

STORIES THAT SHAPE COMMUNITIES

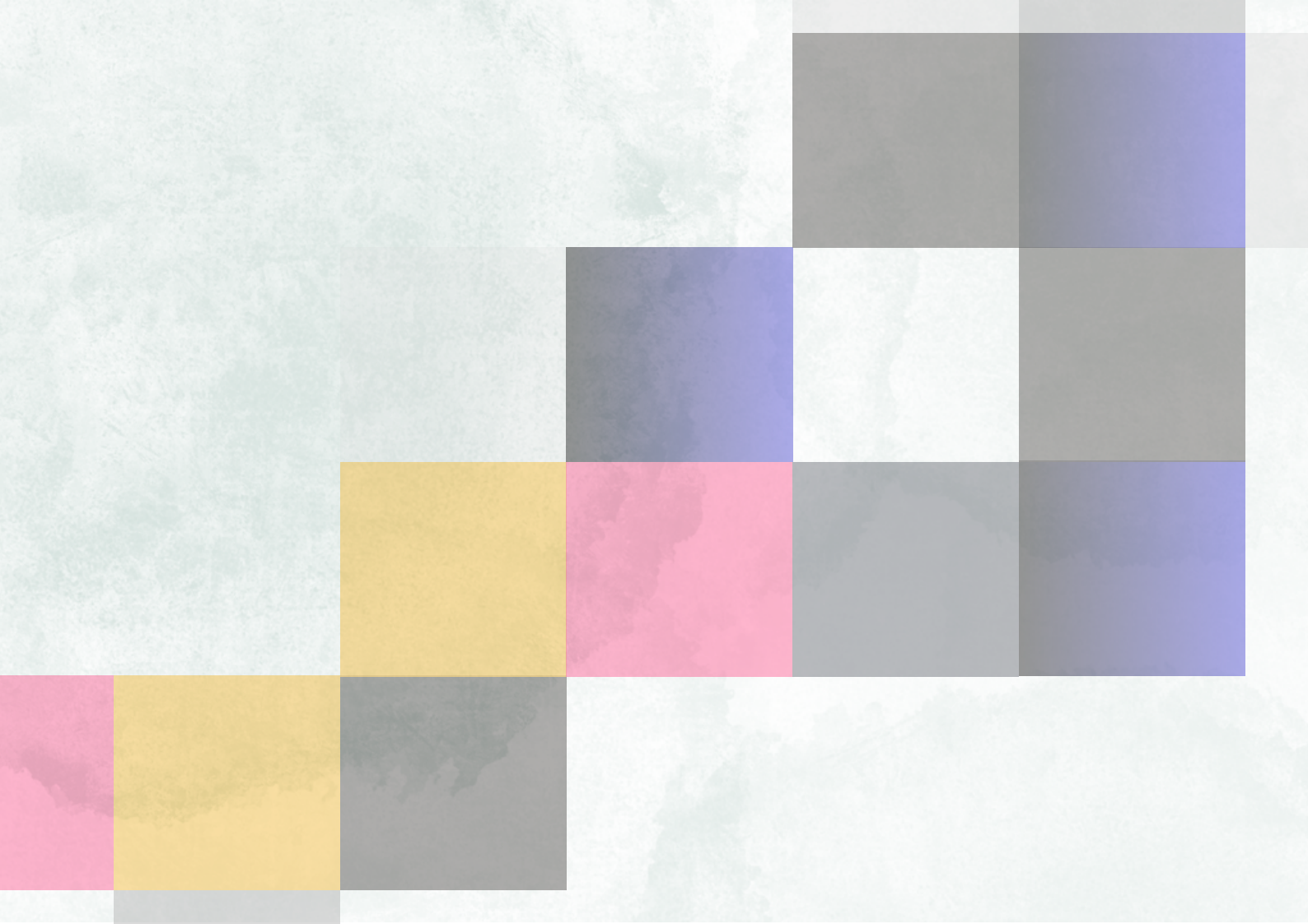
Project “LINK 4 Cooperation”

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Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to a vast wealth of untold stories—stories of individuals who have taken small but vital steps to help their communities slowly but steadily progress. These small steps form the foundation for future generations, whose mission is to write the next chapters of these inspiring narratives.

This publication presents 22 such stories, viewed through the lens of 22 civil society organizations. These organizations, composed of citizens deeply connected to their communities, are active agents of change, fully aware that positive transformation does not happen on its own.

They dedicate themselves to long-term efforts, fostering connections, networking, and collaboration. They engage, affirm, and advocate, often driven by passion and a desire for progress and innovation. Sometimes, their motivation stems from personal adversity, transforming individual struggles into a collective fight for the common good. Whether it involves empowering women, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, protecting the environment or cultural heritage, raising youth awareness about key challenges, integrating senior citizens into community life, or advancing tourism and agriculture—these stories all begin with the same thought: Our obstacles become the motivation for a better future for our communities.

The content of this publication is based on the activities of 22 projects implemented from April to November 2023 as part of the grant scheme under the three-year project "LINK for Cooperation," funded by the European Union. The total contracted amount allocated for implementing grant scheme projects was 118,104.00 KM, with 113,585.28 KM ultimately spent. The grant scheme was financed by the European Union, with co-financing provided by local self-governments, the project beneficiaries.

It is important to highlight the role of municipalities and cities that recognized the importance of fostering stronger cooperation and supporting the civil sector to achieve better outcomes at the local level. These include the Municipality of Berkovići, the Municipality of Jablanica, the Municipality of Kostajnica, the Municipality of Maglaj, the City of Mostar, the Municipality of Novi Grad, the City of Prijedor, the Municipality of Ravno, the City of Trebinje, the City of Zavidovići, and the Municipality of Žepče.

Empowered Women for Resilient Communities

CSO Center for Mothers "Plamen" Zavidovići

For the past ten years or so, enthusiasm and a desire for change have driven the women's associations in the City of Zavidovići. Through dedication and hard work, they not only sustained their existence but steadily grew stronger. Along the way, they evolved—gaining self-awareness, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, and eventually deciding to confront the barriers that were holding them back from becoming even more impactful. Their goal was to become not only reliable partners in the community but also self-sustaining entities.

Operating in a predominantly rural area presents many challenges. Access to information is limited, support for innovative ideas is hard to find, and gaining visibility in the broader public eye is no easy task. Moreover, as is often the case with women's activism, their efforts were undervalued by their surroundings. Encouragement was scarce, as were institutional support and official recognition.

Determined to change this narrative, the women's associations stepped forward with strength and resolve. Guided by the motto "Empowered Women for Stronger Communities," they committed themselves to learning and growth. Some—thirty women, to be exact, sat at computers and mastered digital tools to improve communication and access information more efficiently. Others honed their practical skills—learning to sew by machine, cut fabric, and produce handmade goods. Then they shared their achievements, loudly and proudly, with those around them. They showcased what they knew, how much they had learned, and just how valuable their skills and knowledge truly are. And they did so not just for themselves, but for everyone. Because throughout their journey, they remained anchored to one guiding principle: the community—a strong, inclusive community built together, by everyone, equally.

And people noticed. They were seen. Formal, meaningful meetings followed—the kind where decisions are made and actions taken. They were welcomed as they are: capable, determined, entrepreneurial, and equal. Together with others, they began shaping a place where life is better for all—a place that reflects the needs of all its residents. This new understanding of community, where women are recognized as a driving force, has inspired new initiatives—built on partnership, collaboration, and shared vision.

Did you know that through this project:

- 30 women improved their digital literacy skills
- 25 women enhanced their expertise in sewing and embroidery
- 5 awareness-raising campaigns were carried out, along with a public event showcasing the work of women's associations
- 1 roundtable was held to strengthen cooperation between women's associations and local government



Scientific Research Camps for New Protected Natural Areas in Maglaj and Žepče

CSO Center for Mothers "Plamen" Zavidovići

They discovered the largest population of the Macedonian crested newt (*Triturus macedonicus*) in Bosnia and Herzegovina—possibly even beyond—and identified the largest known habitat of the endangered greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*). All this in just one scientific research camp, driven by a single guiding idea: to protect Mount Ozren.

For some time now, the organization Fojničani from Maglaj has been fighting for Ozren—for the environment they live in, and for nature in general. Despite Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to protect at least 17% of its territory, only around 3% is currently designated as protected. This gap leaves biologically rich areas vulnerable—rather than being declared nature monuments or national parks, they risk becoming targets of exploitation and destruction. Mount Ozren has faced just such a threat.

As Fojničani approaches its 10th anniversary, the organization has committed to a serious, systematic, and scientifically grounded approach to preserving natural values and biodiversity. Their long-term engagement confirms their dedication. Their continued outreach to government bodies at all levels shows their strategic mindset. And the involvement of a broad team of experts and researchers ensures a strong scientific foundation. At the heart of their success lies collaboration and inclusion. Fojničani began this journey alone, bravely—but others soon followed. They turned neighbors and fellow citizens into volunteers and environmental advocates. By involving the local community in their activities, they raised awareness about the importance of Mount Ozren and inspired enthusiasm for protecting nature right on their doorstep.

They were joined by other nature-focused organizations, and together, they launched a movement: raising public awareness, advocating for political and legislative change, and striving for genuine, long-term protection. Now, the final step is to win over the authorities—the ones who hold the ultimate tools of protection—so they too stand on the side of nature. And perhaps, through this momentum, other ecologically rich but endangered areas can also be saved. 8

Did you know that through this project...

- 2 scientific research camps were organized
- Over 60 biologists and speleologists took part in research activities, collecting valuable data on local flora, fauna, and geological formations
- The largest population of the Macedonian crested newt (*Triturus macedonicus*) was discovered
- The largest known habitat of the endangered greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) was identified



Revitalization of the Radak Swimming Area

CSO “Za Doljanku” Zavidovići

The ecosystem of the Doljanka River, located in the small Herzegovinian municipality of Jablanica, has been significantly disrupted in recent years, threatened by various interventions along its course. In response, a group of dedicated enthusiasts came together with a mission: to protect, preserve, and care for the river and its banks. Their focus soon turned to one specific micro-location—a bathing area that had long been neglected, polluted with waste, and overgrown with wild shrubs and brush.

The revitalization of the Radak swimming area began with careful planning and persistent effort—from conceptual design to coordinated clean-up campaigns. The work continued for months, spanning three seasons. It started with just a handful of nature lovers and volunteers. But as the area began to transform and word spread throughout the community, more and more people joined in—armed with gloves and tools, ready to contribute.

By the end of summer, over 150 activists had taken part in more than 30 clean-up actions. Radak was cleared of garbage, invasive shrubs were removed, natural pools and stone dams were built using materials from the river, and the beach area was expanded and arranged for the enjoyment of children. Parking was created for both cars and bicycles, a wooden gazebo was built, and benches and tables were set up for visitors.

Radak also became a kind of open-air classroom—a perfect setting for environmental education and for learning about endangered species living in the river.

In addition to local residents, the revitalized Radak began attracting visitors and explorers from outside the region. It was easy to find, thanks to proud locals who mapped and promoted the site online. And just like that, the activists succeeded—they created a welcoming natural space where people enjoy spending their free time, while also respecting and protecting the environment.

Did you know that through this project...

- 30 environmental clean-up actions were carried out, engaging over 150 volunteers
- The Radak swimming area was revitalized and enriched with new facilities
- The visitor area at Radak was expanded from 50 to over 150 spots
- A new beach for children and a new natural swimming pool were created
- An educational session was held on endangered species in the Doljanka River and environmental protection



Berkovići – Visit, Explore, Experience

CSO Center for the Promotion of Sustainable Development Berkovići

A small but incredibly rich municipality worth visiting – that’s the best way to briefly describe Berkovići, accessible from Nevesinje, Bileća, Gacko, and Stolac. Nestled in a well-preserved natural environment, Berkovići boasts a rich cultural and historical heritage and offers plenty of opportunities for hunting enthusiasts, sports lovers, and adventure seekers. However, it is not easy to find or navigate through the landscape of this area.

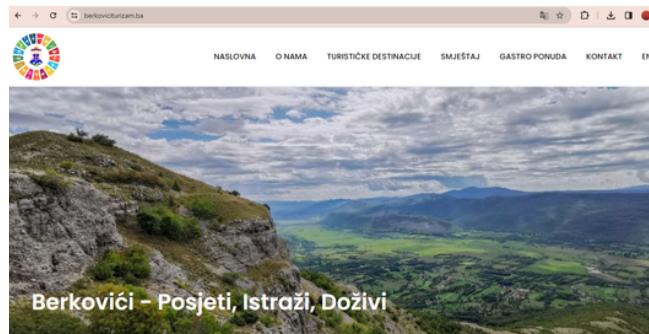
Fortunately, Berkovići is home to the Center for the Promotion of Sustainable Development. Through tourism and the valorization of local resources, this Center fully lives up to its name – aiming to promote development, and specifically sustainable development.

The Center has focused on improving the local tourist infrastructure and enhancing the experience of visitors. They installed clear signage, providing precise information about routes, attractions, and available services, making it easier for visitors to explore the area. All of this was done under the motto: “Berkovići – Visit, Explore, Experience,” through which they aim to reach not only current visitors but also those considering a future visit. They gathered all important and interesting facts on a dedicated website.

Like one of the signs they installed, the project had a clear direction – actually, two directions. Berkovići suffers from high unemployment, forcing many residents to leave their homes and move to larger, more developed cities. However, with the arrival of tourists and the growth of tourism as an economic sector, new opportunities for income, livelihoods, and improved quality of life have emerged. In short, they enhanced tourist visibility and strengthened the local economy. The Center for the Promotion of Sustainable Development Berkovići has no intention of stopping – they are already working on further promotion and building connections with travel agencies.

Did you know that through this project...

- More than 20 tourist attractions were analyzed and mapped
- 23 tourist signposts were installed at 7 different locations across the Berkovići municipality
- A website was created to promote the municipality's tourism potential online
- More favorable conditions were established for the development and utilization of tourism opportunities



Youth and Democracy, Vol. 1

CSO Green team Novi Grad

We live in a society where many people are not even aware of their rights, nor do they know how to exercise them. Many believe that the smaller the community they live in, the fewer opportunities there are for personal growth and self-realization. But the reality is different. What's needed is just an initiative—something to encourage people to show they are open and willing to cooperate.

In the Municipality of Novi Grad, the initial spark for change came from the organization Green Team, with a clear focus on young people. Through conversations with youth, Green Team realized that young people have many reservations about exercising their rights at the local level. On one side, there are prejudices and irrational fears among the youth; on the other, public institutions and local administration have not paid enough attention to them. This has resulted in a lack of communication, cooperation, and opportunities.

Green Team decided to take a bold step forward. They engaged 50 students from the ŠŠC Đuro Radmanović school and taught them about democracy, youth volunteer activism, and how local government functions. The students connected with the Novi Grad municipality—department heads spoke to them about administration, and the students themselves sat in the council seats simulating the work of the municipal assembly to learn about decision-making processes.

This all led to an official initiative submitted by the youth to the municipality, requesting opportunities for professional internships. While this idea is being realized, the youth of Novi Grad have come up with two more initiatives. One concerns formal communication with the municipal mayor on issues important to young people, and the other focuses on caring for the community and the environment—they have requested the construction of a green island in the municipality. All these initiatives confirm just how important cooperation is. Local government, civil society organizations, and educational institutions can achieve a lot together—the potential is there; it just needs to be awakened and directed toward positive change.

Did you know that through this project...

- Over 50 young people were educated on participation in democratic processes
- More than 50 young people learned about the functioning and work of public institutions
- Over 50 young people received training on volunteering and activism at the local level
- Project participants were given the opportunity to take part in the “First Youth Assembly” – a simulation of the Novi Grad Municipal Assembly’s work
- The youth submitted an official initiative to the Municipality of Novi Grad requesting the formal introduction of professional internships within the municipality



Cycling for everyone

CSO Cycling Club “Tajan” Zavidovići

In Zavidovići, as in many other towns across Bosnia and Herzegovina, urban cycling paths are practically nonexistent. This makes cycling—whether for fun or necessity—extremely difficult and often dangerous, especially for children. But not everyone gave up. Some, driven by a love for cycling, decided to change the situation. And the mindset. For everyone around them.

The members of Cycling Club “Tajan” kicked into high gear.

They taught children and youth how to ride safely, how to navigate roads, and why safety gear is essential. Through frequent and large group rides, they raised awareness among drivers about the presence of young cyclists on the streets. These group rides also served to promote cycling as a valuable and multifaceted activity.

From an environmental standpoint, cycling is a sustainable mode of transport that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and helps improve air quality.

From a social standpoint, it fosters an active lifestyle and strengthens social bonds through teamwork and shared experiences. And BK Tajan didn't ignore the economic and tourism potential of cycling either. They successfully organized a professional cycling race – part of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Premier League – hosting around 100 cyclists. During the event, participants explored scenic routes and natural beauty, helping to position Zavidovići as an emerging cycling tourism destination.

All of this was done in close cooperation with the local community—most notably with law enforcement officers, who played an important role in promoting road safety, especially for children. What started as a local initiative is turning into a long-term movement. Through persistent efforts, mass rides are becoming a tradition, and cycling is being redefined not only as a mode of transport—but as a sport of the future.

Did you know that through this project...

...primary school students in Zavidovići were educated about cycling, healthy lifestyles, and traffic safety

...demonstration exercises and training sessions were held to teach children proper bike handling and use of safety gear

...cycling routes were marked and improved

...a professional cycling race for around 100 cyclists was organized, along with races for amateurs, recreational riders, and children



Advancing and Developing Professions Through Education of Youth With and Without Developmental Disabilities

CSO “CERUR” Mostar

Staying competitive in today’s job market—and avoiding becoming just another number in employment statistics—is no easy task. The labour market and the education system often operate out of sync. Some schools are overcrowded, while others remain half-empty or neglected because they offer vocational programmes that are widely considered outdated or irrelevant. Yet these very programmes—trades and crafts—could offer real solutions.

In the citizens’ association CERUR, based in Mostar, the team began rethinking the future of younger generations and how to help them realise their potential. They identified crafts and vocational skills as an important path forward. The project moved in two directions. On one hand, they worked to inspire young people to consider traditional trades—some adapted to the local context—that could help them become independent, start their own businesses, and continue advancing their skills. The goal: to encourage youth to stay in the country and become productive, proactive members of society.

At the same time, CERUR placed special focus on a vulnerable group—young people with disabilities. The aim was to give them real opportunities and ensure they have a bright future. A key partner in this effort was the Secondary Polytechnic School in Mostar, one of the few schools in the Herzegovina region offering a curriculum adapted for students with developmental difficulties.

In both streams of the project, youth were introduced to the vocational paths available at the Polytechnic School, as well as practical training and links to companies in need of skilled workers. Meetings were held with decision-makers to explore ways of improving educational processes and meaningfully including persons with disabilities—preparing them for real and sustainable employment. The outcome? Over 100 participants took part in the project. And in just one school year, the Polytechnic School welcomed a diverse group of new students—the future cosmeticians, horticulture technicians, hairdressers, and florists-gardeners—trades thoughtfully adapted to support young people with disabilities.

Did you know that through this project...

- 50 final-year primary school students were introduced to the vocational programmes offered by the Polytechnic School in Mostar
- 45 students learned about companies in the agricultural sector and employment opportunities within them
- A needs assessment was conducted to support the introduction of new vocational profiles for young people with developmental disabilities
- One multi-sector roundtable was organised to address the challenges of education and employment for persons with developmental disabilities
- Recommendations were developed to improve the education of students with developmental disabilities, including examples of good practices for working with this underrepresented group



Museum of Agro Seeds

Association of Agricultural Producers “Agro Dolina” Zavidovići

The Zavidovići area is characterized by favorable agroclimatic conditions, preserved agricultural land, and a variety of crops. However, interest in agriculture has been lacking, due to the trend of rural depopulation and migration towards Western Europe – or rather, it had been lacking. Until things began to change fundamentally, starting from the seed, because the seed is the foundation of agriculture.

If a strong foundation is built, the entire story of agricultural development makes sense – this was the guiding principle of the Agricultural Producers Association “Agro Dolina” when they embarked on a project quite unusual for this region. They decided to establish a Seed Museum. The museum was envisioned as a seed bank primarily aimed at education, but also to serve as a nucleus for a network that would develop through seed exchange. Unconventional, but highly interesting and necessary.

The museum showed promising results right from the start. Instead of the expected twenty, forty participants attended the first educational session. Schools regularly bring their students to the museum for demonstration classes, even though it is located in a rural, not easily accessible area. About forty seed enthusiasts are already exchanging seeds, including one indigenous variety – the yellow tomato, cultivated in this region for over 1,000 years.

The Agricultural Producers Association “Agro Dolina” has successfully engaged the entire local community, which is no easy task. People in rural areas mostly focus on making a living and are often resistant to change, even when it is for the better. It is even harder to motivate rural populations who have stopped farming to return to agriculture. But what they needed was simply to be presented with what is within their reach, what they can do, and how they can earn a living – in a new, innovative, and creative way. In the same spirit, they gained the support of local authorities, and now together they are considering the next steps. The foundation for success is there; the seed of positive change has been sown...

Did you know that through this project...

- A model agricultural farm with a greenhouse was established
- A permanent Seed Museum exhibition was set up, open to all visitors
- Visits to the Museum were organized for primary school students
- 40 women, youth, entrepreneurs, and representatives of local self-government and institutions were educated on the importance of agriculture
- 3 demonstration lessons were held for students from local primary schools
- A fair seed exchange network was created



The Colorful World

Association of Parents of Children with Special Needs "Neven" Prijedor

Art is vital for personal, social, and cultural expression. For people with intellectual disabilities, it holds even greater significance. Often, due to inadequate attitudes and approaches from society, individuals with disabilities lack opportunities to be more active, interactive, and creative; to participate in activities, to move freely, and to create in ways that help develop their social skills, fine motor skills, and cognitive abilities.

At the Association of Parents of Children with Special Needs “Neven” in Prijedor, which supports 325 children and adults with intellectual disabilities, this unjust treatment was no longer acceptable. With the help of an academic painter, they created a special world for their children – the “World in Color.” For six months, art workshops were held as a space for the creative, sensory, motor, emotional, social, and cognitive development of 36 participants.

In this colorful world, even if only briefly, the beneficiaries of “Neven” became active creators in visual arts – painters – experiencing integration, inclusion, and belonging in their community. The community was presented with over two hundred artworks – drawings, paintings, and sculptures created during the workshops – in an exhibition. For the people of Prijedor, it was an opportunity to see beyond just pictures; it was a demonstration of true social inclusion.

This exhibition highlighted the importance and necessity of providing more activities and social services like these, to make them accessible to all children with developmental difficulties. It was an excellent example of good practice and the significance of investing in this population. Experts are needed to help these individuals develop skills and empower them for active participation in community life – especially since, as a rule, after finishing school, they often remain unemployed, and the support for them ceases, leading to rapid mental and physical decline.

The world of the “Neven” beneficiaries from Prijedor sends a message through the exhibition of their handmade works: life can be colorful every day, everywhere. Because they can and must be part of every aspect of the community in which they live.

Did you know that through this project...

- 22 art workshops were held, involving 36 direct participants with intellectual disabilities, guided by an academic painter.
- Over 200 artworks were created during the workshops, using various individual and combined painting techniques.
- An open exhibition of the artworks was organized, attended by a large number of citizens, representatives of local government, NGOs, and relevant institutions.



Sword dance

CSO “RUSAG” Prijedor

The acronym “HEMA” may be unfamiliar to many. Behind it lies an entire world that, although rooted in the Middle Ages, still captivates attention and sparks interest today. HEMA stands for Historical European Martial Arts — the traditional combat techniques of the Old Continent, with the sword reigning as the “king” of fighting skills.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, these skills and this noble sport are preserved only in a few places. One of those places is the city of Prijedor, where enthusiasts who introduced this sport selflessly decided to share it with the public.

The Prijedor-based civic association “RUSAG” brings together lovers of the medieval era. They strive to “revive” and modernize it. While this subject has long been part of popular culture in Europe, RUSAG, having mastered these knightly skills themselves, wanted to bring them closer to others, especially young people. The interest was certainly there — for years, people from Prijedor and nearby areas have been asking about HEMA swordsmanship. Practicing swordsmanship and medieval martial arts required acquiring props and equipment. Given their specificity, it wasn’t easy — these are not items you find around every corner or in general stores. But the knights of RUSAG received great support from the entire Prijedor community, and everything needed for classes and knowledge-sharing was provided. Multiple times a week, classes were held for over twenty young people, five of whom even came from Banja Luka.

What was almost unknown just a few years ago has now become very popular—and rightly so. By introducing swordsmanship as an accessible sport, a strong interest was awakened among otherwise dormant youth. The efforts and dedication of the “knights” have been recognized by the local community. The city of Prijedor aims to add this discipline to the official list of sports and is determined to promote and nurture it. The team at RUSAG is more than satisfied with their achievements. They say they are happy to have reached a large number of young people and to have earned recognition from the local community. Such partnerships, they say, are invaluable for the development and success of the community.

Did you know that through this project...

...a medieval swordsmanship HEMA section was established, training 25 young people

...the groundwork was laid for the continuation of the section's activities

...cultural heritage was promoted and awareness about its preservation was raised within the local community

...the City of Prijedor intends to include HEMA swordsmanship as an official sport discipline in Prijedor and continue promoting it alongside other sports



Perspective

CSO Youth Network Trebinje

Although called a youth organization, the Trebinje group cares about all their fellow citizens. They monitor the situation in the city, analyze the needs of the population, and based on that, find adequate solutions and responses to what troubles, hinders, or slows them down. This time, they acted in multiple ways, for the benefit of many at once. With the support of the City, they initiated the establishment of a Social Center whose doors are literally open to both young and old. Through this center, a large number of organizations and informal groups have gained a space to operate – a place where they can carry out their activities effectively.

At the same time, they were given the opportunity to contribute to intergenerational solidarity, as the Social Center also became a gathering place for Trebinje's oldest citizens. They needed it as a refuge where they can find support, where they can talk, and through which they can access content that is otherwise physically inaccessible to them. Pensioners generally cannot easily keep up with rapid technological progress, so support from the youth in training and mastering technology was more than welcome. The Social Center thus became a place where Trebinje residents help each other and solve problems through joint efforts.

Life in Trebinje gained a new perspective. Older citizens are no longer alone; they are included in the community. The youth again have a resource to engage more easily in society and a direct opportunity to contribute to the community. And all this with the support of the local administration and public institutions – in fact, the support of everyone involved in all spheres of society. The youth organization “Youth Network” Trebinje says such support and cooperation are the key success of the project. There were no obstacles in implementation; everyone continuously expressed a desire for progress and connection.

Did you know that through this project...

...a Social Center was opened, provided by the City of Trebinje for the implementation of activities for the project users

...a cooperation protocol was signed with the “National Library” Trebinje for lending literature to the users of the Social Center

...a promotional flyer and guide for the Social Center were created and distributed to all 18 local communities and project users

...2 workshops were held aimed at helping elderly people master modern technical devices, with a focus on accessing electronic sources of information

...an informal network of young people and elderly persons was established



Academy for Political Empowerment of Women Leaders

Women's Association "Krivaja-Iskra" Zavidovići

In Zavidovići's Krivaja neighborhood, no woman had ever been elected as the head of the local community. None were elected because none had even run for the position. And they hadn't run because they were underrepresented — they never participated in decision-making processes.

The women themselves, gathered in the Association "Krivaja-Iskra," realized this and decided to change things. They decided to ask out loud: "Where are the women?"

Twenty local women of different ages decided to educate and motivate others, giving them a chance to discover their strength, build self-confidence, and become aware of how they can and must be involved in all community processes. Participants of the Academy for Political Empowerment of Women Leaders asked many questions, exploring whether it's possible to be both a homemaker and an active citizen, and how to engage politically at all. They understood that their underrepresentation in decision-making was due, among other reasons, to gender dominance and reinforced stereotypes about women in politics.

A survey conducted among the local population confirmed the mindset: 51.7% of respondents believe there is a division of male and female roles in their households; 65.4% think society is still patriarchal in this division. However, 86.2% of respondents also believe that women should be employed outside the home. Through workshops and conversations at the Academy, it became clear that women so far have not been involved in local governance for multiple reasons — not only family influence and mentality but also lack of communication and social skills.

Until now, the women of Krivaja had no desire to participate in decision-making in their local community. It is therefore very positive that the conversation about change has been initiated, that these problems have been addressed, and most importantly, that women have been empowered to take action for their own benefit and that of the entire community.

Znate li da je kroz ovaj projekt...

- ...organizovana promocija aktivnosti na kojoj je učestvovalo 60 mještanki i mještana
- ...urađen popis punoljetnih žena sa područja Krivaje radi informisanja o broju žena sa pravom glasa
- ...prikupljene informacije o nivou rodne ravnopravnosti u zajednici
- ...održane 4 radionice za žene s ciljem izrade strategije za kandidovanje žena na lokalnim izborima
- ...provedena kampanja o pravima žena da se kandiduju na izborima
- ...organizovan javni događaj "Krivajska pramajka" za razmjenu iskustava i njegovanje tradicije i običaja krivajskog kraja



Valorization of the ŠA Fest for the Creation of Development Projects for the Youth Policy of the City of Prijedor

CSO ŠA Fest Prijedor

Although primarily a music festival, the Prijedor ŠA Fest has been engaged since its inception. Created in honor of a Prijedor music creator, the festival supports artists from Prijedor, especially young and unestablished ones. Over time, ŠA Fest has grown and matured, and what followed was a logical sequence of events.

During the festival days, at LivingLab workshops attended by young people with various interests and views on society, the organizers realized that although undeniably creative and mostly motivated for activism and change, young people were actually disoriented and uninformed about what can be collectively called youth policy. Hence the project, the initiative to encourage youth to act in the community, to participate in decision-making...

Primarily through ŠA Fest workshops, with the help of experts, young people were introduced both theoretically and practically to activities within youth policy, or how to get involved in general. Workshop participants included, among others, representatives of local authorities, and lengthy discussions on, for example, youth inclusion in the development of Prijedor resulted in the announcement of the opening of a youth center and the expansion of the City Youth Council.

The enthusiastic team behind ŠA Fest and the youth policy encouragement project is satisfied. They say they have achieved their goal and more. Because they not only encouraged the youth of Prijedor to become socially engaged but also “awakened” the city authorities. The city has promised support, not just declaratively but from the start, with logistics so that the youth can create and develop their policies. What this story really needed were actors committed to inclusivity and social engagement.

Did you know that through this project...

...2 Living Lab workshops on youth policy were held, attended by 35 young people under the mentorship of experienced professionals

...the results of the workshops and the project were presented to the relevant departments of the City of Prijedor, institutions, and organizations with the aim of creating development projects for youth



12th Youth Artists' Art Colony

CSO "Ceker" Zavidovići

U gradu Zavidovići jedno udruženje već 11 godina nastoji svijetu oko sebe dodati malo boje, tako što djeci, mladima i njihovim učiteljima o likovnoj umjetnosti govori kao o izričaju koji spaja, okuplja, pruža jednake prilike svima, kao o univerzalnom jeziku koji nikakve barijere ne poznaje. Mala su sredina, pa nastoje mladima ponuditi veću lepezu mogućnosti, priliku za afirmaciju, za napredak, za ostanak u svojoj lokalnoj zajednici umjesto da je mijenjaju nekim drugim svjetovima... Zato su ih, 12. put zaredom, okupili na likovnoj koloniji.

Prirodni ambijent Izletišta u Maoči bio je inspiracija za čak četrdesetero mladih kreativaca. Stvarali su, crtali, pokazivali svoje vještine, a ujedno se družili, sticali nova prijateljstva, širili svoje vidike. Jer tako je kolonija zamišljena – da se izraze likovni umjetnici, mladi i svi koji su za likovni izraz nadareni, i da kroz teme svojih radova propituju, promišljaju, sarađuju, od stručnjaka uče i uz njih napreduju.

A onda su još, kao nagradu za trud i zalaganje, svoje umjetnine predstavili cijeloj zajednici, izložbom održanom u sklopu kulturno-zabavne zavidovičke manifestacije "Ljeto u gradu". U Udruženju građana "Ceker" i više su nego zadovoljni. Ne samo radovima koje je likovna kolonija iznjedrila, nego činjenicom da kod djece koja su je pohađala vide promjenu. Ne manjka im samopouzdanja, socijaliziraju se više, i ne prave razliku ko otkuda dolazi i kako se zove. Očito je da mladi, ističu u udruženju, mogu bolje razumjeti suživot, lakše prihvataju ljude oko sebe, bolje razumiju kulturnu raznolikost koju Bosna i Hercegovina ima. Vjeruju u Zavidovićima da su s likovne kolonije mladi otišli cekera punih znanja, razvijenih vještina i navika koje će iskoristiti da sebi utabaju puteve za zdravo odrastanje, za zdraviju budućnost...

Did you know that through this project...

...40 young people participated in the art colony under the mentorship of established artists
...collaboration was established with 9 schools from the Zavidovići area
...an exhibition was held featuring over 40 works created through the art colony activities
...socialization, creativity, and skill development among youth were encouraged
...a short film about the art colony's activities was produced



Women's Section Bijelo Polje

Cultural and Artistic Society “Bijelo Polje” Mostar

In Bijelo Polje near Mostar, a cultural and artistic society has been active for 75 years. It preserves, nurtures, and promotes the culture and traditions of the area and of all its peoples. Women have always played a prominent and active role in the society's work. However, this wasn't the case in the broader community, where women were rarely recognized or valued. That's why the society, as a well-known and respected voice in the community, decided it was time for change.

The “Bjelopoljka” woman—as they colloquially call themselves—has always been willing to contribute to her community and society. Guided by this belief, the cultural society decided to mobilize and encourage women to become more active. Although hardworking by nature, these women rarely had opportunities for involvement or collaboration. They began spending their free time together and socializing. It wasn't easy—free time is a luxury in daily life—but they were more than eager and persistent. What began as casual gatherings evolved into true activism—something long missing in their community.

Starting with mobilization, the women moved into formal and informal organizing, building partnerships and laying foundations for the future. The Women's Section of the Cultural and Artistic Society “Bijelo Polje” found partners in the women's association “Most” from Jablanica and, locally, in the elementary schools “Bijelo Polje” and “Vrapčići”. Through these efforts, the women of Bijelo Polje made it clear that they want to be proactive, to participate in all key community processes, leaving behind past passivity and missed opportunities.

Today, they actively and wholeheartedly contribute through the cultural society. They are learning leadership skills, working toward the economic empowerment of local women, and have become aware of both their individual potential and the potential of their small community in northern Mostar. Now, they are steadily and purposefully developing that potential—socially and economically—so that Bijelo Polje becomes a better place for all its residents.

Did you know that through this project...

...a partnership, support, and mentorship were established with the Women's Association "Most" from Jablanica, which promotes women's empowerment

...more than 60 women were connected through participation in project activities

...the "Women's Section Bijelo Polje" was formally established through official registration



Equal Opportunities for All

CSO “Prva” Žepče

In the municipality of Žepče, more than 85% of the population lives in rural areas, on the outskirts of the municipality. Although exact data has never been available, the number of inhabitants has undoubtedly decreased over time, and the number of elderly households has increased. This is a consequence, among other things, of uneven development – a preference for urban over rural areas, which leads to a cause-and-effect situation where marginalized and socially excluded groups emerge, living lives on the edge of poverty.

As the situation had not changed for years, a group of aware women from Žepče, gathered in the association “Prva” (“First”), decided to initiate change within the community. Believing in a society of equal opportunities for all, and with the ultimate goal of creating local development plans aligned with the real needs of every individual, they began a “battle with numbers and data” on the ground. For two rural local communities, Globarica and Radunica – where there was no demographic data, they compiled a registry of individuals and their related household members, necessary for determining the socio-economic status of each person. The intention was to show relevant authorities that it is possible to collect valuable data for institutions such as the social welfare services, the health center, and the Red Cross, which provide care for the elderly and vulnerable. This data is now collected in one place – a social map. It was envisioned as a unified information system: a registry containing data on the socio-economic status of individuals who are beneficiaries of rights and services in the field of social protection, intended to serve as a basis for developing support programs for families in need.

The women’s association “Prva” explained to local authorities and the public sector that the social map of the municipality of Žepče is more necessary than ever, particularly in a time when the elderly population is rapidly growing. It is a measure of support for the rural population, many of whom find it difficult or impossible to access basic services such as healthcare. The pilot project in the two local communities can be considered a success, as all relevant institutions in the areas of social care and health unanimously supported the initiative to create a social map for all 48 local communities in the municipality of Žepče.

Did you know that through this project...

... the methodology for developing a social map for the Zenica-Doboj Canton was applied for the first time in creating a social map for the municipality of Žepče

... field research and data processing were conducted with the aim of creating social maps



Trebinje Urban Beekeeping – A New Concept for Improving Quality of Life

Beekeepers' Association "Leotar" Trebinje

In the municipality of Žepče, more than 85% of the population lives in rural areas, on the outskirts of the municipality. Although exact data has never been available, the number of inhabitants has undoubtedly decreased over time, and the number of elderly households has increased. This is a consequence, among other things, of uneven development – a preference for urban over rural areas, which leads to a cause-and-effect situation where marginalized and socially excluded groups emerge, living lives on the edge of poverty.

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Did you know that through this project...

...a promotional campaign was carried out to introduce urban beekeeping to the wider public

...an SOS team was formed and equipped to catch and rescue swarming bee colonies, destroy wasp and hornet nests, and address other animal groups posing a potential threat to residents

...a bee sanctuary was established

...honey and the importance of beekeeping were promoted in 4 kindergartens

...200 honey-bearing plants were procured and planted in public green areas



Smart Money – Financial Management for Youth

CSO “Melior” Mostar

The departure of youth from BiH to economically stable countries has become a common and long-standing phenomenon. In Mostar, a small but very hardworking and dedicated group started fighting against the “brain drain.” And they did it in a very serious, yet interesting and specific way. Through a thorough approach and field research, they identified what drives young people far from home. Namely, few in Mostar (and likely similarly in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina) manage—even with early employment—to responsibly manage their finances, achieve their goals, and shape a life that fulfills and satisfies them.

The “Melior” Association realized the key is education: educating young people about responsible money management, saving, investing, and everything that directly impacts them, their families, and the broader local community. “How to be smart with money” is the question from which the project Smart Money – Financial Management for Youth emerged. Among other things, it produced a guide answering and explaining all key unknowns of the financial world. Today’s youth, usually overwhelmed with information, impatient, and with short attention spans, received an interactive guide designed to provoke thoughtful reflection on this important topic.

The promotion of the guide was fully adapted to the age and lifestyle of the target audience—giving priority to social media over physical distribution. The latter came later, reaching out to high school seniors who are just about to enter the financial world. To better engage young people, a dance video spot was also created, a short clip designed to attract attention.

The enthusiastic team at Melior wanted to send a clear message to youth that finance is not something to fear; they wanted to teach them to start planning their futures early. Because in schools, financial education is not taught—young people are left unprepared when “entering the adult world.” It is rarely discussed at home or in society in general. Yet, this topic is crucial for young people and their future. By doing this, the foundation for a responsible community is laid. Melior has set that foundation. Now it is up to society to continue.

Did you know that through this project...

...a guide for youth on financial management was created

...a promo video was produced to raise awareness about the importance of financial knowledge

...the guide was presented to high school students, the employment agency, and promoted in places where young people gather, to raise awareness about the importance of financial literacy



Strengthening the capacities of the Beekeepers' Association Vrijesak and supporting the organization of other farmers in the municipality of Ravno

Beekeepers' Association "Vrijesak" Ravno

In Ravno, which stretches along the hinterlands of Neum and Dubrovnik on one side and Popovo Polje on the other, the locals have traditionally been engaged in agriculture. Traditional, yet oriented toward the future. Through beekeeping, for example. Because nature here is untouched, the plants are wild, mostly medicinal herbs — a paradise on Earth for bees. The honey produced by the beekeepers of Ravno, with its unique composition and medicinal properties, is well known and in demand.

Beekeepers in Ravno have been united since 2010 under the "Vrijesak" Association, which currently counts 35 members and manages over 2,000 bee colonies. With wholehearted support from the Municipality of Ravno, they aimed to strengthen their capacity and increase production. There is room for honey sales, not just locally. Dubrovnik, a world-renowned tourist destination, is within reach. The beekeepers saw their opportunity there. And not just for themselves.

They decided to strengthen the entire local community, including fellow farmers. Supported by the municipality, since agriculture is one of Ravno's strategic development branches. Now, alongside "Vrijesak," all farmers in Ravno are united. The "Dulum Zemlje" (Acre of Land) association was created to assist those who make their living from agriculture—working together to more easily access support and assistance at various levels and in different circumstances.

They want the benefits of strong agriculture to be felt by the entire community. The beekeepers did not stop there. While gathering their colleagues, they also diligently worked on technical prerequisites for producing higher-quality honey. More production means more work and more jobs. And once again, everything, like a perfect circle, returns to the same point—these are all prerequisites for a better living standard. For everyone in Ravno.

Did you know that through this project...

...the importance of improving beekeeping in Ravno was promoted

...70 stainless steel honey containers were procured, strengthening the capacities of local beekeepers

...the establishment of a much-needed agricultural association was initiated, formally connecting farmers from the Ravno



VFD for all

Volunteer Fire Departament (VFD) of the Urban Area Mostar Southeast – Blagaj

When something has the word “voluntary” in its title, it is clear that the activity is done out of pure love. And care – for one’s surroundings, for the community. Because how else can you explain that someone, voluntarily, as those in volunteer fire departments do, risks a lot just to save people and property?

Volunteer fire departments mostly operate in small communities, in places far from the center of activity and logistics. That is why they are very aware of how important fire protection is. Because fires are often impossible to prevent, let alone predict. But we can prevent their consequences, the damage they cause. And we can, indeed must, know how to act in case of fire. Guided by this idea, the volunteer fire department from Blagaj decided to enter schools. They taught both teachers and students about the fire approach, how to act, who and how to call, how to evacuate people from endangered areas... They also taught students and teachers how to handle the equipment. Then they checked the equipment in schools. It was mostly outdated and faulty, so they physically and logistically helped wherever they could.

Activities in firefighting organizations are based on expert, technical knowledge and skills. Their goal is safety in the community, safety of citizens. That is why they continue to share knowledge about how to act in emergencies. They visit elementary schools to raise awareness among the youngest; they want to make them responsible individuals. Working with youth is key to a safe future in their local community.

They want to inspire interest in social work, in social benefit. And they don’t focus only on firefighting activities, although they never lose sight of them. Rather, they focus on a whole range of events, behaviors, and activities that will strengthen societies and organizations like the volunteer fire department – but also the very sense of belonging to their environment, to their local community.

Did you know that through this project...

...awareness was raised about the importance of volunteer fire departments (VFDs) for the community, and the significance of support from relevant stakeholders, through 2 public events.

...2 demonstration exercises were held for elementary school students and staff, highlighting the importance of initial fire extinguishing and the role of VFDs.



Teaching Youth for Sustainable Local Community Development

Women's Association "Most" Jablanica

Preserving Tradition and Developing Jablanica – the women gathered in the association symbolically named "Most" had a vision. They also had the tools to turn the idea into reality. Only hands were missing...

Jablanica, although a rather small community, is widely known. Rich in historical facts, gastronomically unique, geographically strategically located – all these are prerequisites for successfully developing tourism as a driver of the community. However, Jablanica faced a lack of workforce. The plague of people leaving these areas, not only the young, has not spared Jablanica either. Yet, Jablanica has its valuable guardians of heritage who refused to silently observe such a situation...For young people studying tourism and hospitality, specifically culinary arts, through their secondary education, they designed a cooking school. Not just any cooking school, but one focused on traditional Herzegovinian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian recipes, and traditional ways of preparing dishes. But they knew it would not be easy to simply convince the students to participate in additional "school" activities – since few of them even attend regular school; so they suggested that the participants prepare dishes themselves and come up with new recipes...

Dedicated to their community as they are, they also kept in mind another group of their fellow citizens – the elderly. Everything prepared in that small kitchen was shared with those who spend their retirement days in the Jablanica Home for the Elderly and Infirm. The residents of the Home felt that their local community had not forgotten or neglected them, while the youth got firsthand feedback on how faithfully they had recreated numerous delicacies... All the while, the members of the association themselves set an example for the youth – while the young cooked and played pastry chefs, the women diligently sewed and embroidered, creating eco-friendly bags.

Learning in Jablanica was mutual – the youth were prepared for the labor market and motivated to grow into proactive and socially sensitive citizens, and the entire local community learned how important it is to do good together. Good for oneself, good for others, good for the environment.

Did you know that through this project...

- ... 22 young high school students acquired skills in preparing and cooking traditional food
- ... cooperation was established with the high school, the Municipality, and the Home for the Elderly and Infirm
- ... a campaign was carried out to raise ecological awareness among citizens
- ... 100 hand-sewn eco-friendly bags with eco-motifs and messages were distributed to promote the campaign “Say No to Plastic Bags.”



Una – the one and only

Sports Fishing Association “Mrena” Kostajnica

According to legend, the name of the tufa (travertine) river in the northwest of Bosnia and Herzegovina was given by the Romans. Resting from battle on the riverbank, it is said, a Roman soldier, amazed by its beauty, exclaimed “Una!” meaning “one” or “the only one.” Such a unique river, Una still enchants today. It is a special river, known for its large travertine deposits, exceptional biological diversity, and emerald-green water. It flows through the Kostajnica municipality for 14 kilometers.

With calm, lowland waters and rich with 39 species of fish, the Kostajnica stretch of the Una is a paradise for anglers and water sports enthusiasts. Unfortunately, it is also viewed by those who do not prioritize its preservation—poachers see Una and its riches as an easy and quick source of profit, without concern for the lasting consequences... But those who have grown up by the river and with the river have decided to “confront” the poachers and those who exploit it shamelessly. The Sports Fishing Association “Mrena” operates along the entire course of the Una in the Kostajnica municipality. It gathers nearly two hundred members, lovers of fishing and nature. Besides using various kinds of hooks and casting them in different ways, the people of Kostajnica also stock the Una with fish, organize fishing schools, and deal with those on the other side, not of the river, but of the law.

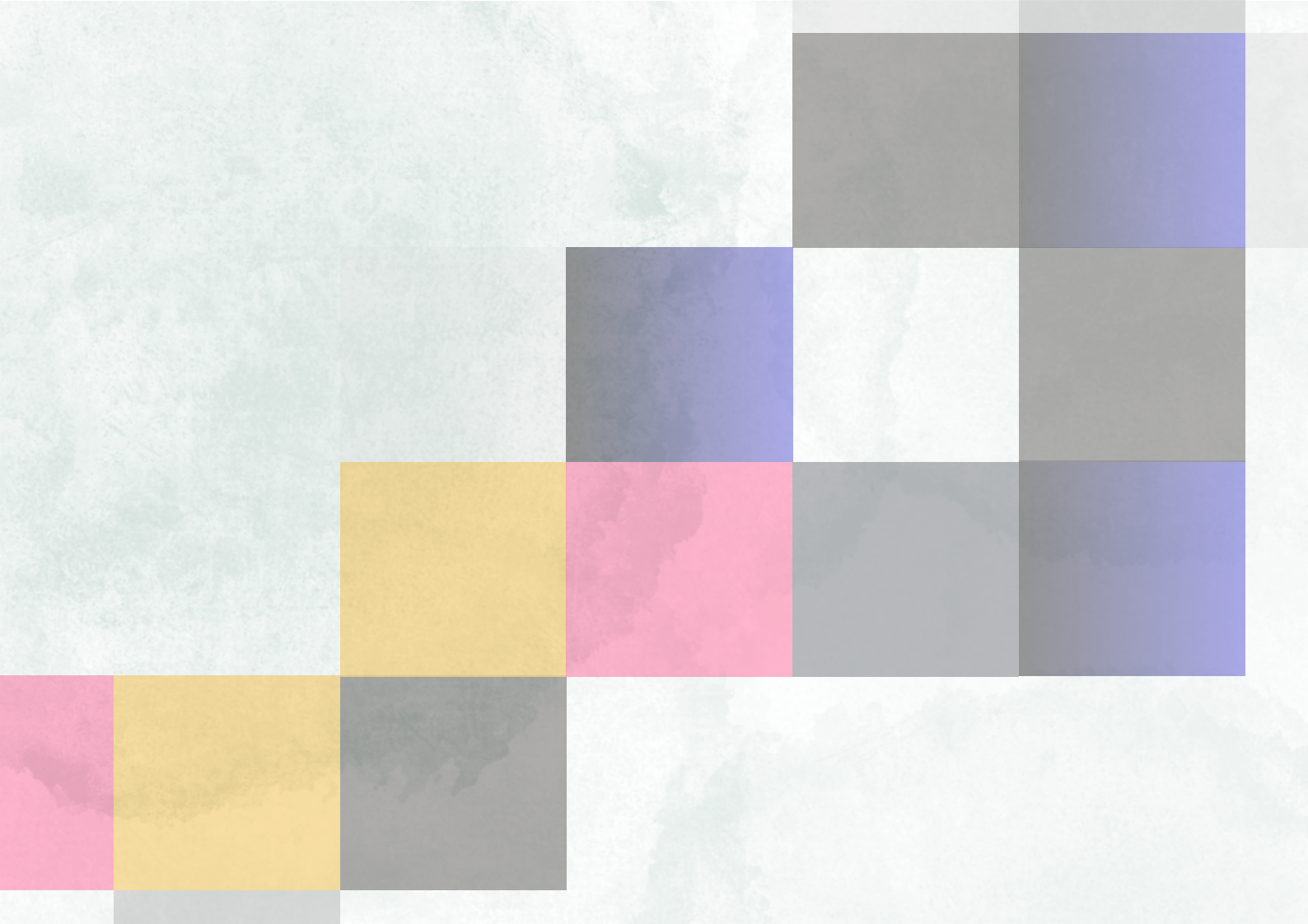
There has long been a fishing and guarding service, made up of guardians of the fishing area and fish stock. Now, however, they have wider support and better tools for protection. Adequate boats and equipment contribute to stronger control and faster response on the ground—or rather, on the water. Full support and seriousness from the Municipality help to enhance everything that is being done. And through nature schools, enlightened youth, ready to pass on both knowledge and love for Una and its flora and fauna, are a promise for the future and a clean environment.

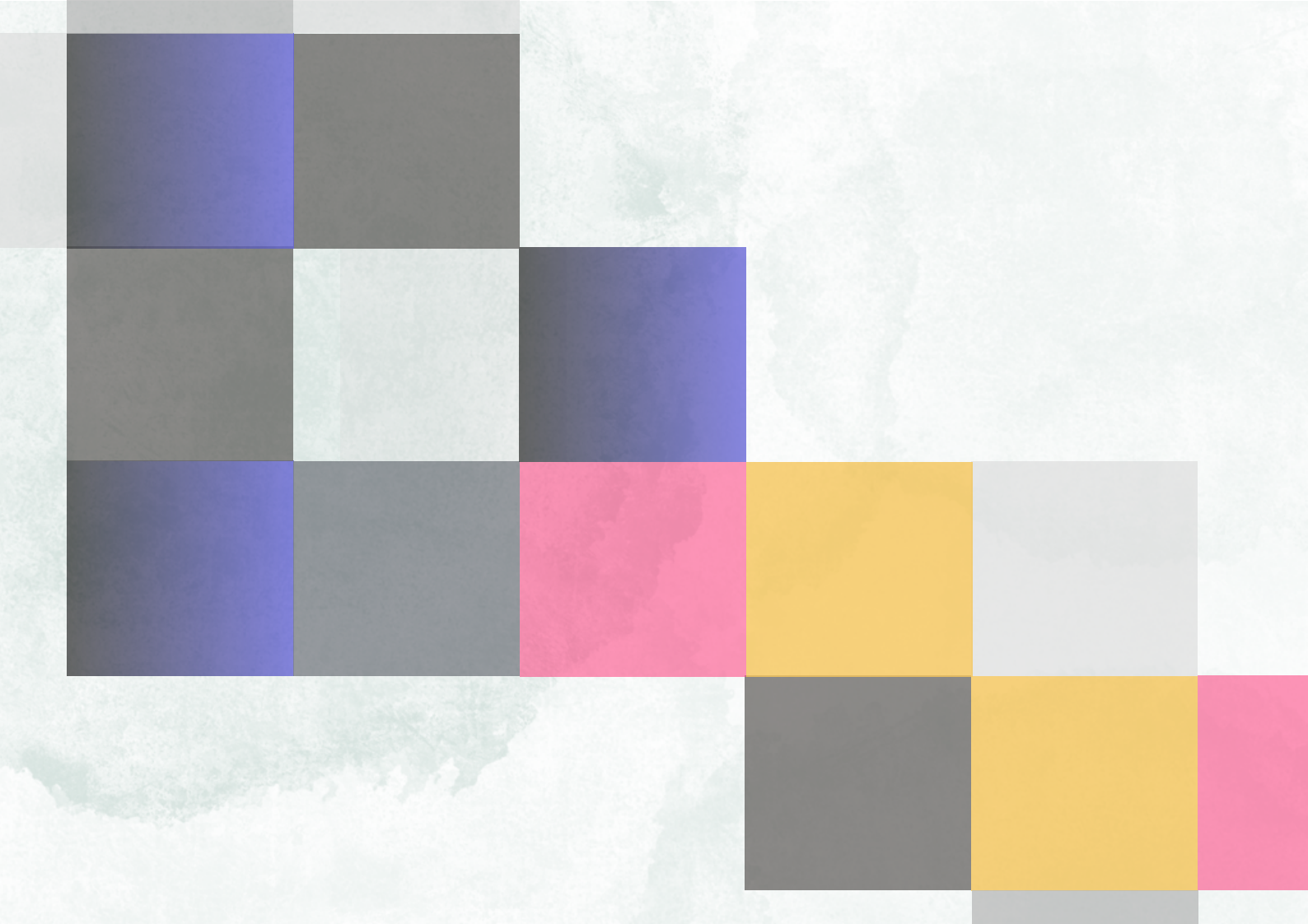
Now, new stories can be told about Una and Kostajnica—stories that include fishing, but not fishing complaints. Because it is deeds that remain...

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