and vocational preparation, attending meetings and – where feasible – offering specific opportunities for employment, work experience or B2B cooperation. Not every local model will require the same level of employer involvement, but scaling up the employability component without a genuine link to the labour market's demand side undermines the rationale of the entire intervention.

4.12. Lesson 11 – Community support and networking within the intervention

The Polish pilot demonstrated that technical entrepreneurial skills do not fully address the needs of female participants. Community mechanisms, networking, peer support and access to other participants and experts were incorporated to complement the employability and entrepreneurship pathway. This combination of technical support with social capital and mutual learning was a key element in the adaptation of the Polish pathway. This is particularly important for those who have lost their existing professional and social networks or are attempting to enter a new labour market without local contacts. Networking can serve as a means of accessing information, experts, clients, business partners or further support opportunities. At the same time, the project's experience suggests that creating a network does not automatically guarantee its sustainability. If community building is to lead to long-term value, there needs to be scope for renewed contact, the flow of information and ongoing relationships even after the main programme cycle has ended.

4.13. Lesson 12 – personalisation increases relevance, but limited specialist resources for individual work can be a barrier to scaling

The most valuable elements of the model are often also the most resource-intensive. The Polish report indicates that scalability is facilitated by modularity, the division of components into mandatory and optional elements, the use of existing partner services, cohort-based work, and implementation tools and standards. At the same time, it highlights the importance of individual counselling, expert consultations and the provision of personalised pathways as one of the key constraints, given the potential shortage of available counsellors, consultants and experts. A similar conclusion emerges from the pilot in Italy. Small groups, individual situation analysis, counselling and referrals were among the programme's valuable elements, but scaling them up requires planning the number of cases per coordinator and expert, as well as distinguishing between participants who need only information and those who require ongoing

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coordination and follow-up. Therefore, scaling up should not simply mean increasing the number of participants whilst keeping staff numbers unchanged. Intensity must be resourced. If a larger scale leads to a loss of quality and key features of the model, this may result in scaling up the form whilst losing the model's fundamental mechanism.

4.14. Lesson 13 – adaptive management should be built into the implementation of the model

In both pilot projects, some significant changes resulted from information obtained only during implementation. In Poland, the categorisation of support pathways was used to better tailor the intensity of support to the actual level of readiness of participants for developing entrepreneurship and employability. In Italy, the results and needs identified in the first cycle influenced the design of the second recruitment round and led to greater use of individual support. This is an important lesson for future scaling. One should not expect that a contextual analysis carried out before the programme's launch will identify all needs and barriers. The model should incorporate feedback loops that enable the analysis of participation, drop-outs, reported needs, responses to support modules and the functioning of partnerships, and allow for controlled changes to be introduced on this basis. Adaptive management does not, however, mean arbitrary modification of the programme. Significant changes should be justified and assessed in terms of their impact on the core mechanism.

4.15. Lesson 14 – monitoring should support reporting and the decision-making process

The pilot projects utilised a set of common M&E tools, including pre- and post-measurements, module evaluations, and feedback from participants, partners and service providers. This made it possible to bring together several perspectives and identify both changes reported by participants and implementation issues. However, these experiences also highlight the limitations of monitoring. Without a longer-term follow-up, it is not possible to determine whether increases in knowledge, self-assessment or readiness have translated into sustainable economic activity. The Polish report recommends further assessments after 6 and 12 months. The Italian pilot also clearly distinguishes between short-term effects and outcomes relating to employment, income and long-term integration, which could not be assessed during the pilot period. For subsequent roll-outs, this means that the monitoring system should be proportionate to the duration of the support programmes, useful and linked to the

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implementation decisions being taken. The aim is not to maximise the number of forms, but to obtain the data needed to manage the pathway, identify problems and assess whether the core mechanism is functioning as intended.

4.16. Lesson 15 – follow-up should be part of the model, particularly where tangible results emerge some time after the programme has ended

In projects relating to entrepreneurship and labour market integration, many key events only take place after the support programme has ended. Registering a business, making contact with clients, applying for funding, having qualifications recognised, starting a course or taking up employment often occur over a longer period of time. Experience in Poland highlights the need for continued access to advice, information on funding, assistance with the actual registration of a business, and support during the initial period of operating in the market. Experience in Italy also showed that some referrals were still ongoing at the end of the reporting period; thus, the conclusion of the formal pilot cycle did not signify the end of individual pathways. This conclusion is particularly important for planning sustainability. The programme should have a clearly defined transition point from active implementation to follow-up, and participants should know what resources they can continue to access and who – if anyone – remains responsible for coordinating and supporting their next steps.

4.17. Lesson 16 – sustainability begins with how implementation is organised

SIMPLE's experience shows that sustainability cannot be treated solely as a matter of finding a new source of funding once the project has ended. If the model relies on services provided by local institutions, referrals from partners, resources from employers, community organisations and the expertise of existing service providers, its sustainability depends primarily on whether these relationships are integrated into a more enduring way of operating. The Polish pilot demonstrated the ability to mobilise various actors and expertise, but feedback from stakeholders also points to the need to move from project-based collaboration towards more stable ecosystem management structures, long-term partnerships and the coordinated delivery of services as a systemic solution. The Italian experience, on the other hand, highlighted the limitations of a model in which many relationships remain bilateral and dependent on a single operator. Sustainability must therefore be designed through institutional embedding, partner

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ownership, reusable tools, continued referral pathways and maintained coordination capacity.

The SIMPLE model is most transferable when treated as a set of interrelated functions and mechanisms, rather than as a closed catalogue of activities. The elements that require particular protection during further transfer are the logic of needs and individualisation, the continuity of the pathway, the ability to mobilise various resources, the operator's coordinating function, access to the local ecosystem, and the ability to learn from and adapt the programme during implementation. The form of service delivery, the configuration of partners, the number of modules and the communication channels, on the other hand, may vary significantly between contexts. At the same time, pilot studies show that transferability is not the same as readiness for unlimited scaling. Some elements can be standardised relatively easily, whilst others may be resource-intensive and hinder large-scale scaling. Scaling must therefore take into account both increasing reach and safeguarding the quality of the model's core mechanisms.

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5. Stakeholder Feedback and Implications for Replication

5.1. Why the stakeholder perspective is important for the transfer of the model

In the SIMPLE model, stakeholders are not merely recipients of information about the project or parties involved in the dissemination of results. Their experiences are one of the primary sources of knowledge needed to determine whether a solution is feasible in practice, what conditions must be met for the model to work, and how the solution should be adapted before being applied in a different context. For this reason, stakeholder feedback was treated within the project as part of the process of learning and gathering important information regarding the feasibility of solutions in other contexts. Incorporating the perspectives of those participating in the pilot into the process of revising the model and guidelines prior to their further transfer is highly valuable. In SIMPLE, this database includes both feedback from participants in both pilot schemes and the perspectives of service providers, institutional partners and a wider group of organisations and stakeholders with whom the partnership had the opportunity to meet and discuss the solutions developed within the framework of the model.

5.2. Participants' perspective – relevance begins with the participants' actual situation

Feedback from participants in both pilot schemes confirms the importance of an approach centred on real needs, rather than solely on a pre-determined programme of action. In Poland, participants rated the usefulness of the support highly, particularly the components providing practical knowledge on running a business, liaising with institutions and developing their own ideas. At the same time, the diversity of their starting points showed that even within a relatively homogeneous target group, not all women required the same type or the same level of support. Some participants were ready to continue working on a specific business idea, whilst others needed, above all, to identify their own professional and entrepreneurial potential. It was precisely this difference that became one of the main arguments in favour of using differentiated pathways rather than a single standard programme for everyone. The Italian pilot project further highlighted the wide range of needs that can affect employability. Participants pointed, amongst other things, to the need to improve work-related Italian language skills, labour market orientation, assistance with job seeking, recognition of qualifications, and navigating administrative procedures . Health, psychological and long-term integration needs were also identified. This meant that the programme's initial

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design could not be regarded as a comprehensive response to all needs. Some of these needs only became apparent through engagement with the participants and required a more nuanced approach to services. The participants' perspective thus points to the first condition for future replication. The programme should begin by understanding the individual's situation, rather than assigning them to a pre-defined module. This applies both to needs directly related to work and entrepreneurship, and to the barriers that determine their ability to access support. For future programme operators, this also means the need to allow some scope for change. Feedback from participants should influence the intensity, sequence and method of delivering support, rather than merely serving to evaluate the programme after its completion.

5.3. Participants' perspectives confirm the importance of practicality and the immediate usefulness of the support

A second recurring theme in the feedback was the expectation that the support would be directly applicable in real-life professional or personal situations. The Polish pilot project revealed a high level of satisfaction with activities that translated knowledge into practical application for the participants. Similarly, in Italy, participants particularly valued a better understanding of the labour market, employment rights and knowledge of where and how to obtain further assistance. Qualitative responses also highlighted expectations regarding more practical information, access to materials and the opportunity to maintain contact and provide mutual support after the support had ended. The implication for replication is significant. The SIMPLE model should retain the practical nature of the learning process. Information alone is insufficient if the participant does not know how to use it to take the next step. Materials, sessions and consultations should therefore lead, as often as possible, to a concrete outcome – the preparation of a document, the refinement of an idea, the establishment of a course of action, contact with an institution, a referral or a decision regarding the next stage. This approach is consistent with the broader perspective held by stakeholders and interested parties. The organisations consulted emphasised the need for practical guidelines, examples, implementation tools and opportunities to learn from specific applications, rather than merely learning about innovative concepts in theoretical terms. They also pointed out that effective transfer depends more on the ability to identify applicable elements and adapt them to local conditions than on replicating entire projects.

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5.4. The service providers' perspective – quality depends on the preparation, flexibility and coordination of the support programme

Feedback from module deliverers offers a different perspective to that of the participants' evaluations. It allows us to assess whether activities that are useful from the beneficiaries' point of view can also be realistically implemented by organisations and experts. In the Polish pilot, service providers rated highly the alignment of activities with participants' needs, the preparedness of staff and the ability to adapt content flexibly. At the same time, the final report recommends that, in future implementations, providers should use plain language, practical examples, document templates, checklists and exercises leading to specific outcomes, whilst ensuring that content across different facilitators is coordinated in a way that ensures a logical sequence and minimises unnecessary repetition. The Italian pilot, on the other hand, showed that involving external specialists can effectively expand the operator's expertise. The experts represented various fields – ranging from the labour market and administrative matters to health – enabling the operator to provide broader support than would be possible using only its own team. At the same time, this approach increases the importance of coordination. External modules should not function as standalone events, but should be linked to the participant's individual pathway and to the information available to the support coordinator. From a scalability perspective, this means that the provider of a given module should understand the objective of the entire pathway, the nature of the target group, their role within the support sequence, and how issues identified during the delivery of that module can be passed on and utilised in the provision of comprehensive support.

5.5. The perspective of institutional partners – cooperation must be linked to the participant's pathway

One of the most important aspects of stakeholder feedback is the distinction between the formal existence of a partnership and its actual functionality. In Poland, institutional partners represented various parts of the local ecosystem and enabled the intervention to be assessed not only in terms of individual outcomes, but also in terms of opportunities for collaboration, sustainability and scalability. The recommendations arising from the pilot project point very clearly in the direction of an operational partnership in this regard. The roles, responsibilities and resources actually available to each partner should be defined relatively clearly. A partnership should not be limited to declarations of support, promotion or participation in individual events. It should enable participants to move effectively between successive stages of the pathway, taking into

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account the ‘ ’ logic of the modules implemented by the partners. The Italian pilot highlighted this issue in terms of its limitations. Institutional partners assessed the cooperation positively, but took a more critical view of communication, the clarity of the scope and the level of inter-institutional cooperation. Importantly, the partner surveys represented only two perspectives, and the report explicitly warns against treating them as a representative picture of the entire ecosystem. At the same time, both views were consistent with observations made during implementation, where cooperation took place primarily through the operator, whilst direct and more structured relationships between partners and with public services remained limited. For replication, this means that the stakeholder map cannot be the final product of the partnership process. It is merely the beginning. The next step should be to determine what each partner can actually contribute to the support pathway for programme participants, how a participant will be referred to it, who will monitor the subsequent progress, and what will happen if a particular service is unavailable.

5.6. Broader stakeholder feedback – existing resources are often sufficient, but remain poorly connected

One of the most consistent findings from consultations and discussions with stakeholders is that, in many countries, the problem is not a complete lack of institutions, knowledge or services. Far more often, the challenge lies in the lack of a coherent integration of available resources into a pathway that is understandable to the beneficiary.

The consultations have shown that organisations generally have expertise in their specialist areas, but cooperation tends to be fragmented, based on informal relationships or limited to the duration of a single project. This gap is highlighted as one of the most recurring challenges across different countries, and the need to strengthen ecosystem governance, clear coordination mechanisms and more stable partnerships is emphasised. This observation has direct implications for the SIMPLE replication model. A new operator should not automatically assume that it is necessary to create a parallel service infrastructure. First and foremost, they should check what resources already exist, whether they are accessible, and what is missing for participants to be able to use them effectively. In some contexts, the greatest value of the model may therefore lie not in creating a new service, but in establishing a functional link between existing services.

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5.7. Employer engagement – an area of great importance where readiness levels remain uneven

Broader stakeholder feedback also indicates that engaging employers is one of the areas requiring particular attention during replication. Many organisations supporting migrants have experience in working directly with beneficiaries, but cooperation with the private sector is often less developed. Employers are sometimes involved at a late stage or primarily through general messages regarding corporate social responsibility, rather than through dialogue about their needs, recruitment barriers and the terms of potential cooperation. At the same time, the Italian experience shows that labour market actors can contribute specific resources, such as career guidance, knowledge of recruitment processes, training opportunities or access to job vacancies. However, making fuller use of the demand side requires the earlier and more systematic involvement of employers in designing the implementation pathway for the support programme. The implication for replication is therefore broader than simply recommending that employers be invited. The programme operator should determine what the actual role and value of the collaboration is for them. In different contexts, this may involve consulting on skills requirements, participating in the design of training programmes, verifying CVs and preparing candidates, organising links with the labour market, verifying and enhancing participants' work experience, or participating in subsequent employment or collaboration in a self-employment (B2B) arrangement.

5.8. Trusted organisations and intermediaries as access infrastructure

Consultations with partners and stakeholders also highlight the importance of organisations and individuals who have existing relationships with the target group. Diverse communication channels, collaboration with trusted local organisations, and the use of people with migration experience as facilitators or community ambassadors can increase the programme's reach and credibility. This is consistent with the experience of the Italian pilot project, where Ukrainian associations played an important role in disseminating information and referring participants to the programme. In circumstances of geographical dispersion and where some activities are carried out online, such entities can serve as a local 'anchor' for a centralised programme. For replication, this means that access infrastructure must be planned just as carefully as content delivery. An organisation with a sound methodology but no existing relationship with the target group may face difficulties in both recruitment and maintaining engagement. It is therefore worth identifying organisations that already enjoy the trust of the community and engaging them not only as communication channels but – where

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possible – as partners with a real influence on how activities are designed and implemented.

5.9. Feedback should lead to change, not merely to documentation

One of the strongest conclusions from the stakeholder engagement process is the need to close the loop between gathering information and the decision to implement. It is emphasised that, in both pilot schemes, adjustments made during implementation improved the programme's effectiveness. At the same time, a common pitfall is identified as a situation where feedback is collected but does not lead to any change in the way things are done. Feedback is only valuable to the scaling process if there is a mechanism in place to analyse it, make a decision, document the change and assess its effects. This means that future replications of SIMPLE should include periodic review points. These need not lead to constant programme redesign, but should enable answers to questions such as whether the group is actually benefiting from the support, whether any unforeseen barriers have arisen, whether the partnerships are functioning as intended, and whether any of the components require a change in form or intensity.

5.10. Implications for future replication

A synthesis of feedback from participants, service providers, institutional partners and stakeholders involved in wider consultations leads to several interrelated conclusions.

Future replication of SIMPLE should begin with a catalogue of activities and an assessment of the local ecosystem's readiness to implement the programme. It is necessary to identify not only the needs of potential participants, but also which organisations are present, what resources they have at their disposal, which relationships are already in place, where gaps exist, and who could take on a coordinating role. The second condition is to translate stakeholder engagement into specific implementation roles. Engagement is most valuable when it goes beyond consultation and assigns organisations a practical role within the support pathway. Early ecosystem building, clearly defined responsibilities, practical collaboration and continuous feedback have strengthened the model's capacity for adaptation. The third condition concerns maintaining the participant's perspective as the organising principle of the entire system. Partnerships, training modules, referrals and various types of tools should create as coherent a pathway as possible, which the participant can follow from assessment to the next practical step, right through to the completion of the support programme.

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The transferability of SIMPLE depends not only on the quality of the model itself, but also on the ability of local actors to implement it jointly and to learn throughout the process. Local stakeholders often possess the necessary expert knowledge, whilst the greatest challenge lies in establishing links between them. Services may exist in parallel without forming a functional pathway for the participant. This is precisely why the SIMPLE model should be replicated not as a collection of autonomous services, but as a coordinated local pathway built around the participant and supported by a functioning ecosystem. The effective replication of SIMPLE does not depend solely on the implementation of properly designed activities. It depends on creating conditions in which participants, the operator, providers, public institutions, employers and civil society organisations can function as elements of a single, coordinated pathway.

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6. Do's and Don'ts for Replication and Scaling

6.1. Do's and Don'ts

The **'Do's and Don'ts'** translate the lessons learnt from the SIMPLE pilot projects and stakeholder feedback into practical guidance for organisations preparing to replicate or scale up the model. They are not an abstract catalogue of good practices. Each one stems from implementation experience gathered in Poland and Italy, as well as from a broader consultation and validation process carried out through engagement with stakeholders and project partners. Their underlying logic is simple. The 'Do's' highlight practices that help preserve the core SIMPLE mechanism when transferring it to a new context; the 'Don'ts' highlight actions that may lead to an apparent replication of the model whilst simultaneously undermining its functions. Replication should not be understood as a reproduction of pilot activities in an identical form. The implementing organisation should identify the core elements, possible adaptations, stakeholder roles and local conditions, and then document implementation decisions and use evaluation results to further refine the model.

6.2. Do: transfer the mechanism; Don't: copy the programme one-to-one

Do: Begin replication by identifying the functions responsible for the core mechanism of change. Determine what must be retained in the model so that it continues to deliver the intended outcomes, and then select a form of implementation appropriate to the local context.

Don't: Do not treat replication as a mechanical reproduction of the timetable, the number of workshops, the structure of the modules or the partner configuration used in one of the SIMPLE pilot projects.

The Polish pilot was deliberately based on the principle *of 'replication with adaptation*'. Functions such as phased preparation for entrepreneurial activity, pre-incubation, individualisation, mentoring, networking and integration with the local ecosystem were transferred, whilst the form, intensity and scope of services were adapted to the participants' current situation and the institutional environment. This same principle is confirmed by stakeholders, who identify as one of the main pitfalls the tendency to treat replication as a simple re-enactment of pilot activities and to ignore differences in the local governance system and the capabilities of stakeholders and partners.

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***Good replication should therefore ask**: 'What function is this element intended to fulfil in the new context?', rather than: 'How exactly was it implemented previously?'*

6.3. Do: assess needs before assigning a pathway; Don't: offer everyone the same package

Do: Use recruitment and initial assessment to determine participants' level of readiness, actual needs, barriers and resources. On this basis, tailor the intensity and configuration of support.

Don't: Do not assume that formal compliance with the target group criteria implies that all participants have similar needs.

In the Polish pilot, the assessment led to the identification of distinct support pathways: a more intensive business development pathway and a pathway for identifying professional and entrepreneurial potential. A common core of support was retained, but the practice of directing people without a sufficiently developed business idea into intensive pre-incubation was avoided. The Italian experience further demonstrated just how wide-ranging the range of actual needs can be: from language and labour market orientation, through the recognition of qualifications and administrative matters, to health and psychological needs.

Assessing** the needs, expectations and individual circumstances of participants should serve as a tool for decision-making**, rather than merely** a 'form' to be **filled** in before the programme begins**.

6.4. Do: build a coherent pathway; Don't: treat modules as standalone events

Do: Design support as a sequence of interconnected steps – from assessment, through skills development and individual support, to referrals, networking and follow-up.

Don't: Do not assume that a series of valuable workshops in itself constitutes an integrated model for employability or entrepreneurship.

Experience from implementing pilot projects unequivocally recommends maintaining a comprehensive pathway encompassing assessment, pre-incubation, training, specialist consultancy, language support, institutional navigation, networking, action plans and

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ongoing support. At the same time, it cautions against attributing the changes observed in participants to a single training session, highlighting the combined impact of various components.

In future replications, it is important to assess not only the quality of individual services, but also the comprehensiveness of the support package, and whether participants understand and are actually able to progress to the next stages of support.

6.5. Do: build the ecosystem before launching the support; Don't: recruit before securing basic resources

Do: Before starting recruitment, identify what skills and services will be needed, which organisations can provide them, and what roles they play in the pathway.

Don't: Do not launch the programme on the assumption that missing partners or services can be found later.

Common pitfalls include starting to recruit beneficiaries before securing the capacity to deliver the support programme – including establishing organisations to support implementation – inviting stakeholders without defining their roles, and limiting partnerships to existing contacts rather than seeking the expertise actually required for the support programme and the specific support pathway.

Not every element of the ecosystem needs to be finalised before the first call for applications. However, a minimum infrastructure is required to enable the reliable delivery of basic support and to respond to participants' typical needs.

6.6. Do: assign specific roles to partners; Don't: measure the quality of the ecosystem by the number of logos

Do: Specify what knowledge, service, resource or referral opportunity each partner contributes, who is responsible for communication, and at what stage of the pathway the partner is involved.

Don't: Do not equate a long list of partners with a functioning ecosystem.

SIMPLE's experience has shown that the effectiveness of cooperation depends more on the clarity of roles than on the number of organisations. It is recommended to establish the scope of cooperation and the potential division of responsibilities before

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implementation begins, to designate a coordinating organisation, and to periodically review roles as new needs arise.

In the Polish pilot, the partnership enabled the use of various expertise in recruitment, training, counselling, networking and institutional cooperation. Nevertheless, in future implementations, it is necessary to define even more precisely the resources actually available, the deadlines, the number of people who can be supported, and the contact persons in the individual institutions.

A good partnership should be describable by answering the question: what exactly will happen to a participant when they need support from that partner?

6.7. Do: appoint a pathway operator or coordinator; Don't: assume that the participant will link up the disparate services themselves

Do: Ensure a clear role for the entity that maintains an overview of the entire pathway, assists with transitions between services, monitors referrals and responds to emerging barriers.

Don't: Leave the participant without coordination or a clearly defined support pathway, or simply provide them with a list of organisations and expect them to build a coherent support system from it on their own.

Both the Polish and Italian pilot projects confirmed the usefulness of the 'operator–navigator' role. In Poland, the operator co-ordinated support and utilised the resources of other organisations rather than building a parallel system encompassing all services. This model was subsequently identified as potentially scalable, provided there is a sufficiently developed local ecosystem. Experience from consulting stakeholders on the model shows that one of the most common problems is not a lack of services, but a lack of links between them.

The coordinating role is not an additional administrative function. It is one of the mechanisms that enable a set of available resources to be transformed into a tangible pathway for the participant.

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6.8. Do: involve stakeholders in practical collaboration; Don't: limit stakeholder engagement to information sessions

Do: Involve employers, public institutions, civil society organisations, experts and service providers as co-implementers of specific elements of the pathway.

Don't: Do not regard a partner's mere participation in a launch event, networking session or consultation as evidence of effective engagement.

Common mistakes include limiting stakeholder participation to information events, involving them only at the beginning or end of the project, and organising activities without opportunities for practical interaction. At the same time, the Italian experience has shown that the participation of labour market specialists, legal experts and other stakeholders increased the practical value of the pathway precisely when organisations contributed specific knowledge or services.

Stakeholder engagement should therefore be assessed on the basis of their contribution to implementation, rather than merely their presence in the support programme.

6.9. Do: involve employers around a specific value; Don't: treat employer engagement as project promotion

Do: Identify what an employer can realistically contribute and what they themselves need, e.g. information about candidates, specific skills, better staff training, support with procedures, contact with intermediary organisations or the opportunity to trial collaboration.

Don't: Do not base relations with the private sector solely on CSR, general appeals for support for refugees or the provision of job vacancies.

Employer engagement is one of the more challenging areas. Organisations often involve employers at a late stage and find it difficult to move from general communication to a lasting, mutually beneficial partnership. The Italian pilot demonstrated the potential of direct cooperation with a labour market actor, but also the limitations arising from its small scale.

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Future implementations of the model should plan for employer engagement at an earlier stage, ideally in conjunction with specific programme components, rather than during or at the end of the intervention.

6.10. Do: ensure genuine co-creation where the model requires it; Don't: label consultation as co-design

Do: If you are using a learning community or co-design, ensure that participants have a genuine say in identifying problems, setting priorities, designing responses and determining next steps.

Don't: Do not present a one-off consultation meeting or survey as a full co-creation process.

The Italian pilot retained some of SIREE's features through small group sessions, during which participants shared their experiences, jointly defined problems and attempted to design solutions. At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on the cyclical nature of the meetings, more work on prioritising problems and actions, and monitoring of joint action plans. It is recommended to retain the designed support method, but to increase the number of recurring sessions for the same group.

For the sake of the model's fidelity, it is important to note that using a similar format for an activity does not automatically mean that its mechanism is being maintained. Care must be taken to implement the necessary format of a given activity or service so that one can speak of maintaining its mechanism leading to the planned change.

6.11. Do: use flexible and digital delivery formats; Don't: equate greater reach with greater impact

Do: Use online and hybrid delivery where they improve accessibility, enable you to reach people spread across different locations, or reduce barriers to participants' involvement in support programmes by eliminating time constraints or care responsibilities.

Don't: Do not assume that increasing the number of people who can log in to a session automatically means scaling the entire programme.

An Italian pilot project demonstrated a significant benefit from delivering the programme online. This made it possible to reach women from as many as 12 regions across Italy. At the same time, this approach made it difficult to maintain the group

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dynamic and limited the full application of the 'learning community' mechanism. Digitalisation can therefore scale up reach to participants, but it does not automatically replace individualisation, the building of group relationships, or the local anchoring of the support programme.

When designing digital solutions as channels and methods ***for delivering services, one should ask not only 'how many people can participate?', but also 'how will we retain them after the initial contact, and how will we anchor the support programme within the local ecosystem?'.***

6.12. Do: design for accessibility; Don't: assume that a free programme is accessible

Do: Analyse language proficiency, delivery times, care responsibilities, mobility, digital skills, possible formats for participation and the required level of engagement as integral elements of the project.

Don't: Do not reduce accessibility to the absence of a participation fee or the formal opening of the programme to all eligible individuals.

In both Poland and Italy, care responsibilities, the programme's duration and its adaptation to participants' availability, language and the organisation of daily life all influenced the ability to take part in the support programme. A flexible approach, including online sessions, reduced the barrier to participation but, as a rule, did not remove it entirely.

An approach to scaling based on inclusive design should form part of preparing the model for implementation, rather than being a correction introduced only after a drop in participant attendance at the support programme.

6.13. Do: treat feedback as a management tool; Don't: collect feedback without a plan for how to use it

Do: Schedule specific times and occasions when the team analyses feedback from participants, partners and suppliers, decides on any necessary adjustments or adaptations, and documents the rationale behind them.

Don't: Do not limit feedback to a satisfaction survey conducted after the programme has ended.

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The pitfall lies in gathering information without taking action or making decisions based on it, and postponing adjustments until the end of the project. The Italian pilot provided an example of an adaptive approach – when additional needs arose, elements such as work-oriented language and more personalised consultations were added. In Poland, the data and information gathered on needs and expectations led to a more nuanced approach to the services provided under the support programme.

The feedback loop relating to the collection and use of feedback and information should look as follows:
Data/information/feedback → review → decision → adaptation → monitoring.
This cycle allows for flexibility without losing control over the model.

6.14. Do: scale in line with available resources; Don't: increase the number of participants at the expense of maintaining the integrity of the model's mechanisms

Do: Before scaling up, estimate how the demand for resources related to coordination, the implementation of necessary actions and services in accordance with the model's requirements and the requirements of the change mechanism will increase.

Don't: Do not assume that the model can accommodate, for example, a group twice as large with the same resources simply because some modules can be delivered in groups or using digital solutions.

The Polish pilot indicates that modularity, cohorts, ready-made tools and the use of partners' services facilitate scaling up, but at the same time, individualisation remains one of the main constraints. The Italian pilot similarly highlights the need to plan for increased resources in the event of more intensive support.

In practice, scaling up the model means that the scale should be increased in a controlled manner, whilst maintaining a minimum quality threshold for the implementation standards of the support programme and preserving the functions of key intervention mechanisms.

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6.15. Do: monitor subsequent steps and outcomes over time; Don't: equate satisfaction and short-term self-assessment with long-term success

Do: Combine ongoing monitoring with subsequent follow-up, particularly where the expected outcomes relate to employment, self-employment or sustainable social and professional integration.

Don't: Do not interpret a high rating of a module or an improvement in self-assessment immediately after the programme as evidence of a lasting impact on the participants' professional situation.

The results of the pilot studies regarding participants' self-assessments indicated relatively significant positive changes amongst participants in support programmes. The Italian pilot study clearly showed that PRE/POST self-assessments in a small group without a control group do not allow to draw definitive causal conclusions regarding employment, income or changes in the actual situation on the labour market. An important recommendation emerges from the Polish pilot study regarding the need to design supplementary monitoring of participants' situations and follow-ups, for example after 6 and 12 months, in order to obtain information on the status and ongoing changes among participants in support programmes in the context of their labour market situation.

In subsequent roll-outs as part of scaling the model, it is worth distinguishing between at least three levels: participation and satisfaction, short-term change, and longer-term outcomes. Not only should the monitoring system cover these aspects, but the entire support programme should also be timed in such a way that such measurement is possible and can be carried out.

6.16. Do: plan follow-up from the outset; Don't: treat the completion of the final module as the end of the pathway

Do: Specify what happens after the main phase of the programme ends. Can the participant return to the expert? Is the referral still being monitored? Who provides information about available resources, and how long does the contact last?

Don't: Do not leave the follow-up to the team's informal goodwill once the main part of the support programme has ended.

The implementation of pilot schemes in Poland and Italy clearly highlights the need to plan the follow-up phase in a way that enables its full implementation to the extent

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necessary to confirm the long-term results of support programmes. In Poland, following the pilot, it is recommended that further consultations be made available, along with assistance with the actual registration of a business and continued access to information on funding and support during the initial stages of operating in the open market. In Italy, however, it is evident that some of the participants' referrals to further services and support were still ongoing at the close of the reporting period, which confirms that a participant's actual journey does not always end at the same time as the formal project implementation cycle.

Follow-up should be well and properly planned as part of the** overall **model, even if its intensity diminishes over time. It is important that follow-up yields data on the ultimate effectiveness of the support programme implemented.

6.17. Do: build sustainability through embedding and ownership; Don't: reduce sustainability solely to the next grant

Do: From the outset, identify elements that can be integrated into the partners' regular activities, based on existing services or sustained through permanent cooperation mechanisms.

Don't: Do not wait until the end of the project to ask who will own specific functions and who will maintain the partner network.

Feedback gathered from stakeholders and partners indicates that one of the main limitations of local ecosystems is their dependence on temporary project structures and the fact that support programmes can only be implemented within the framework of public intervention programmes targeted at groups in need of support. Knowledge and services often exist, but relationships between organisations do not always develop into sustainable cooperation mechanisms in the absence of platforms in the form of publicly funded programmes for social, educational or entrepreneurial development.

Sustainability in SIMPLE can be understood more broadly as the durability of the ecosystem's existing capabilities and functions, which can be activated in various configurations when it is necessary to undertake a specific intervention for refugee groups, rather than as the implementation of a project with an identical structure to that of a model featuring an identical partnership structure.

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In summary, the 'Do's and Don'ts' show that the greatest risks in replicating SIMPLE do not stem from the lack of an extensive catalogue of services. They arise much more frequently when the logic linking services into a single pathway breaks down; that is, when the assessment does not influence decisions, partnerships remain merely declarative, participants seek further support independently, feedback does not lead to adaptation, and an increase in the number of beneficiaries comes at the expense of individualisation. On the other hand, SIMPLE's experience indicates that the model can be adapted to a considerable extent, provided its core functions are retained: participant-centred diagnosis, an integrated pathway, an operator or coordinating function, access to complementary expertise within the local ecosystem, feedback and adaptation mechanisms, and monitoring of subsequent steps. This approach is particularly important for scaling up and further replication. Organisations should identify core and adaptable elements, document the implementation process and lessons learnt, maintain collaboration with partners, and use evaluation findings to improve the model before transferring it to a new context.

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7. Implementation Guidelines – How to replicate the SIMPLE model step by step

7.1. Purpose and logic of the implementation process

The aim of these Implementation Guidelines is to translate the experience gained during the SIMPLE pilot projects into a practical sequence of actions that can be used by organisations preparing to apply the SIMPLE approach in a new institutional, territorial or organisational context. The guidelines do not impose a single, rigid programme model. Instead, they identify **the functions that should be retained, the decisions that need to be taken, and the minimum conditions that should be met in order to preserve the logic of the intervention whilst allowing for adaptation to the local context**.

The implementation process should therefore be understood as **a managed pathway, rather than merely a linear checklist**. Individual stages may overlap to some extent, particularly with regard to stakeholder engagement, resource mobilisation, monitoring and the adaptation of solutions. Nevertheless, their basic sequence is important. The pilot projects have shown that implementation should begin when the local ecosystem is ready to cooperate, and the recruitment of participants should take place whilst ensuring adequate support for programme participants through a coordination mechanism provided by the operator. The fundamental principle of the entire process can be summarised as follows:

understand the context
identify a transferable mechanism
build a local ecosystem
assess participants' needs
configure the appropriate pathway
provide and coordinate support
monitor and adapt
carry out follow-up

7.2. Step 1 – Assessment of the local context and organisational readiness

Replication should begin even before the first participant is recruited. The first implementation decision is to determine whether the local context and the organisation considering replication are sufficiently prepared to launch a pathway inspired by the SIMPLE model. A contextual analysis should identify who the intended beneficiaries are, what their main barriers to the labour market and socio- -occupational integration are,

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what relevant services already exist, where gaps lie, and what institutional or regulatory conditions may affect the implementation of the support programme. Consideration should also be given to factors affecting the practical feasibility of participation, such as the beneficiaries' proficiency in the host country's language, geographical dispersion, digital access, existing barriers arising from care responsibilities, transport issues, and the general availability of specialist services for female participants in the support programme. This analysis need not replicate broad national assessments, but should rather be of an operational nature. A potential operator should acquire sufficient knowledge to answer several practical questions: What problem is the pathway intended to solve? What existing resources can be utilised? Which needs are currently unmet? How can the sequence and comprehensiveness of the planned service be ensured? Where is there a risk of participants dropping out of the support pathway?

At the same time, organisational readiness must be assessed. An organisation does not need to possess all the necessary expertise within its own internal structure. Indeed, the experience from both pilot projects suggests that the ability to coordinate complementary expertise and services may be more important than the capacity to provide everything independently. It is crucial that the organisation understands the rationale behind the SIMPLE intervention, possesses sufficient coordination capacity, and is able to build relationships with entities that provide the missing services and functions of the model. By the end of this stage, the future operator should be able to justify why SIMPLE is appropriate in the given context, which target group it is intended for, which initial pathway seems most appropriate, and which organisational capacities already exist and which still need to be developed.

7.3. Step 2 – Defining exactly what will be transferred: core and adaptable elements

Once the local context has been understood, the next step is to determine exactly what is to be replicated. This stage protects the implementation from two opposing errors. The first is copying the reference solutions (from the Polish or Italian pilot schemes) too literally. The second is modifying the model so extensively that its underlying logic becomes unrecognisable, thereby losing its function as a mechanism for change.

The operator should therefore identify the core functions that need to be retained, and the operational elements that can be adapted. For example, in the Italian pathway, the key functions identified were labour market orientation, system navigation and referrals, functional language support, personalised guidance, employer engagement and ecosystem coordination, whilst elements such as the specific delivery channel or the

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intensity of selected services may vary depending on the context. The same principle applies to the Polish pathway. It is possible to retain the assessment, preparation for economic activity, skills development, individualisation, access to experts, networking and navigation within the local ecosystem, whilst changing the number of meetings, the delivery format or the division of tasks between organisations.

The key implementation question should therefore not be:

'Which activities should we replicate?'

but rather:

"What function does this element serve, and how will we ensure the same function in our local context?"

Any significant adaptation should be justified precisely through the prism of this function. If the change concerns a core component, its impact on the intervention mechanism must be clearly assessed, rather than treating it as a mere organisational adjustment.

7.4. Step 3 – Building the implementation ecosystem before service delivery begins

The next stage is to create the ecosystem necessary to implement the support pathway. One of the most important insights and conclusions of the SIMPLE Project is that the relevant services and capabilities often already exist locally, but remain scattered. Replication should therefore begin by identifying organisations capable of providing specific functions, rather than assuming that a new project must build all services from scratch. The local ecosystem may include public employment and social welfare services, civil society organisations, migrant and community organisations, employers and business organisations, educational and VET providers, institutions supporting entrepreneurship, experts and other specialist services relevant to the target group.

The Polish pilot demonstrated the value of investing in the preparatory phase even before services begin to be delivered, whilst the Italian experience revealed limitations arising from a situation where cooperation remains largely bilateral and heavily dependent on a central operator. It is therefore recommended to build a local ecosystem before commencing activities, to define complementary roles, and to move from formal stakeholder engagement to practical cooperation. The aim is not to maximise the number of partners. A smaller group of organisations with clearly defined responsibilities can create a more functional ecosystem than a broad network lacking operational commitments. The operator should know what an organisation can realistically provide,

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for whom, under what conditions and at what stage of the pathway. This applies not only to the direct provision of services, but also to reaching the target group, recruitment, the possibility of referring individuals to a partner's services, specialist advice, access to employers, networking, follow-up and support in resolving institutional issues. The outcome of this stage should be a functional map of the ecosystem, rather than merely a list of stakeholders.

7.5. Step 4 – Establishing management principles, responsibilities and resources

Before launching the support programme, and before recruiting participants, responsibility for the pathway should be clearly defined. SIMPLE's experience supports the use of an operator or coordination centre model, which maintains an overview of the entire implementation process. This does not imply the centralisation of all services. On the contrary, both pilot projects demonstrated the practical feasibility of combining a strong coordination function with specialist services provided by partners. The operator should be able to coordinate recruitment, needs assessment, pathway allocation, communication with partners, referrals to partner services, monitoring, quality assurance and documentation. If several organisations share operational responsibility, the division of roles should be precise enough to ensure that participants are not passed between institutions without clear responsibility for the next step. Resource planning should be based on the functions that need to be provided, rather than simply replicating the staffing structure of a model project. The Polish pilot project indicates that the operator–navigator model can reduce the need to create parallel infrastructure through greater use of the existing ecosystem's resources, provided that cooperation is sufficiently developed and areas of responsibility are clear. At this stage, organisations should therefore identify not only the total resources required, but also where staff involvement will be most intensive, which services can be provided externally, which contributions from partners can realistically be counted on, and what minimum coordination capacity is needed per participant or cohort.

7.6. Step 5 – Designing information, recruitment and enrolment activities for participants as the starting point of the support pathway

Recruitment should be treated as the first operational stage of the intervention, rather than merely an administrative procedure preceding the 'actual' programme. It is important that recruitment combines transparent eligibility criteria with appropriate

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outreach channels, clear information on the conditions of participation and, where possible, the early collection of information useful for subsequent needs assessment. It is also recommended to utilise trusted community organisations and local networks when selecting outreach channels to reach beneficiaries and to document eligibility for participation in the support programme. Experience from pilot projects supports the use of a variety of outreach channels. Depending on the context, these may include community organisations, social media, migrant networks, local institutions, employment services, referrals from partners, or direct outreach by the programme operator. The information provided to potential participants should explain not only what activities are available, but also what participation entails, how long the pathway may take, which elements are standard and which depend on individual needs, and what the programme can and cannot realistically offer. This is particularly important for managing expectations. The SIMPLE model should not be presented as a programme that guarantees employment, business start-up or access to every form of specialist support. It should be presented as a structured pathway designed to enhance employability, readiness for entrepreneurial development, navigation of the system and access to relevant resources. The recruitment process should also familiarise the participant with the programme's rationale. The individual should understand that enrolment does not automatically mean participation in all available activities and that the scope and intensity of support may vary depending on the identified needs.

7.7. Step 6 – Conducting an assessment of needs, resources and barriers

Needs assessment is the point at which a general programme becomes a personalised pathway. The assessment should cover not only deficits, but also resources, experience, motivation and the level of readiness to actually participate in the support programme. Depending on the chosen pathway, factors such as previous work experience, entrepreneurial experience, current employment status, the stage of development of the business idea, qualifications, language skills, digital skills, family responsibilities, availability, administrative barriers, financial constraints and the existence or absence of a support network may be relevant. The aim is to gather sufficient information to enable an appropriate decision to be made regarding further support. The Polish pilot demonstrated the value of channelling the results of the assessment into appropriate service pathways, rather than offering all participants the same level of business support. Similarly, the Italian pilot revealed needs including strengthening labour market orientation, recognition of qualifications, issues relating to language skills and administrative procedures, as well as health and psychosocial needs. Consequently, the assessment should result in a specific decision regarding the support required and

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should help determine whether a participant primarily needs general guidance on the system, more intensive employment support, development of a business idea, specialist advice, language support, a referral to an external organisation offering relevant services, or a combination of several of these service areas and functions. A good assessment therefore leads to a decision on the logic behind the support pathway, rather than merely filling in a form detailing needs and expectations.

7.8. Step 7 – Translating the assessment into an individual or cohort-based support pathway

Once the assessment is complete, the programme operator should determine the appropriate pathway for the participant in the support programme. Not every participant should automatically receive the full range of available services. The assessment should be translated into specific actions, and support should address the identified needs and expectations, rather than being automatically allocated to the programme participant. Individualisation does not necessarily mean creating a completely separate programme for each person. Experience from the Polish pilot scheme shows that cohort-based differentiation can be an effective intermediate solution. Participants with a similar level of readiness can benefit from a shared set of modules, whilst more specialised support can be targeted selectively. The implementation pathway can therefore combine three levels:

- a common core, providing knowledge and guidance relevant to the majority of participants;
- selective components, targeted at groups with specific needs;
- and individual support, used when barriers, decisions or objectives require more intensive work.

The most important thing is for the participant to understand the rationale behind their pathway and why a particular form of support has been recommended, what the intended outcome is, and what the next step in the support process will be. This approach also promotes the efficient use of resources. Intensive individual counselling can be targeted at those most in need of it, whilst general information can be provided in a group setting, online or through other formats suitable for larger numbers of people.

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7.9. Step 8 – Delivery of integrated group and individual support

The delivery of services should maintain the integrated nature of the SIMPLE model. Group activities are well-suited to knowledge transfer, practical exercises, peer learning and working on shared problems. Individual support is more appropriate where a participant requires a personalised solution to a problem, consultation, assistance in making a career or business decision, specialist guidance through the institutional system, or further specific referral to other services within the existing ecosystem. This distinction is functional in nature. Group support is not a 'lower-level' form of support, nor is individual support automatically more valuable. Their usefulness depends on the nature of the problem they are intended to address.

Importantly, implementation should ensure continuity between different service formats regardless of how they are delivered, and coaches and experts should understand the logic of the entire pathway. The operator, for its part, should have a coordination mechanism in place to identify needs that emerge during the implementation of the support programme and translate them into appropriate actions within the support pathway. For example, if language support is required, it should be functionally linked to the development of employability and familiarisation with the host country's institutional system. Similarly, business advice should, as far as possible, lead to specific decisions and actions related to the development of the participant's entrepreneurship, rather than being limited to the provision of abstract information.

7.10. Step 9 – Applying co-design and learning communities where they form part of the chosen pathway

If co-design or a learning community mechanism is used in a given implementation, it should be carried out with sufficient intensity to preserve its participatory function. The Italian pilot project provided an important lesson in this regard. Small group sessions retained significant elements of participant input, peer exchange and joint problem-definition; however, limitations on the frequency of meetings may have affected prioritisation and joint action planning. Therefore, future replication should clearly distinguish between consultation and co-creation. Consultation gathers opinions. Co-design requires participants to have a genuine influence on decisions regarding the scope of support and the process of its implementation. If learning communities are chosen as the primary method, the implementation should ensure the continuity of participants' engagement through frequent contact, should create a group of participants capable of working safely and effectively, rely more on facilitation than on the expert delivery of content, and provide a mechanism through which participants'

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priorities and proposals influence the further implementation of the support programme. Not every replication of SIMPLE needs to replicate the exact structure of a learning community. However, if the term is used, its fundamental participatory mechanism should be retained.

7.11. Step 10 – Connecting participants with employers, institutions and specialist services

One of the core functions of the support pathway for participants in the SIMPLE model is to connect participants with opportunities and resources within the wider ecosystem. These may include public employment services, employers, institutions supporting entrepreneurship, public administration, bodies responsible for the recognition of qualifications, training providers, legal and financial experts, language services, or specialist social and health services. Referrals to available ecosystem services should involve more than simply providing an address or a link. Obviously, the intensity and scope of support provided when making further referrals to services should depend on the participant's needs; furthermore, where appropriate, the operator should explain the purpose of the referral, confirm that the service in question is suitable and available, facilitate contact and – where possible – check whether the participant has actually accessed the recommended support.

The involvement of employers should be subject to the same practical principle. Employers should not be involved merely to demonstrate the presence of stakeholders. Their participation should add concrete value to the pathway, i.e. knowledge of recruitment processes, labour market expectations, training opportunities, job vacancies, or another function directly related to employment.

7.12. Step 11 – Continuous monitoring of implementation and adaptation based on data

Monitoring in SIMPLE should serve management purposes, not merely evaluation. Monitoring is defined as a continuous process, encompassing data on participation, information from the modules, feedback from participants, providers and partners, the identification of implementation issues, and decisions regarding any necessary adaptations. It also requires that significant changes be documented and assessed in terms of their potential impact on the core components of the model.

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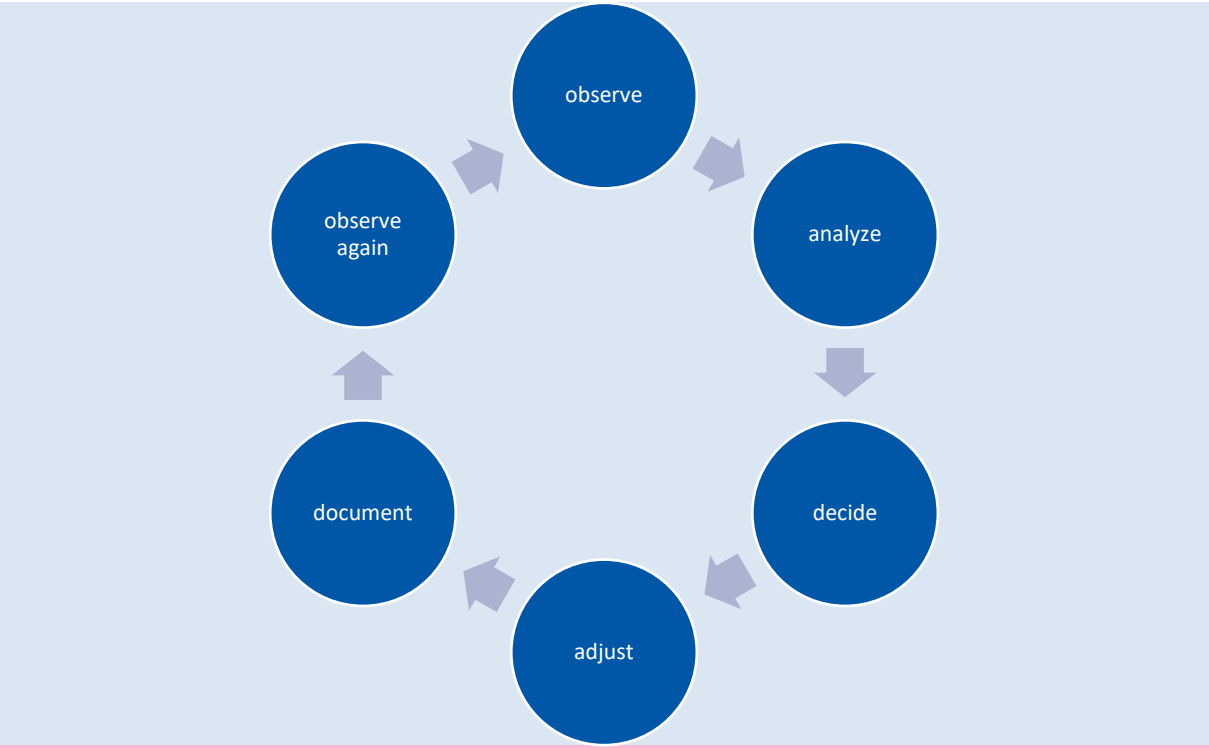
This creates a practical learning loop:



During implementation, the following should be monitored, amongst other things: attendance, drop-outs, unmet needs, barriers to access, delays in service delivery or referrals to other service providers, the quality of external services, employer engagement, participant feedback and the workload of the coordinator/operator. Not every deviation requires a redesign of the programme. Some may reflect normal operational variability in the initiative being implemented. It is crucial to distinguish whether a change relates solely to the form of delivery or whether it affects the underlying mechanism of the change. For example, moving a workshop to an online format may be an operational adaptation. However, replacing a cyclical participatory process with a single information session may already affect the mechanism of the model and should be treated differently. This is precisely the purpose of the adaptation log. It is designed to maintain transparency in the process and provide insights for future implementations.

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7.13. Step 12 – Concluding the pathway with evaluation, follow-up and a plan for further steps

The conclusion of a participant's involvement in the support programme should be treated as the completion of the summary stage, rather than as the administrative end of the programme. It is recommended to summarise the support provided, collect final data, establish opportunities for further contact and – where appropriate – carry out a follow-up after a specified period. This is particularly important because many outcomes relevant to SIMPLE only emerge after the main intervention has ended, often over a longer period of time. A participant may subsequently register a business, continue to apply for funding, complete the process of having their qualifications recognised, take up employment, commence further training, or only later make use of various services about which they were informed and referred, with implementation deferred. The Polish pilot therefore recommends more long-term monitoring, potentially involving further contact at later stages, whilst the Italian pilot showed that some referrals to external services were still ongoing at the close of the reporting period. At participant level, the closure of a pathway should answer three questions:

What has changed? What issues remain unresolved? What is the next realistic step?

At programme level, however, it should provide sufficient data to distinguish between completed activities, short-term changes and outcomes that cannot yet be fully assessed.

7.14. Step 13 – Closing the implementation cycle and preserving organisational knowledge

The final stage concerns not an individual participant, but the programme as a whole. The implementing organisation should be able to reconstruct what was planned, what was actually carried out, what was changed, why adaptations were made, and what evidence supports the conclusions drawn. This is necessary not only for reporting purposes; it forms the basis for future replication. It is recommended that implementation documentation, monitoring data, a record of adaptations, feedback s from participants, suppliers and partners, and a final synthesis of lessons learnt be created and retained. The closure procedure is designed to enable future users or stakeholders interested in implementing the model to distinguish between planned and actually implemented components, and to assess which adaptations are worth retaining, which require reconsideration, and which should be avoided. Transferability should be considered from the very start of implementation. Organisations should identify core and adaptable elements, document stakeholder roles and procedures, maintain contact

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with partners, and use evaluation data to improve the model before applying it elsewhere. Implementation therefore does not end with the final session, but with a structured learning process.

7.15. Minimum implementation standard

The exact configuration of a SIMPLE-inspired pathway may vary significantly. However, project experience indicates that replication should meet a minimum implementation standard if it is to remain consistent with the logic of the SIMPLE approach.

SCOPE OF IMPLEMENTATION	MINIMUM EXPECTED FUNCTIONALITY
CONTEXT ANALYSIS	The target group, barriers, existing services and key gaps in the ecosystem are identified before implementation begins.
CORE/ADAPTABLE DISTINCTION	The organisation knows which mechanisms it intends to retain and which operational elements to adapt.
GOVERNANCE	A single organisation or a clearly defined function coordinates the participant's journey and the partners' contributions.
ECOSYSTEM READINESS	Key external services and partners are identified before participants are referred to them.
TRANSPARENT RECRUITMENT	Eligibility criteria and conditions of participation are clear and documented.
NEEDS ASSESSMENT	The assessment goes beyond formal eligibility and influences the decision to provide support.
INDIVIDUALISATION	Participants do not automatically receive the same package or level of support.
INTEGRATED DELIVERY	Group, individual, external and referral-based support form a coherent pathway.
ACCESSIBILITY	Language, time, digital access, care responsibilities and other barriers to participation are taken into account.
PARTICIPANT INPUT	Feedback can influence implementation; where co-design is stated, participants have a real say.
EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT	Where appropriate, employers' involvement adds practical value rather than being merely symbolic.
REFERRAL AND NAVIGATION	External referrals have a clearly defined purpose and an appropriate level of follow-through.
MONITORING AND ADAPTATION	Participation, quality, feedback and implementation issues are regularly reviewed.
DOCUMENTING CHANGES	Significant adaptations are justified and assessed in terms of their impact on the underlying mechanism.
FOLLOW-UP	Once the main phase is complete, the participant is given a specific next step or further pathway.
DOCUMENTING LEARNING	The organisation is able to explain what has been implemented, what has been changed and what lessons should inform future replication.

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These standards should not be understood as a requirement to build a complex bureaucratic system. Their function is the opposite: they are intended to define the minimum functions necessary to safeguard quality, whilst leaving organisations the freedom to choose the most effective local approach.

7.16. From implementation to adaptation and scaling

The implementation process described above has been deliberately designed to support more than one cycle of delivery. A well-implemented pathway delivers not only results at the participant level, but also insights into the conditions under which the model operates – which services are essential, which partnerships are reliable, what adaptations increase accessibility, which activities are resource-intensive, where coordination mechanisms fail, and which functions can be standardised or shared across locations. Therefore, implementation and scaling should not be treated as two entirely separate stages. Every implementation decision generates data that is relevant for future scaling. A local organisation that documents adaptations, monitors staff workload, understands the role of each partner, distinguishes between shared support and intensive individual support, and tracks participants' pathways beyond individual modules is already building the infrastructure needed for responsible scaling. Conversely, a programme that carries out valuable individual activities but is unable to explain how they are interconnected, what resources they require and what mechanism they follow will be difficult to replicate reliably. The aim of these Implementation Guidelines is therefore not merely to enable organisations to carry out another SIMPLE pilot. Their purpose is to support the creation of a locally relevant, data-driven pathway that can be implemented consistently, refined through learning, and prepared for responsible transfer and scaling up.

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8. Adapting SIMPLE to a New Context

8.1. Adaptation as a prerequisite for effective transfer

From the outset, the SIMPLE model assumed that the replication of social innovations in a new country or region should not involve merely copying them mechanically. The principle of 'replication with adaptation' was adopted, whereby the model's key mechanisms and functions are transferred to a new context, whilst the manner of their implementation may be adapted to legal, institutional, social and market conditions, the profile of the target group, and the availability of local services and resources. The experiences of the Polish and Italian pilot schemes confirmed that such flexibility is not only permissible but necessary. However, adaptation should not be equated with arbitrary changes to the programme. Its aim is to preserve the mechanism for change in conditions that differ from the context in which the reference model was originally developed.

Therefore, the key question when transferring SIMPLE to a new environment is not: *'How can we faithfully replicate the activities from Poland or Italy?'*, but: 'How can we preserve the model's core function within the context of a new target group and local ecosystem?'

8.2. Start with the new context, not with the existing programme

The first stage of adaptation should be an analysis of the location to which the model is to be transferred. This does not involve preparing a comprehensive national report, but rather identifying those conditions that could realistically alter the way the pathway operates. The analysis should primarily take into account the profile of future participants, their situation in the labour market, typical barriers, language proficiency, access to public services, legal and administrative conditions, the geographical distribution of the group, the availability of partners, employers and specialist services, and the operator's capacity to coordinate the entire pathway.

One could also define adaptability more broadly, identifying seven interrelated dimensions:

- ✓ understanding the local context and the needs of beneficiaries,
- ✓ alignment of the model with the organisation's mission,
- ✓ selection of the appropriate SIMPLE pathway,
- ✓ internal organisational capabilities,
- ✓ partnerships and ecosystem development,
- ✓ adaptation to regulatory, cultural and institutional conditions

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- ✓ and the feasibility of launching activities.

This means that, prior to adaptation, it is necessary to answer not only the question 'what do participants need?', but also 'is the local environment capable of providing the functions required to implement the support pathway?'

In one location, public language services, a well-developed entrepreneurial infrastructure and active employment services may be available, whilst in another, the operator may be forced to secure these functions through community organisations or external experts. In one context, a group may be geographically concentrated; in another, it may be dispersed and more accessible via digital channels. Adaptation should be based precisely on such differences.

8.3. Distinguish between what should be retained and what can be changed

The most important stage of adaptation is separating core functions from adaptable elements. Core functions are those whose loss would alter the logic of the model. They do not have to look identical in every country, but their role should be retained. Depending on the chosen pathway, these may include, amongst others, the assessment of needs and resources, the personalisation of support, practical orientation towards the labour market or the development of entrepreneurship, access to advice, navigation through the system, referrals to external services, links to the local ecosystem, coordination of the pathway, or the ability to use feedback to adapt support. The elements that are more adaptable, however, are primarily the form of delivery, the number and duration of sessions, communication channels, the selection of specific providers, the exact scope of topics, the involvement of individual partners, and the configuration of group and individual support. The Polish pilot project illustrates this principle well. In the transfer of BSI_4Women, the core functions relating to phased preparation for entrepreneurial activity, pre-incubation, skills development, personalisation, access to advice and experts, networking, and links to the ecosystem were retained. At the same time, the organisational form, thematic scope, intensity and method of service delivery were adapted to the actual profile of the participants and the current conditions in Poland. In practice, therefore, every adaptation decision should pass a simple test:

- ➢ **Are we changing the method of implementation, or the mechanism itself?**

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If the form changes but the function remains the same, this constitutes an adaptation. If a function that is key to the mechanism of change is lost, this constitutes a significant deviation requiring further justification or the decision not to replicate the model.

8.4. Planned adaptation and adaptation during implementation

The SIMPLE experience highlights the need to distinguish between two types of adaptation. Planned adaptations are introduced before implementation begins. They result from an analysis of the differences between the original and new contexts. In the Polish pilot, these related, amongst other things, to the changing profile of female refugees from Ukraine – the length of their stay in Poland, their level of language proficiency and their experience of functioning in the Polish labour market. Operational adaptations, on the other hand, arise during implementation, when recruitment, assessment, attendance, feedback or the team's observations reveal needs that could not have been fully anticipated beforehand.

Both types are justified, but should be managed differently. Planned adaptations should form part of the project's roadmap from the outset. Operational adaptations should result from data and feedback, and should then be documented and assessed in terms of their impact on the core mechanism. Adaptability should therefore not mean constant improvisation. It should mean the ability to make controlled changes based on objective information and data.

8.5. Learn also from partial adaptations and limitations

An important lesson from the Italian experience is that transfer analysis should not be limited to the question of whether a given element was implemented. It is more important to determine which mechanism was retained and which was restricted. For example, the planned model of 'learning communities' envisaged regular meetings and continuity of work within the same group. In practice, two small, one-off online groups were organised. Part of the essential mechanism was retained – the exchange of experiences, participants' influence on the agenda, the joint definition of problems and the formulation of proposals – but the cyclical nature, joint prioritisation and action planning were limited. This situation provides an important principle for future replications: adaptation should not be assessed solely by the similarity of form, but by the degree to which functions are preserved. Similarly, the transition from a local format to a nationwide online implementation increased the reach of the Italian pilot scheme, but limited some of the informal relationships and local anchoring. This does not mean

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that the online format was flawed. It does, however, mean that the adaptation entailed both benefits and costs, which should be taken into account when designing the next implementation. In practice, therefore, a good adaptation should always ask three questions: what do we gain, what might we lose, and how can we minimise the risk of losing the core mechanism?

8.6. Key areas that may require adaptation

The scope of adaptation will vary depending on the context, but SIMPLE's experience highlights several areas that should be reviewed systematically.

AREA	WHAT NEEDS TO BE ASSESSED IN THE NEW CONTEXT	WHAT CAN BE ADAPTED
TARGET GROUP	profile, level of readiness, professional experience, language, barriers	operational criteria, segmentation, intensity of pathways
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	available services and how the administration operates	division of tasks between the operator and partners
LABOUR MARKET	demand for skills, barriers to entry, the role of employers	module topics, scope of employer engagement
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	Language proficiency and access to services	translation, bilingual support, professional language
DELIVERY METHOD	geography, accessibility, family commitments, digitalisation	online, offline, hybrid, timetables and frequency of sessions
INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT	Level of complexity of needs	number of consultations, caseload, use of referrals
PARTNERSHIPS	availability and readiness of local organisations	Ecosystem configuration and form of governance
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT	feasibility of individual pathways for the group	proportions and intensity of components
CO-DESIGN AND PEER SUPPORT	the feasibility of maintaining the group and regular contact	the format of the group, communication channels, number of meetings
MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP	Available resources and expected timeframe for results	frequency of assessment, form of follow-up contact

The listing of the above areas does not imply that each of these elements should be changed. The purpose of this list is to highlight areas where the local operator should make an informed decision rather than automatically replicating a solution used previously.

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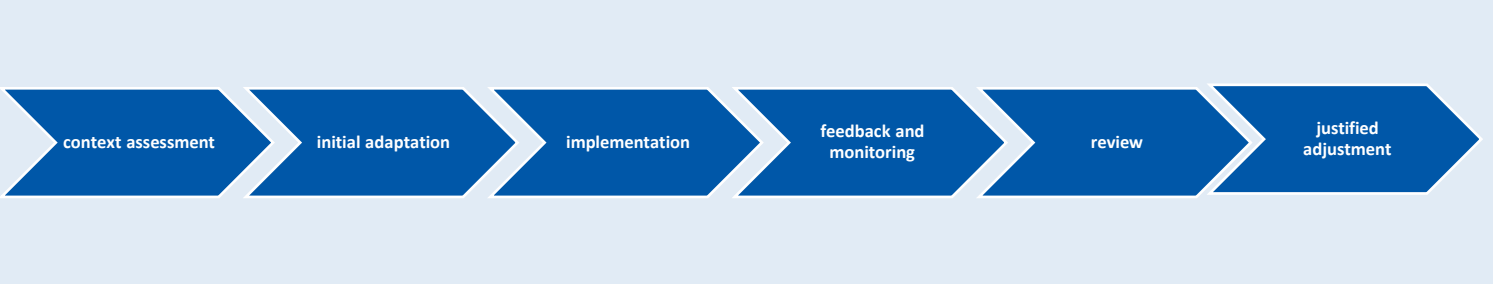
8.7. Adaptation as a process of continuous learning

Adapting the model to a new context does not end once the implementation plan has been approved. Experience from both pilot projects shows that some of the most important information only emerges during the recruitment process and whilst working with participants. Adaptation should therefore be treated as an iterative process:



It is worth emphasising that effective transfer requires not only identifying what is fundamental and adaptable, but also documenting roles, procedures and lessons learnt, and using the results of the evaluation to improve the model before it is transferred further. This is particularly important from the perspective of scaling up. Adaptation carried out solely for the needs of a single location may remain a local solution. Properly documented adaptation, on the other hand, becomes new knowledge about the conditions for the model's transferability. This is precisely why SIMPLE should be viewed not as a closed package, but as a transferable intervention architecture, the core of which remains stable whilst the organisational form is adapted to local conditions. Successful transfer does not mean achieving an identical programme in every location. It involves maintaining the same logic of change whilst creating a method of implementation that is feasible, accessible and functional within a specific environment.

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9. Scaling Strategy

9.1. The aim of the scaling strategy

The Scaling Strategy sets out how the SIMPLE approach can be developed beyond the pilot scale, whilst retaining the functions and mechanisms that ensure its quality. The strategy outlines how to transfer and scale up the refined model in new contexts, taking into account its adaptability, sustainability and mechanisms for monitoring progress. Scaling should not be understood solely as an increase in the number of participants. Pilot experiences show that the model's development can proceed in at least several directions, e.g. by repeating the programme for successive cohorts, extending it to new locations, building a network of local operators, increasing its reach through digital solutions, intensifying the level of support, or transferring the model's core mechanism to other countries and institutional systems. It is therefore possible to scale up the reach, scale and intensity, but at the same time it is essential to maintain quality, effectiveness and an adequate level of implementation resources. The SIMPLE scaling strategy is therefore based on one fundamental principle: scale what works, but protect what makes it work.

9.2. Scaling as a phased process

The most realistic path for SIMPLE's development is phased scaling. Polish experience from the pilot suggests four possible levels: cohort replication, regional expansion, a national model and international transfer. Each successive level requires greater standardisation, a more structured quality system and a stronger coordination mechanism. At the first level, the model can be replicated for successive groups in the same location, using a similar team, partners and procedures. This is the safest way to scale up, as it allows one to verify whether the solution can be replicated without any significant loss of quality, whilst also enabling further refinement of the tools and process. The second level involves territorial expansion – implementing the programme across several locations or regions. In this scenario, common standards are required, but local partnerships and the way services are organised may vary. A central methodology should not replace local adaptation, but should rather define the minimum functions that every operator must maintain. The third level can be described as a network or national model. Here, the possibility is highlighted of combining a central repository of tools and a shared monitoring system with local partnerships and regional teams. Such a structure aligns particularly well with the SIMPLE framework, as ‘ ’ allows for the standardisation of what should be shared (methodology, tools, minimum standards and M&E) whilst maintaining local flexibility in how services are delivered. The fourth level is international transfer, in

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which the core of the model is retained, whilst legal, linguistic, institutional and market aspects are adapted to the new country. This variant requires a renewed consideration of the implementation context, a distinction between core and adaptable elements, and an analysis of the local ecosystem configuration.

9.3. What in SIMPLE facilitates scaling

The Polish pilot identified several features of the model that may facilitate its development. These include its modular design, the ability to distinguish between mandatory, optional and selective elements, the possibility of carrying out some activities in a flexible format, existing recruitment and evaluation documentation, cohort-based work, common monitoring standards, and the ability to use partners' services rather than building a complete infrastructure within a single organisation. Modularity is particularly important. It does not mean that components of the model can be removed at will. Rather, it allows functions common to all participants to be separated from the support required only by part of the group. On a larger scale, this means the ability to provide basic information and common modules to wider cohorts, whilst directing the resource-intensive elements of the model towards those who genuinely need them. A second feature supporting scalability is the use of off-the-shelf tools and common standards. The greater the number of operators or locations, the greater the risk that the term 'SIMPLE' will come to denote completely different practices. Common tools for assessment, pathway planning, monitoring and documenting implementation can mitigate this risk without the need to impose an identical way of working. A third advantage is the ability to build a model centred on a coordinating function, rather than a single organisation providing all services. Experience in Poland suggests that the 'operator-navigator' model is a solution that can reduce the need to create costly parallel infrastructure. A central or local operator may be responsible for assessment, coordination, quality control, monitoring and directing participants to services within the ecosystem, utilising the existing services of specialised partners. However, this requires a functioning ecosystem and clear rules for cooperation.

9.4. A scaling model based on the operator–navigator function

From the perspective of the SIMPLE experience, the operator–navigator model is one of the most promising ways of scaling up without the need to proportionally expand the infrastructure of each local programme. In this model, the operator retains responsibility for those functions that must be consistent throughout the pathway: assessment,

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diagnosis, referral to appropriate support, coordination of the flow between services, monitoring, documentation and quality control. However, it does not need to employ its own expert in every possible area. On a smaller scale, this role can be fulfilled by a single organisation. With regional expansion, several local operators operating according to common standards can be utilised. On a larger scale, a 'central coordination – local delivery' model is possible, in which the central level provides the methodology, tools, M&E and quality assurance, whilst local entities are responsible for assessing the context, working with participants and maintaining partnerships.

9.5. Scaling reach – increasing the number of participants and geographical coverage

One way to scale up is to increase the reach, i.e. the number of people or geographical areas covered by the support. The Italian pilot provides a concrete example of this type of expansion. As the programme was delivered mainly online, a small team was able to reach women living in 12 regions of Italy. The report indicates that digital delivery can increase accessibility and flexibility, and enable the recruitment, support and evaluation of a larger group of participants. At the same time, geographical expansion was supported by existing social networks, Ukrainian associations and other trusted organisations, which were able to act as local channels for recruitment, communication, referrals and trust-building. This experience suggests that digitalisation can be an important tool for scaling up reach to the target group, but should not be treated as a standalone scaling model. The online format alone does not create a local ecosystem. In the case of territorial expansion, a model combining centralised or digital coordination with a local presence appears more appropriate. Functions that can be standardised include information dissemination, educational resources, tools, M&E components and the thematic scope of support delivered through sessions, which can be delivered centrally or online. Recruitment, trust-building, any referrals to other external services and some specialist support, on the other hand, should be based on local networks and locally available services.

9.6. Scaling through local ecosystems rather than the expansion of a single organisation

Scaling up need not – and perhaps should not – lead to the creation of a single large organisation providing all forms of support. On the contrary, the project's experience indicates that greater scale requires a greater capacity to integrate existing resources.

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The scale of the programme depends on a functioning ecosystem, as the model is based on coordination between multiple entities. Building such an ecosystem takes time, and simply establishing contact does not in itself mean that a partner is ready to participate in the pathway. Partners must not only be prepared to accept participants, but in some cases also adapt their own provision and approach to collaboration in order to deliver services in line with the participants' needs and the logic of the support programme. Implementing a comprehensive and effective support pathway may not be possible through the efforts of individual organisations operating in isolation. It requires a coordinated local ecosystem bringing together the public sector, civil society, employers, the education sector and other specialised organisations. Consequently, when scaling up, it is worth investing not only in expanding target groups or providing additional service hours, but also in the capacity of the ecosystem. Key factors here include clearly defined roles, partner management, common referral standards, the ability to exchange information, and problem-solving mechanisms between organisations. In the long term, SIMPLE's most scalable resource may therefore not be the number of participants within a single project, but the local system's ability to jointly guide a participant through the various stages of effective support.

9.7. Standardise functions, not all forms of implementation

As the scale increases, so does the need for standardisation. At the same time, excessive standardisation may undermine the fundamental advantage of SIMPLE, namely the ability to adapt interventions to individual and local needs. Therefore, the scaling strategy should be based on distinguishing between what should be common and what should remain local. At a larger scale, the following elements in particular can be standardised: the basic logic of the model, definitions of core components, minimum implementation standards, diagnostic methods, key principles for designing pathways, the basic M&E system, the adaptation register, data protection requirements and key quality principles. The following, however, should remain local: partnership configuration, the detailed scope of services, content dependent on legislation and the labour market, the method of engaging employers, language and communication, the delivery channel, and the intensity of specific forms of support. The conditions for scaling up without compromising quality can therefore be understood to include, amongst other things, the definition of a minimum standard, the distinction between mandatory and adaptable components, the use of common tools for assessment and pathway planning, the preparation of service providers, quality control and systematic monitoring.

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9.8. Resources as a constraint and a condition for scaling

The greatest constraint identified in the Polish pilot scheme is the resource-intensive nature of individualisation. Counselling, expert consultations, the preparation of individual pathways and the active referral of participants to necessary and available services require time and staff. An increase in the number of participants without a corresponding increase in resources may lead to individualised pathways being replaced by mass solutions. Further risks include the availability of experts, operator overload, varying quality of services provided by partners, limitations on the part of participants that may arise during the delivery of support, a lack of sustainable funding, difficulties with long-term follow-up, and insufficient resources allocated per participant. This means that the decision to scale up should also be preceded by an assessment of the resource model required for scaling. It is necessary to determine which functions can benefit from economies of scale – e.g. shared educational materials, recruitment tools, joint information sessions or the M&E system – and which remain almost proportionally dependent on resources, such as the number of trainers or experts.

9.9. Quality assurance – scaling without compromising the core mechanism

Scaling up only makes sense if the operator is able to monitor not only the number of participants but also fidelity to the core mechanism. Experience from pilot projects points to several conditions for safeguarding quality, including a minimum programme standard, a clear distinction between mandatory and adaptable elements, common diagnostic tools, limits on the number of participants per counsellor, quality control, regular monitoring and the maintenance of local partnerships. Not all of these measures need to take exactly the same form in every country. Their common function, however, is to ensure that the development of the support programme does not lead to the gradual simplification of the most resource-intensive, yet most important, components of the programme. Quality control should encompass at least three levels:

- ✓ implementation quality – whether activities are carried out in accordance with minimum standards;
- ✓ pathway quality – whether the participant actually follows a coherent pathway and gains access to the recommended services;
- ✓ adaptation quality – whether local modifications are justified and do not undermine the core mechanism.

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In a larger network of operators, peer reviews, periodic reviews and joint consultations become particularly important to ensure an appropriate level of implementation.

9.10. Monitoring scaling – measuring not only growth but also the quality of growth

It is important that transfer and scaling can be linked to progress monitoring metrics, as well as to periodic review mechanisms and adjustment protocols. At the Scaling Strategy level, it is worth distinguishing between several categories of metrics. A detailed matrix will be developed in the next chapter; however, even at the strategy level, monitoring should address at least the following questions:

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE MONITORING QUESTION
REACH	Is the number of participants and areas covered by the support increasing?
ACCESS	Does the wider reach also include people facing greater barriers?
FIDELITY	Are core functions still being carried out in accordance with the minimum standard?
INTENSITY	Do people requiring more complex support continue to receive it?
QUALITY	As the scale increases, is the quality of services and the participants' experience deteriorating?
COORDINATION	Are local operators and partners carrying out their agreed roles?
REFERRAL EFFECTIVENESS	Do referrals lead to actual access to services?
ADAPTATION	What changes have been made locally and for what reason?
RESOURCES	Is the workload on staff and partners still manageable?
OUTCOMES	Are the changes observed at participant level comparable when scaled up?
SUSTAINABILITY	Do the structures and partnerships used in scaling have the potential to continue?

The aim is not to create an overly complex reporting system. The point is to distinguish between growth and successful scaling. An increase in the number of participants is just one metric and does not in itself indicate successful scaling.

9.11. Key risks of scaling and how to mitigate them

SIMPLE's experience highlights several risks that should be monitored whenever a decision is made to expand the programme.

- The first is the dilution of individualisation – replacing diagnosis and a personalised pathway with a standard group package. This risk can be mitigated by segmenting participants, applying different levels of intensity, and maintaining a minimum level of individual resources.

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- The second is operator overload. The operator–navigator model improves efficiency but can lead to too many functions being concentrated within a single team. At a larger scale, coordination, support, M&E and administration must be clearly separated, and caseloads must be planned accordingly.
- The third risk concerns uneven quality across partners and locations. As new operators and providers are brought on board, the likelihood of quality variations increases. The solution lies in common standards, monitoring, documentation and periodic reviews.
- The fourth risk is expansion without ecosystem readiness. Simply launching a programme in a new region does not guarantee that participants will have access to appropriate referrals and specialist services. The Italian experience shows that local networks and trusted organisations are particularly important when expanding into new territories.
- The fifth risk concerns 'digital substitution' – a situation in which online solutions, originally intended to increase accessibility, gradually replace elements that require relationship-building and a sustained sense of participation in the programme. Digital scaling should therefore always be assessed in terms of which functions can safely be moved online, and which require local or individual anchoring.
- The sixth risk is 'project dependency' – the model may achieve greater reach through further funding, but remain dependent on the temporary structure of partnerships and collaboration within a specific, ongoing project. Therefore, scaling should, from the outset, be linked to the question of the sustainability of partnerships, collaboration and coordination.

9.12. Conditions for readiness to scale up

Based on experience from pilot projects, it can be assumed that an organisation should not move to the next level of scaling simply because it has completed the first implementation cycle. A minimum level of readiness is required. Before scaling up, it is worth confirming that:

- the core functions are clearly defined and reproducible;
- the completed cycle has provided sufficient data on the implementation and any barriers;

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- the basic tools and procedures are well-organised;
- the operator understands the actual requirements regarding the necessary resources;
- there is a coordination model that can be applied on a larger scale;
- the services and partners required at the next location can be identified;
- the M&E system allows for a distinction to be made between an increase in the number of participants and the maintenance of quality;
- adaptations and lessons learnt are documented;
- the main risks arising from a larger scale are known.

This approach reinforces this logic, indicating that organisations should identify essential and adaptable elements, document roles and processes, maintain contact with partners, and use the results of the assessment to refine the model before transferring it to a new location.

9.13. The SIMPLE strategic scaling model

A synthesis of the experiences of Poland, Italy and broader stakeholder feedback allows for the formulation of a possible strategy for the development of SIMPLE. The most appropriate direction is progressive, ecosystem-based scaling, in which growth occurs gradually, based on common standards whilst maintaining local capacity for adaptation.

Under this approach:

- the central level can provide the methodology, tools, training materials, minimum standards, M&E principles and quality assurance mechanisms;
- local operators are responsible for context analysis, recruitment, assessment, pathway delivery and the activation of the local ecosystem;
- local partners provide complementary services, specialist knowledge, referrals and access to the labour market;
- a digital format can increase reach, standardise some resources and support coordination, but should not replace functions requiring interpersonal relationships, personalisation or local anchoring;
- monitoring and feedback enable comparisons between implementations, the detection of quality decline, and the updating of the model as the scale increases.

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This strategy is consistent with the SIMPLE experience. The model is flexible enough to function in different contexts, but this flexibility requires that its core mechanisms be safeguarded. Consequently, scaling SIMPLE should not mean creating an ever-larger central programme, but rather increasing the number of locations and organisations capable of implementing the same logic of change according to shared standards, using their own local resources and partnerships.

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10. Transfer and Scaling Action Plan

10.1. Purpose and Function of the Action Plan

The Transfer and Scaling Action Plan translates the approach to scaling into a concrete process for preparing, launching, evaluating and gradually scaling up the SIMPLE model. Its purpose is to bring together three perspectives that must operate simultaneously during actual implementation: the methodological quality of the model, the organisational capacity of the implementing entities, and the practical conditions of the local ecosystem. The transfer and scaling strategy is accompanied by an action plan containing clearly defined roles, a timetable and metrics for monitoring progress. At the same time, the process includes periodic reviews, stakeholder check-ins and mechanisms allowing for the introduction of justified adjustments. The Action Plan enables us to answer a more operational question:

- ✓ what should happen, in what order, who should be responsible for it, and how can one tell that the organisation is ready to move on to the next stage of transfer or scaling?

The plan should be applied flexibly. An organisation repeating the programme for a subsequent cohort, for example in the same location, will require a much shorter preparatory phase than an organisation transferring the model to another country. The basic sequence, however, remains similar:

10.2. The ‘scale by evidence’ principle

The Action Plan is based on the premise that moving to a larger scale should be driven by data and organisational readiness, rather than solely by the ambition to increase the number of participants. The Polish pilot indicates that scaling can benefit from modularity, ready-made tools, cohort-based work, partner services and the roles of

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operator, ‘ ’ and ‘navigator’. At the same time, it shows that as the scale increases, there is a risk of overburdening the operator, a reduction in personalisation, variations in the quality of partner services, and insufficient resources for counselling and follow-up. Therefore, the Action Plan should not lead directly from a single implementation to rapid expansion. It should establish decision points at which the organisation checks whether core functions are being maintained, whether the local ecosystem is functioning in practice, whether resources are sufficient, and whether monitoring indicates any deterioration in quality. This approach recommends planning for transferability from the outset, documenting roles and procedures, maintaining relationships with partners, and using evaluation findings to improve implementation methods before transferring the model to the next context.

10.3. Roles in the transfer and scaling process

As the scale increases, the clear allocation of responsibilities becomes particularly important. In future replication, it is not necessary to replicate the structure adopted in the SIMPLE project. What is needed, however, is to ensure equivalent **roles and responsibilities**.

- ✓ **The strategic owner / organisation owner** is responsible for deciding whether to commence transfer or scaling up, approving the scope, securing resources, and aligning the model with the activities of the organisation or system in which it is to operate.
- ✓ **The operator / implementation coordinator** is responsible for the practical management of the pathway, i.e. for preparing the local model, organising partnerships and ecosystem-wide collaboration, recruitment, assessment, coordinating support, referrals to external services, monitoring and documentation. In a more decentralised model, this function may be performed by local operators operating according to a common standard.
- ✓ **Implementation partners** provide specific functions: training, consultancy, expert knowledge, support for entrepreneurship development, employment, language support, community activities or other elements required by the local pathway.
- ✓ **M&E / quality assurance function** – here, the operator ensures the systematic collection of data, analysis of progress, monitoring of compliance with minimum standards, and the identification of signs indicating a decline in quality.

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- ✓ **Employers and other stakeholders in the ecosystem** should fulfil specific practical roles in line with the local model: advisory, expert, service-providing or related to the creation of employment opportunities.
- ✓ **Participants and organisations representing the target group** are a key source of feedback on the accessibility, relevance and functioning of the pathway.

As the programme scales up, it becomes increasingly important to distinguish between central responsibility for standards and quality and local responsibility for implementation and adaptation.

10.4. Framework Transfer and Scaling Action Plan

The plan below sets out the recommended sequence of actions. The timeframes given are approximate – they refer to the launch of a new cycle or a new location and should be adjusted to the scale of replication.

Stage	Main objective	Key activities	Main responsibility	Timeframe	Milestone / metrics
1. Readiness and scope decision	Determining whether and on what scale the model is to be transferred	Defining the objective; target group; level of scaling; preliminary assessment of resources and readiness	strategic owner + future operator	before preparation begins	defined scope; designated operator; go/no-go decision
2. Context and adaptation assessment	Adapting the model to the new environment	analysis of needs, the system, the labour market and available services; determination of core/adaptable elements; identification of necessary adaptations	operator + expert partners	before finalising the local model	context analysis; core/adaptable matrix; register of planned adaptations
3. Ecosystem and governance set-up	Securing the resources and collaboration needed to implement the pathway	mapping; identification of partners; roles; referrals; governance; employer engagement	operator + local partners	prior to recruitment; then on an ongoing basis	assigned roles; key services available; agreed rules for cooperation
4. Operational preparation	Preparing the organisation for the safe launch of the programme	recruitment and diagnostic tools; pathways; M&E; team capacity building; accessibility and communication plan	operator + M&E/QA + suppliers	immediately prior to launch	tools ready; team trained; monitoring system; resource plan

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Stage	Main objective	Key activities	Main responsibility	Timeframe	Milestone / metrics
5. Initial implementation cycle	Testing the local configuration of the model in practice	recruitment; assessment; delivery; referrals; partner engagement; monitoring; adaptations	operator + partners	first implementation cycle	participation; pathway delivery; feedback; referral completion; adaptation log
6. Review and scaling decision	Assessment of whether the model is ready for further scaling	data analysis; review of core functions; quality, resources, partnerships and adaptation; lessons learnt	strategic owner + operator + M&E/QA + key partners	immediately after the cycle and once baseline data has been collected	decision: maintain / improve / expand / do not expand
7. Controlled expansion	Increasing coverage, the number of cohorts or locations	subsequent cohorts; new operators; deployment of tools; capacity building; network expansion	central structure + local operators	once readiness has been confirmed	new cohorts/locations whilst maintaining quality standards
8. Consolidation and sustainability	Transition from a project to a more sustainable operating model	embedding; maintaining partnerships; securing resources; follow-up; updating tools and standards	strategic owner + operator + partners	in parallel with subsequent cycles	model functions maintained; continuity of partnerships and resources

10.5. Stage 1 – Readiness and scope decision

The process should begin with a clearly formulated decision: what exactly is to be scaled up? This may involve repeating the programme for another group, expanding to a new location, or transferring the model to another country. At this stage, detailed services should not yet be designed. First, the scope must be determined and it must be checked whether the organisation has the foundations in place to move forward: a coordinator, minimum resources, the ability to secure partners and the capacity to carry out monitoring. When scaling up, it is particularly important to distinguish between increasing the number of participants, expanding the geographical scope and increasing the intensity of support, as each of these options generates different resource requirements.

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10.6. Stage 2 – Context and Adaptation Plan

The next stage translates the general decision to transfer the model into a local variant of SIMPLE. The operator should carry out a context analysis and prepare an Adaptation Plan, covering elements retained without functional changes, localised elements, and those components which, for contextual reasons, require more significant modification. The plan may take the form of a set of principles, procedures, tools and minimum standards for subsequent use in other contexts, whilst retaining the ‘ ’ elements responsible for the basic mechanism of change and the ability to adapt the form, intensity, delivery channels, partnerships and tools. In practice, this stage should result in three short deliverables: a context analysis, a core/adaptable matrix and a register of planned adaptations. This will make it possible, during a subsequent evaluation, to determine not only whether the programme worked, but also which version of the programme was actually tested.

10.7. Stage 3 – Ecosystem and Governance Set-up

Before recruitment begins, it is essential to ensure that there are entities capable of providing key functions. This does not mean that a formal agreement must be signed with every stakeholder. It does, however, mean that the operator should know who is responsible for specific areas and which resources are actually available. Of particular importance here are:

- ✓ the ability to refer users to services not offered by the operator,
- ✓ access to specialist services,
- ✓ employer engagement,
- ✓ the readiness and capacity for institutional support from the ecosystem.

10.8. Stage 4 – Operational Preparation

Only once the model, partners and responsibilities have been established should the organisation move on to full operational preparation. At this stage, forms, diagnostic tools, pathway plans, participant documentation, the system for referrals and the use of external services, feedback mechanisms and M&E tools should be adapted. The team and external providers should understand not only their own tasks, but also how their contribution fits into the overall pathway. On a larger scale, capacity building for service providers becomes one of the fundamental mechanisms of quality assurance. The conditions for scaling up must include, amongst other things, the use of common

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diagnostic and pathway planning tools, the preparation of service providers, quality monitoring, appropriate caseload planning and the maintenance of local partnerships.

10.9. Stage 5 – Initial Implementation Cycle

The first cycle in a new context should be treated as a controlled implementation, even if the model has already been tested elsewhere. The aim is not only to deliver services but also to test the local configuration: whether recruitment reaches the right people, whether assessment leads to useful decisions, whether partners actually provide the services they have committed to, whether referrals are working, and whether the level of personalisation is sustainable given the agreed caseload. Monitoring should be particularly intensive during this period. Any significant adaptation must be justified, and its implications for core functions should be assessed. It is also worth introducing at least one mid-cycle review, during which the operator analyses attendance, drop-out signals, participant feedback, the work of partners and the team's workload. This is not intended to be a full evaluation, but rather an opportunity to respond before problems become entrenched throughout the cycle.

10.10. Stage 6 – Review and Scaling Decision

Once the first cycle has been completed, a formal scaling review should be carried out. This should not be limited to the question of whether the target number of participants has been reached. The review should cover the quality of the pathway, the delivery of core functions, the functioning of partnerships, the strain on resources, the effectiveness of referrals, participant feedback, identified barriers and the scope of the adaptations made. On this basis, four fundamental decisions are possible:

- ✓ **continue** – maintain the same scale and configuration;
- ✓ **improve** – modify the model and run another cycle before expanding;
- ✓ **scale** – increase the number of cohorts, locations or operators;
- ✓ **stop or redesign** – if the core mechanisms cannot be sustained under the given conditions.

This approach is methodologically important. Scaling is a decision justified by the information and data obtained, confirming that the model is sufficiently stable to take on further organisational risk.

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10.11. Stage 7 – Controlled Expansion

If the review confirms readiness, scaling up should take place gradually. With subsequent cohorts at the same location, most of the existing model can be retained and the focus shifted to improving efficiency. When expanding regionally, the analysis of the context, partners and available services should be repeated, even if the methodology remains the same. In a multi-operator model, common standards, regular data exchange, capacity building and the ability to compare quality across locations become essential.

10.12. Monitoring progress – how to measure the implementation of the Action Plan

Metrics should enable the assessment not only of growth, but also of **readiness, quality and the sustainability of that growth**. There is no basis for setting a single universal threshold for all future implementations. Target values should be determined locally, depending on the scale of the programme, the target group and the intensity of the pathway. The monitoring framework, however, may remain common.

Area	Examples of progress indicators
Readiness	context analysis completed; operator identified; level of transfer/scale defined
Adaptation	Core/adaptable matrix prepared; number of significant adaptations with justification
Ecosystem	key functions covered by partners; availability of referral services; active involvement of employers
Governance	clearly assigned responsibilities; a functioning coordination mechanism
Recruitment and access	number of applications, those selected, and those actually commencing participation; reasons for withdrawal
Participant pathway	percentage of participants who have undergone an assessment and have a defined pathway; implementation of planned components
Referral	number of referrals and – where this can be monitored – the proportion of referrals resulting in actual access to the service
Quality	participant feedback; compliance with minimum standards; workload of advisers/co-ordinators; quality issues with service providers
Adaptive management	number and type of changes; response time to identified problems; effect of the adjustment
Scaling	number of subsequent cohorts, locations or operators whilst maintaining the standard
Outcomes	short-term changes consistent with the objectives of the local pathway and – where possible – follow-up results
Sustainability	functions maintained after the first cycle; partners continuing their collaboration; resources secured for subsequent activities

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10.13. Checkpoints and the 'go / improve / scale' principle

The Action Plan should include several formal checkpoints. Their purpose is to halt automatic expansion and enforce a brief assessment of readiness before moving on.

- ✓ **Checkpoint 1 – Ready to Launch:** the local variant of the model is defined, core functions are in place, roles are assigned, and key services are available.
- ✓ **Checkpoint 2 – Implementation on Track:** following the first part of the cycle, there are no issues that undermine the model's underlying logic; significant barriers are identified and addressed.
- ✓ **Checkpoint 3 – Ready to Repeat:** the first cycle can be repeated with the same or a similar configuration without any significant loss of quality.
- ✓ **Checkpoint 4 – Ready to Scale:** the organisation has sufficient data, resources, standards and capacity to increase the number of cohorts or begin implementation in a new location.
- ✓ **Checkpoint 5 – Scale remains sustainable:** growth does not lead to operator overload, weakened partnerships, a breakdown in follow-up or a decline in the quality of individual support.

10.14. From the Action Plan to a sustainable delivery system

The most important outcome of the Transfer and Scaling Action Plan is not to reach the maximum possible number of participants. It is to create the conditions in which the SIMPLE model can be replicated, transferred and developed without losing its underlying logic.

This involves a gradual transition:

- ➢ from a one-off implementation to a repeatable process,
- ➢ from informal collaboration to a functional ecosystem,
- ➢ from individual knowledge to shared tools and standards,
- ➢ from a one-off evaluation to continuous learning,
- ➢ from a project to a model that can be embedded in sustainable organisational and partnership practices.

Successful replication requires an understanding of which elements form the core of the model, documenting the process, and using evaluation to improve implementation before its further transfer. The Transfer and Scaling Action Plan should therefore act as a bridge between strategy and implementation, enabling organisations to translate general scaling objectives into specific decisions, responsibilities, checkpoints and

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metrics, and then to use the experience gained to move on to the next, more informed stage of the model's development.

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11. Sustainability Tips

11.1. Sustainability as part of the ‘ ’ model

Sustainability should not be understood solely as the ability to secure a new source of funding once the project has ended. Sustainability means, above all, maintaining those functions, relationships, competencies and mechanisms that allow participants to continue to benefit from the model’s value, even if the source of funding, the organisation of services or the formal structure of the programme changes. The most important principle is: do not try to maintain the entire project in its original form – maintain the functions that create value and the mechanism for change.

11.2. Sustainability begins at the design stage

Sustainability cannot be effectively ‘added’ to a programme a few weeks before it ends. The decisions that are most significant for sustainability are made much earlier: when selecting the operator, building partnerships, choosing various implementation tools, defining the scope of one’s own services, and deciding which functions can be based on the existing ecosystem. The experiences of the Polish pilot project clearly demonstrate the importance of this approach. Partners rated the model highly, but their readiness and available resources to continue the activities independently varied. It was pointed out that the sustainability of similar initiatives requires further organisational, financial and networking support, and that maintaining cross-sectoral cooperation and providing longer-term support to participants as they move from knowledge and plans to concrete career or business decisions is of particular importance for future implementation. Therefore, when preparing for replication, one should ask not only: ‘Who will deliver this service during the project?’, but also: ‘Who can fulfil this role once the project has ended?’. This is a subtle difference in wording, but a fundamental difference in how new implementations are designed as part of scaling the model.

11.3. Integrate SIMPLE solutions into the organisation’s day-to-day operations

The most stable elements of the model are those that do not require the maintenance of a separate project structure. This does not mean that all SIMPLE activities can be carried out without additional resources. Experience from pilot projects actually shows that intensive consultancy, training, individual coordination and long-term follow-up are resource-intensive. However, some of the project’s results can be sustained through ‘ ’

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organisational embedding, i.e. the integration of methods, procedures and tools into the organisation's day-to-day practices. This may concern, for example, the way in which needs are assessed before assigning a participant to a pathway, the use of an up-to-date service map, the use of active referrals, the use of shared diagnostic tools, the involvement of experts and partners, the consideration of participant feedback, or the documentation of adaptations. Sustainability therefore does not always mean continuing the same programme under the same name. Sometimes a more lasting result is a situation where the organisation's way of working changes thanks to SIMPLE, and the practices developed become part of its standard working procedures.

11.4. Maintain the role of facilitator–navigator, even if the programme's format changes

One of the functions particularly important for sustainability is the coordination of the pathway. If, after the project has ended, various types of training, labour market services, business advice, administrative assistance or other forms of support still exist, but the participant does not know how to use them or how to navigate between them, the mere availability of these services may be of limited value. It is therefore worth considering whether the operator–navigator role can be maintained in a lighter form even after the intensive project cycle has ended. This need not imply full-time involvement. It could take the form of a point of contact, periodic consultations, an updated database of services, specific hours for support and advice, a referral system to existing services within the ecosystem, or a shared function amongst several organisations. Experience from the Polish pilot scheme indicates that the sustainability of results requires a partnership enabling participants to move effectively between successive stages of support and to make use of the available range of services. It is recommended, amongst other things, to identify partners' actual resources, appoint permanent contact persons, establish practical referral mechanisms, coordinate service provision, and continue cooperation even after project funding has ended. From a sustainability perspective, this means that it is particularly important to maintain the continuity of the navigation function, even if the other components of the programme are already operating within other structures.

11.5. Turn a project partnership into a sustainable ecosystem

The greatest risk to the sustainability of social models is a situation where cooperation exists solely because it is currently funded by a specific project. SIMPLE's experience

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indicates that a distinction should be made between a project partnership and a functional ecosystem. A project partnership may be based on a specific timetable, budget and division of responsibilities. A functional ecosystem, on the other hand, should be able to maintain at least some of the relationships even when these formal conditions cease to exist. It is recommended that cooperation mechanisms be maintained even after funding has ended. In practice, a lasting partnership requires at least a few simple things: up-to-date contact details, knowledge of partners' services, a clear referral mechanism, a regular exchange of information, and an awareness of which organisations are prepared to accept participants into their services. A new formal structure is not always necessary. What is needed, however, is continuity in the working relationship.

11.6. Plan for the sustainability of each participant's individual pathway

The sustainability of the programme should not be assessed solely at the organisational level. It is also important to answer the question: what remains for the participant once the main support cycle has ended? Experiences from the Polish pilot project indicate that some of the outcomes could not be unequivocally confirmed at the time the pilot ended. This applies, amongst other things, to the sustainability of the network of participants, long-term career and business decisions, and the maintenance of relationships with institutions. It was emphasised that ongoing contact requires the continuation of facilitation activities and a space allowing for the regular exchange of information. The Italian pilot project leads to a similar conclusion. At the time the evaluation was concluded, the ecosystem's readiness to continue was still only partial, whilst it was not yet possible to assess medium-term outcomes relating to employment, entrepreneurship or networks of contacts. A participant's sustainability does not mean the project must continue to guide them indefinitely. It should mean that, once intensive support has ended, the participant has a realistic next step, knows where to turn for help, and, where necessary and possible, there is a mechanism for follow-up contact.

11.7. Maintain and update tools and organisational knowledge

One of the easiest SIMPLE outcomes to sustain are the tools, procedures and implementation know-how, provided they remain up to date and are actually used. Sustainable resources may include, amongst other things, recruitment and assessment procedures, individual pathway forms, referral arrangements, training materials, checklists, M&E tools, work scenarios and lessons learnt. However, simply archiving

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documents does not in itself constitute sustainability. A tool retains its value only if someone knows where it is, what it is for and when it should be updated. In particular, materials relating to legislation, funding, labour market services and institutions can quickly become out of date. Therefore, sustainability of knowledge should include ownership. For the most important resources, it is worth designating an organisation or function responsible for their storage, updating and sharing.

11.8. Maintain continuous learning, not just products

The sustainability of SIMPLE should also encompass the partners' capacity for continued learning. The model operates in a field that is subject to change. The profile of refugees and migrants, legislation, the labour market situation, employers' needs, available financial instruments and the structure of local services are all changing. A solution that was appropriate during the pilot phase should not automatically be treated as set in stone. Therefore, sustainability should include periodic updates to knowledge and the exchange of experiences between organisations. In practice, this could take a light-touch form, such as periodic meetings of service providers, joint updates to the service map, peer exchanges between advisers, analysis of new barriers, or the sharing of information on new opportunities. There need not be an elaborate cooperation platform to sustain the learning process. What is important is that there is a repeatable mechanism for knowledge exchange.

11.9. Financial sustainability – diversify resources and fund functions, not just projects

Funding remains one of the conditions for sustainability, but experience from consultations with stakeholders and partners within the SIMPLE framework also highlights the risk of over-reliance on short-term project funding. Financial instability was highlighted by various stakeholder groups, and one of the proposed approaches was to integrate effective measures more firmly into existing systems and structures. The practical guidance, however, is clear: it is necessary to distinguish between functions that can be integrated into the existing resources of the organisation and its partners, and those that genuinely require additional funding. The first category might include, for example, the use of existing tools, utilising partners' already available services, or updating referral mechanisms. The second category may encompass particularly resource-intensive elements such as intensive one-to-one counselling, specialist services, or support services such as childcare or systematic follow-up. This distinction allows for

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more realistic sustainability planning than attempting to find funds to maintain the entire project in its original form.

11.10. Maintain employer engagement through mutual value

Relationships with employers will be more enduring if they are not based solely on the employers' willingness to support the project. Employers should be treated as key partners, particularly in areas relating to the recruitment of refugees, integration in the workplace, diversity management and long-term talent development. From a sustainability perspective, this means the need to build cooperation around mutual value. Employers can contribute market knowledge, skills requirements, employment opportunities, mentoring or access to schemes enabling candidates to gain professional experience (e.g. work placements). At the same time, employers can benefit from better-prepared job candidates or support integration processes in the labour market. A partnership based solely on a one-off event has little chance of lasting. A partnership addressing a real problem faced by both parties has a much greater chance of continuing.

11.11. Build sustainability through local ownership

A model may be methodologically sound and adequately funded, yet still fail to survive if it remains 'a single organisation's project'. Sustainability increases when several entities see their own interest and their own role in maintaining its functions. Therefore, during the scaling process, efforts should be made to gradually increase local ownership. This may involve partners taking over certain modules, incorporating referrals into their daily practices, continuing cooperation with employers, local operators using SIMPLE tools, or assuming responsibility for selected follow-up elements. There is no doubt that the sustainability of results requires cooperation between public administration, business, civil society organisations, migrant organisations and the education sector, and that partnership should go beyond mere declarations of support or one-off events. In this sense, one of the most important indicators of sustainability is not the question 'will the operator continue the project?', but 'which functions of the model are individual organisations within the ecosystem ready to continue?'

11.12. Link sustainability to long-term monitoring

It is not possible to speak credibly of sustainability without subsequently verifying which outcomes have actually endured. Experience from pilot projects has shown that an

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increase in knowledge, agency or institutional orientation is an important short-term outcome, but the sustainability of such changes requires confirmation over the longer term. Similarly, the networks and contacts that have been established cannot automatically be considered sustainable simply because they were created during the pilot phase. Therefore, for the sake of sustainability, monitoring should cover not only the future circumstances of the participants, but also the sustainability of the implementation system itself. It is worth checking at a later stage, amongst other things:

- whether the partners are still cooperating;
- whether referral pathways remain active;
- whether the tools are still being used;
- whether participants have access to further services;
- whether the operator or another entity continues to fulfil a coordinating role;
- whether the selected activities have been incorporated into the organisation's regular operations;
- whether new resources have become available to enable the continuation of elements requiring funding.

Not all of these elements need to be measured through an extensive study. Even a simple periodic sustainability review can provide valuable insight into what has actually survived beyond the funding cycle.

11.13. From project to sustainable practice

The most useful way of thinking about sustainability in SIMPLE is to move away from the question: 'How can we sustain the project?' towards the question: 'How can we sustain the value that the project has created?'

In one context, this may mean continuing to implement the full pathway. In another, it may mean incorporating parts of the methods into existing services, maintaining a referral system, enabling various operators to use the tools, continuing partnerships or retaining a coordinating role. In yet another context, the greatest lasting value may lie in changing the way institutions collaborate or in enhancing an organisation's capacity to design personalised pathways to employability. The SIMPLE experience does not provide grounds for claiming that there is a single universal model of sustainability. However, they clearly show that sustainability is greater when a solution is embedded within

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existing organisations and ecosystems, shared responsibility is distributed amongst partners, knowledge and tools remain accessible, and funding is focused on functions that cannot be maintained without additional resources. Seen in this light, sustainability is not the final chapter of the implementation cycle. It is a prerequisite that should be in place from the moment the initial decision to replicate is made.

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12. Monitoring Scaling and Continuous Improvement

12.1. The Purpose of Monitoring the Scaling Process

Monitoring scaling should serve not only to check whether the SIMPLE model is encompassing an increasing number of participants or new locations, but above all to assess whether, as the scale increases, the model's core functions, the quality of support, the capacity for individualisation and the efficiency of the local ecosystem are being maintained. This is particularly important because scaling may appear to be proceeding correctly – for example, the number of participants, partners or activities carried out may be increasing, whilst at the same time the mechanisms responsible for the quality of the intervention are gradually weakening. With a larger number of participants, the intensity of individual support may decrease; the operator may have less and less time for active referrals; partnerships may become more formal than functional; and local adaptations may increasingly distance individual implementations from the core logic of SIMPLE. Therefore, scaling monitoring should simultaneously address two questions: Is the model scaling up? and Is it scaling up without losing what makes it work? Monitoring should therefore be treated as a mechanism for managing scaling, rather than merely as a final evaluation of results.

12.2. From pilot monitoring to scaling monitoring

Monitoring of a single implementation focuses primarily on participants, service delivery and direct outcomes. Scaling monitoring should additionally analyse:

- whether the model is being implemented in a comparable manner across different locations;
- whether adaptations preserve the core functions;
- whether the appropriate level of support is maintained as the number of participants increases;
- whether new operators have sufficient organisational capacity;
- whether local partnerships ensure effective access to the necessary services;
- whether scaling remains feasible in terms of resources;
- whether the observed outcomes do not deteriorate as the scale increases.

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In this way, M&E moves from the simple question 'Has the programme been implemented?' to the question 'Can the model be replicated and scaled up whilst maintaining the required quality?'

12.3. Monitoring should cover the entire scaling chain

The most useful monitoring system should encompass several interrelated levels. It is not enough to measure only the number of participants or even outcomes at the individual level. Scaling is a systemic process, and therefore its quality depends simultaneously on reach, accessibility, the quality of the pathway, organisational resources and the functioning of the ecosystem.

- ✓ **Reach and access**

The first level concerns the actual increase in reach. It is important to monitor not only the number of participants, but also the number of people who apply, are selected, commence activities and remain in the programme. The analysis should also cover attendance, drop-outs and – where possible – the reasons for these. It is important that scaling up does not lead to the selection of only those who are easiest to manage. Therefore, monitoring of accessibility should check whether people with limitations – such as language barriers, care responsibilities, digital difficulties or other barriers – can still benefit from the programme.

- ✓ **Fidelity to core functions**

The second level involves checking whether the core SIMPLE mechanism is being maintained. The aim is not for all implementations to look identical. Rather, it is to check whether the functions deemed essential are being maintained: assessment, maintenance of support pathways, coordination, access to complementary services, active referrals, participant feedback, monitoring and the capacity for adaptation. If a local implementation differs from the pilot but these functions are retained, the difference may constitute a valid adaptation. If, however, scaling up leads, for example, to individual assessment being replaced by another solution, this may indicate a weakening of the core mechanism.

- ✓ **Quality and intensity**

The third level concerns the quality of support. Factors to be analysed include the workload of the coordinator/operator, the availability of advisers, the possibility of obtaining individual support, and waiting times for the service. Experience and lessons learnt from the Polish pilot scheme indicate that, when scaling up, it is particularly

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important to safeguard the ‘ ’ of individualisation, as counselling, expert consultations and the coordination of pathways are among the most sensitive components of the model.

- ✓ **Ecosystem performance**

The fourth level concerns the functioning of the partnership. It is not enough to monitor the number of agreements signed or to record the organisations participating in events. It is more important to determine whether partners are actually fulfilling their agreed roles, e.g. accepting participants, delivering services, responding to referrals, engaging employers, providing feedback and participating in problem-solving.

- ✓ **Participant outcomes**

The fifth level covers changes on the part of participants. The scope of indicators should be based on the agreed pathway, but may include, amongst other things, changes in knowledge, skills, institutional orientation, readiness to take action, the implementation of individual plans, the use of further services, training, employment or the development of business activities.

- ✓ **Sustainability and continuation**

The final level concerns whether the model being developed creates the capacity for continued operation. Monitoring should therefore assess not only ongoing implementation, but also the maintenance of partnerships, the continued use of the tools developed, the potential for continuation, and the resources required for subsequent cycles.

12.4. Monitoring should combine quantitative and qualitative data

Experience with SIMPLE shows that quantitative data alone is insufficient when assessing a complex integration pathway. The number of participants may indicate that the target group has been reached and the project’s reach, but it does not explain why some people drop out. The number of referrals will not show whether a participant actually received the service. High attendance rates do not explain whether the activities met participants’ needs. Conversely, a mere declaration of satisfaction does not allow us to assess whether a participant has taken the next step on their pathway. Therefore, a mixed-methods approach has been adopted, combining data on participation, PRE/POST self-assessments, module evaluations, participant feedback, information from partners and service providers, and data on the functioning of the ecosystem. It is recommended to retain the pre–post measurement, but to supplement it with an analysis of attendance

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and reasons for dropping out, monitoring of the implementation of individual pathways or action plans, the quality of use of partners' services, surveys on participants' subsequent circumstances, and qualitative interviews with participants, advisers and providers. In practice, a good scaling monitoring system should therefore combine:

- ✓ administrative data – who is participating, in what and for how long;
- ✓ process data – whether the pathway is being implemented as planned;
- ✓ feedback – how participants, providers and partners rate the support;
- ✓ outcome data – what changes are observed among participants;
- ✓ and data on the organisation and ecosystem – whether the system is capable of sustaining the increased scale.

12.5. Scaling monitoring – recommended structure

The structure below can serve as a practical minimum for monitoring. Target values should be determined locally, as there cannot be a single set of thresholds for all future implementations.

Area	What to monitor	Example data source	Management question
Reach and coverage	number of applications, participants, cohorts, locations	programme register	Is the scale actually increasing?
Access	participant profile, dropouts, barriers to participation	entry form, attendance, feedback	Does the larger scale remain accessible to the target group?
Diagnosis	participation of individuals who have undergone a diagnosis and have a defined pathway	needs assessment / action plan	Does individualisation still work?
Pathway completion	Implementation of planned components and next steps	participant record	Is the participant following a coherent pathway?
Individual support	level of support, caseload, waiting time	Operator documentation	Does scaling dilute individual support?
Referral	number of referrals, type of service, access to the service	referral register	Does the ecosystem work in practice?
Partner engagement	partner activity, fulfilment of agreed roles	partner review	Is the partnership effective?
Employer engagement	the nature and regularity of employers' contributions	activity records / stakeholder feedback	Do employers bring practical value?
Participant feedback	the relevance, accessibility and usefulness of the support	short surveys / interviews	What needs to be improved?
Provider feedback	implementation issues, needs and resources	Provider review	Is the system operationally feasible?

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Area	What to monitor	Example data source	Management question
Adaptations	changes, justification, impact on core functions	adaptation log	Is the model being adapted in a controlled manner?
Short-term outcomes	knowledge, competences, orientation, readiness	PRE/POST, plans	Are the expected short-term changes being observed?
Longer-term outcomes	further training, referrals, employment, entrepreneurship	follow-up	Do the changes lead to further outcomes?
Sustainability	continuity of services, partnerships and resources	sustainability review	Can the increased scale be maintained?

12.6. Early warning signs during scaling

The monitoring system should be particularly attuned to signs indicating that scaling up may be at the expense of quality. The most important of these include:

- an increasing number of participants per coordinator, accompanied by a reduction in individual contact;
- a decrease in the number of completed referrals to external services or a lack of information on what happens after referral;
- an increase in dropouts or irregular attendance;
- an increasing number of participants receiving an identical support package regardless of their diagnosis;
- significant differences in quality between locations or providers;
- partnerships that exist in name only but are not utilised in practice;
- a heavy monitoring burden, leading to incomplete data or a decline in participants' engagement;
- an increase in reach without continuity of contact or follow-up.

The emergence of any one of these indicators does not necessarily mean that scaling must be halted. However, it should trigger a review and a decision on whether adjustments are needed.

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13. Key Recommendations for Different Stakeholder Groups

13.1. Introduction – responsibility for scaling is dispersed

SIMPLE's experience shows that effective transfer and scaling cannot be attributed to a single type of organisation. From the outset, the model was based on the **quadruple helix** logic, according to which public administration, the private sector, civil society organisations and the knowledge, education and research community contribute different but complementary resources. Sustainable social and professional integration is not possible through the actions of individual organisations operating in isolation. It requires a coordinated ecosystem in which individual actors are responsible for different elements of a participant's pathway. The recommendations set out in this chapter illustrate **how different** stakeholder **groups** should complement one another in the process of replicating, adapting and scaling up the SIMPLE model.

13.2. Organisations initiating replication and programme operators

The greatest responsibility for the integrity of the model rests with the organisation that decides to implement it and coordinates the entire pathway. Its role need not, and indeed should not, be to provide all services itself. Instead, it should ensure that the individual activities form a single coherent process — from context analysis and recruitment, through assessment and individualisation, to the provision of selected services or referrals to services within the ecosystem, follow-up and further integration with the local ecosystem. In particular, the operator should:

- start with an assessment rather than a pre-packaged set of services. Needs, resources, work experience, language skills, family circumstances, availability and formal barriers should influence the choice of pathway;
- ensure a coordination function. The participant should know who is responsible for their pathway and who they can turn to when a further need arises;
- plan the intensity of support in proportion to needs. Based on experience from pilot schemes, it is recommended to make a clear distinction between those who primarily need information and guidance and participants requiring a more intensive, personalised pathway;
- build the ecosystem before the actual implementation begins, rather than searching for the services participants need only once the programme is underway;
- ensure controlled adaptation, documenting changes and assessing whether the core function of a given component has been maintained;

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- and treat monitoring as a management tool, rather than merely reporting after the programme has ended.

The operator should, above all, act as an integrator of the pathway, capable of combining its own resources with the expertise of its partners. This is important for both quality and scalability; as the number of participants increases, it becomes increasingly unrealistic to assume that a single organisation will be able to provide all specialist services on its own.

13.3. Public institutions and bodies responsible for public policies and services

From the SIMPLE perspective, public institutions play a dual role. On the one hand, they are providers or organisers of key services, such as employment, training, social assistance, recognition of qualifications or support for entrepreneurship. On the other hand, they create the institutional conditions on which the sustainability and scalability of integrated support pathways depend. Findings from the Polish pilot project emphasise that the sustainability of results requires cooperation between public administration and the business sector, civil society organisations, migrant organisations and the education sector. This cooperation should not be limited to declaring support or participating in events, but should enable participants to make genuine use of the support on offer, regardless of whether it is provided by the private sector, the non-governmental sector or public administration. Another important role of the public administration is to coordinate and decide on access to funding for socio-economic initiatives and projects. It is important that the public administration, as part of the ecosystem, recognises the need to launch comprehensive support programmes and limits funding to individual elements of assistance only; furthermore, given its remit, it should undertake the coordination and integration of services as well as the coordination of institutions within the ecosystem. These conclusions should be understood as recommendations arising from the SIMPLE pilot experience, rather than as a universal model for public policy. Their common direction is, however, clear: where there are many scattered instruments, added value can result from better combining them into integrated services for beneficiaries.

13.4. Employers, businesses and business organisations

Employer engagement should not begin only when a participant completes their training and starts looking for work. From the perspective of replicating SIMPLE, the employer's

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role can encompass much more than simply providing vacancies. Employers can provide information on actual skills requirements, consult on training content, help participants better understand the recruitment process, participate in mentoring, assess the feasibility of career or business ideas, offer exposure to a real-world working environment and – where possible – create opportunities for employment, work placements or business collaboration. It is important that employer engagement is built around mutual value, rather than merely the expectation of social engagement on the part of business. Employers should understand what they contribute to the pathway, but also what benefits they can gain from better-prepared candidates or access to new labour market resources. Future roll-outs should therefore involve employers at an earlier stage, in a more practical manner and in a way that is linked to actual labour market processes.

13.5. Civil society organisations, migrant organisations and community-based organisations

Civil society organisations play a special role in the SIMPLE model, as they are often closest to the target group and possess a capital of trust that cannot be quickly built through a formal recruitment campaign. Their importance should not, however, be limited to promoting the programme or providing contact details for potential participants. Migrant and non-governmental organisations can help to identify actual needs, tailor communication to the specific characteristics of the target group, design accessible activities, identify barriers that arise during the implementation of support programmes, and maintain contact with participants between successive stages of the support pathway. Experiences from the Italian pilot project recommend involving institutions and Ukrainian associations as early as the design stage, rather than solely as recruitment channels. Their involvement can build trust, broaden the reach and scope of assistance, and create a stronger local anchoring for the programme. The Polish pilot similarly emphasises the role of civil society organisations in building sustainable partnerships and reaching participants who are seeking appropriate forms of support. It is therefore recommended that these organisations move from acting as **'intermediaries for access'** to taking on the role **of partners who help shape the support pathway**. Where they possess the relevant expertise, they may also act as an operator or local navigator. At the same time, responsibility for all systemic gaps should not automatically be shifted onto civil society organisations. SIMPLE is based on the sharing of responsibility within the ecosystem, rather than on non-governmental organisations replacing the public sector or employers.

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13.6. Training providers, advisers, mentors and experts

Support providers have a direct influence on whether the model remains practical and focused on real change, or whether it turns into a series of disjointed educational activities. The Polish pilot project emphasises that their role is not merely to convey information. They should enable participants to understand, apply and link knowledge to the next stages of their own journey. It is recommended to tailor the content to the participant's stage of professional or business development, to use plain language, to employ practical methods, to keep legal and institutional information up to date, to coordinate content amongst trainers, and to make systematic use of feedback. The Italian report reinforces this approach. It recommends taking into account the broader personal and migration circumstances of participants, using plain language, and working on real-life cases as part of services co-delivered by external providers. The provider should therefore not operate as an external contractor unconnected to the rest of the programme. They should know: what the aim of their module is, what has happened prior to it, what outcome is to be achieved, and what may happen next. On a larger scale, it is precisely the preparation and coordination of providers that become one of the fundamental mechanisms of quality assurance.

13.7. Educational and training institutions and VET providers

Although some of their functions overlap with those of service providers, educational and VET institutions play an additional role in scaling. They can provide learning infrastructure, support the updating of content, offer existing courses rather than creating new ones, and help align skills development with labour market requirements. Education and training providers are regarded as an integral part of the local SIMPLE ecosystem, and their role is crucial to the design of support services. For these institutions, it is particularly important to:

- ✓ adapting the format and pace of learning to diverse groups;
- ✓ linking general competences to practical situations related to work and entrepreneurship;
- ✓ treating language as a functional element linked to real-world professional tasks;
- ✓ maintaining flexible formats where online, blended or partially individualised approaches are required;

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- ✓ and maintaining contact with employers and programme providers to ensure that educational content is not designed in isolation from the subsequent stages of the career path.

Their contribution to SIMPLE should therefore be understood more broadly than simply the 'delivery of training'. It is about building a bridge between learning and the next practical career step.

13.8. The academic and research community and bodies responsible for evaluation

In the quadruple helix model, the academic and research community does not merely act as an observer. Its particular value lies in providing support for contextual analysis, evaluation, data interpretation, documenting mechanisms of change, comparing successive implementations and developing knowledge about the conditions for transferability. Future replications require strengthening capacities in strategic planning, the design of integrated pathways, long-term coordination, impact monitoring and sustainability. It also highlights the need for greater involvement of the public sector and the academic community in building a more sustainable quadruple helix ecosystem. From the perspective of the Scaling Guidelines, a particularly useful role for these stakeholders is to support **evidence-informed improvement**, rather than creating an evaluation system that places an excessive burden on the operator and participants. Research should help answer practical questions:

- ✓ Does scaling up affect quality?
- ✓ Which adaptations sustain the mechanism of change?
- ✓ Which outcomes only become apparent in the longer term?
- ✓ Which differences between locations stem from context, and which from the method of implementation?

In this way, the research community can support the transition from individual lessons learnt to the accumulation of knowledge about model replication.

13.9. Participants and organisations representing the target group

Participants should not be treated solely as service recipients or as respondents to a final evaluation. It is recommended that the target group be involved in a participatory manner in the design and development of support solutions. In practice, pilot

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experiences have shown that participant feedback can reveal needs that were not apparent at the design stage and lead to justified programme adaptations.

In future roll-outs, participants should have the opportunity to influence, first and foremost, those elements that directly shape their experience – e.g. content, accessibility, delivery format, barriers to participation, the need for additional support, and – as well as to assess whether the pathway leads to realistic next steps and the expected final outcome. This does not mean that responsibility for designing the entire system is transferred to the participants. Organisational responsibility remains with the operator and partners. The 'participant voice', however, is intended to ensure that decisions are not taken solely from the perspective of the implementing institution. It can be particularly valuable to involve trusted organisations representing migrant and refugee communities, which can act as intermediaries between individual experiences and the broader perspective of the target group.

13.10. Recommendations common to all groups

Despite the differences between the roles of stakeholders, the SIMPLE experience also yields cross-cutting recommendations.

- ✓ Firstly, partners should be engaged around a specific function, rather than merely for the sake of participating in the project. Organisations remain more active when they understand their responsibilities, make a genuine contribution to implementation, and see the value of collaboration for their own institutional objectives.
- ✓ Secondly, collaboration should be organised from the perspective of the participant's journey, rather than the institutional structure of the partnership. It is the participant who experiences the gaps between organisations, and therefore communication and the handover of responsibility between successive stages are just as important as the quality of any single service.
- ✓ Thirdly, feedback should lead to decisions. All stakeholder groups should have the opportunity to highlight problems and suggest improvements, but the operator must have the competence and manage the process to translate this information into controlled change.
- ✓ Fourthly, sustainability requires ownership. If all knowledge, coordination and responsibility remain within a single project organisation, sustainability will be limited. As the model develops, it is worth gradually distributing functions amongst partners who can maintain them even beyond a single funding cycle.

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- ✓ Fifthly, scaling should develop the capacity of the entire ecosystem, rather than merely increasing the number of participants in the programme.

13.12. From division of roles to shared responsibility

The most important recommendation arising from SIMPLE is not that every stakeholder should carry out more activities. It is that everyone should perform the right function at the right time and in a manner coordinated with other entities.

The operator should not replace public services or all experts. Public institutions do not need to manage the entire process on their own. Employers should not merely be the end recipients of candidates. Civil society organisations should not be limited to the role of recruitment channels. Training providers should not operate in isolation from the participant's individual plan, and the research community should not confine itself to evaluating the programme only after its completion. The value of SIMPLE arises when these roles are combined into a single functional support architecture. This is precisely why effective replication requires not only the transfer of tools and methods, but also the transfer of the way in which collaboration takes place – from fragmented services to a coordinated pathway, from a declarative partnership to a practical division of responsibilities, and from one-off stakeholder involvement to joint learning and refinement of the model. In this sense, the various stakeholder groups are not merely the context of the SIMPLE model. They form part of its implementation mechanism and, at the same time, constitute one of the main conditions for its transferability, scalability and sustainability.

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14. Conclusions – From Pilot Experience to a Transferable and Scalable Model

14.1. From the pilot to a practical framework for transfer

The aim of the SIMPLE project was not to create yet another separate support programme for refugees, but to examine how existing social innovations can be transferred, adapted and utilised in new contexts, and then to translate the knowledge gained into a framework useful for other organisations. The pilot projects in Poland and Italy played different but complementary roles in this process. The Polish pathway, inspired by BSI_4Women, focused to a greater extent on entrepreneurship, pre-incubation, skills development, individualisation and navigation within the local support ecosystem. The Italian pathway, based on SIREE, made it possible to test the adaptability of mechanisms for co-creation, community work, labour market orientation, referrals and collaboration with the local ecosystem to the needs of adult female refugees operating within a different social and institutional context. These experiences do not lead to a single, rigid 'SIMPLE programme' that should then be replicated identically. Instead, they lead to the more useful outcome of a transferable intervention framework, whose core functions can be retained whilst adapting the way they are implemented.

14.2. SIMPLE as the architecture of an integrated pathway

The most important conclusion from the entire process can be formulated as follows: the value of SIMPLE lies not in a single service, training module or tool, but in the way they are organised into a coherent pathway that addresses the participant's complex needs.

The pilot projects have shown that employability and economic integration depend on many interrelated factors. Professional or entrepreneurial competences are important, but their practical application may also depend on knowledge of institutions, formal recognition of qualifications, effective use of guidance, access to information on funding opportunities, networks of contacts, or the ability to navigate the host country's institutional system. For this reason, a single training course – even one that is well-rated by participants – should not be equated with the SIMPLE approach. Experience from the pilot project points to the need to maintain a comprehensive pathway encompassing assessment, participant preparation, training, specialist counselling, language support, institutional navigation, networking, individual action plans and follow-up. At the same time, it emphasises that the observed changes should not be attributed to a single component, but to the interaction of various elements in accordance with the ‘ ’ logic.

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In this sense, SIMPLE should be understood as a 'participant-centred pathway embedded in a local ecosystem' – a pathway built around the participant's situation, but implemented through the pooling of resources from various organisations.

14.3. The most important focus of transfer is the functions and mechanisms

The Scaling Guidelines lead to a clear distinction between **core functions** and **adaptable elements**. The transferable core of SIMPLE primarily comprises:

- assessing the participant's situation, needs, resources and level of readiness;
- differentiating pathways and the intensity of support;
- combining group and individual support;
- access to complementary skills and services;
- the role of a pathway operator or coordinator;
- active guidance and referrals;
- involvement of the local ecosystem, including – where appropriate – employers;
- participant voice and feedback mechanisms;
- monitoring to enable adaptive management;
- follow-up and identification of the next realistic step.

However, the organisational form, the number and duration of meetings, the configuration of partners, the method of delivery, the use of online and face-to-face formats, the specific topics covered in the modules, and the division of tasks between the operator and external entities can be considerably more flexible. This flexibility does not mean arbitrariness. Adaptation is appropriate when it changes the method of implementation but allows the function to be retained. If, however, the change results in the loss of the mechanism itself, it should be treated as a significant deviation rather than a mere adaptation of the model.

14.4. The ecosystem is part of the model, not its environment

The second cross-cutting conclusion concerns the importance of the local ecosystem. The SIMPLE experience shows that an organisation does not need to possess all the

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resources required by participants on its own. It can act as an operator–navigator, diagnosing needs, organising a basic pathway, coordinating access to services, monitoring referrals and ensuring the continuity of the process. The Polish pilot project points to precisely this model as one of the possible ways of scaling up. However, this requires a relatively well-developed local ecosystem. The challenge remains coordinating existing resources, building cross-sectoral cooperation, engaging employers and creating coherent pathways rather than fragmented services.

14.5. Scaling should increase the system's capacity, not just the number of participants

One of the most important distinctions in these Guidelines is the difference between 'growth' and 'scaling'. An increase in the number of participants is only one way of developing the model. Scaling may also involve additional cohorts, new locations, greater digital reach, a network of local operators, international transfer, or increased intensity of support for people with more complex needs. Responsible scaling, however, should maintain a balance between three elements: reach – quality – resources. A situation in which reach is increased but participants lose access to the essence of the support cannot be considered a success. Similarly, scaling based on a workload for the operator that cannot be sustained in subsequent cycles is not sustainable. Therefore, the strategy proposed in these Guidelines is based on progressive scaling – increasing the scale in stages, using checkpoints, monitoring and periodic readiness assessments. Not everything should be scaled simultaneously, but rather those elements and configurations for which sufficient organisational, ecosystem and resource conditions exist.

14.6. Transferability does not yet imply confirmed large-scale scalability

An important aspect of the final interpretation of the SIMPLE experience is maintaining an appropriate level of caution. Pilot projects provide useful evidence regarding the feasibility, adaptability and functioning of individual mechanisms, implementation barriers, and the conditions for future transfer and scaling up. However, they do not constitute a test of large-scale systemic scaling. In Poland, the pilot highlights solutions that could potentially facilitate scaling up – modularity, tools, partnerships and the operator-navigator role – but at the same time makes further growth contingent upon safeguarding quality and resources. The Scaling Guidelines should therefore be understood as an evidence-informed framework for responsible replication and scaling,

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rather than as a declaration that identical results will be achieved in every new location or at any scale.

14.7. Continuous improvement is part of a transferable model

SIMPLE should not be treated as a model that is 'finalised' once and for all and then merely disseminated. It can be an ongoing process based on lessons learnt, stakeholder feedback, the revision of guidelines, and the development of transfer and scaling strategies. This approach also involves periodic reviews, stakeholder check-ins and adjustment protocols designed to maintain the model's adaptability. This means that future replications should also generate new knowledge. Each subsequent location can help to better determine:

- whose core functions do indeed remain stable;
- which solutions are highly context-dependent;
- what minimum resources are required;
- which adaptations improve accessibility;
- which partnership mechanisms work best;
- and under what conditions can the scale be increased without compromising quality.

Therefore, one of the most important outcomes of future implementations should be not only the number of participants served, but also documented knowledge of how the model works.

14.8. Sustainability means maintaining value, not necessarily an identical project

Like scaling, sustainability should be understood in functional terms. Sustainability does not necessarily mean that, once funding ends, all activities will continue under the same name and within the same structure. A more realistic aim is to maintain what creates long-term value, i.e. organisational competencies, tools, referral pathways, partnership relationships, navigation functions, partner capacity and mechanisms for continuous learning. For example, the materials, tools and methods developed within SIMPLE can serve as a shared foundation for further use and adaptation, but their long-term value will depend on whether organisations actually use them and generate new insights arising from their application. In this sense, the transition from the project to sustainability should not mean attempting to 'freeze' SIMPLE in its current form. It

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should mean embedding its most valuable features within organisations and local ecosystems.

14.9. Final synthesis

The entirety of the project's experiences can be distilled into a few interrelated principles:

- ✓ Transfer the mechanism, not necessarily the format.
- ✓ Build a pathway around the participant, not around the organisational structure.
- ✓ Assess needs before allocating support.
- ✓ Integrate services rather than creating further isolated interventions.
- ✓ Treat the operator as a coordinator and navigator, not necessarily as a provider of everything.
- ✓ Build the ecosystem before scaling, not after.
- ✓ Engage partners through specific roles, rather than symbolic participation.
- ✓ Adapt the model, but document the adaptations and protect core functions.
- ✓ Scale in stages and monitor the quality of growth.
- ✓ Treat feedback, monitoring and continuous improvement as part of the model.
- ✓ Plan for sustainability by maintaining functions, relationships and competencies.

These principles do not constitute yet another closed model. They form a decision-making framework that enables organisations to design a local variant of SIMPLE in a consistent, informed manner, drawing on the experience gained during pilot projects.

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