



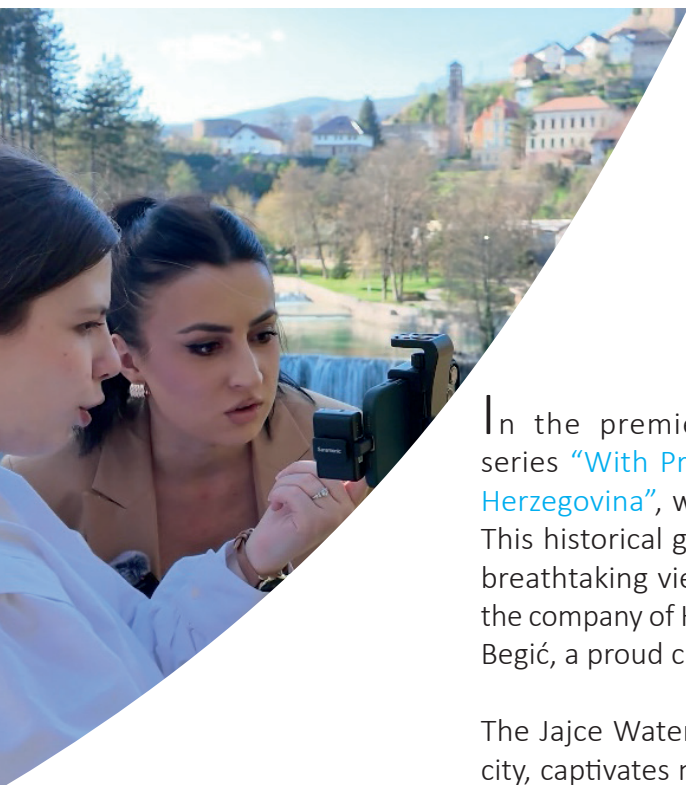
FONDACIJA
HASTOR

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025



The Royal City of Jajce and Its Attractions

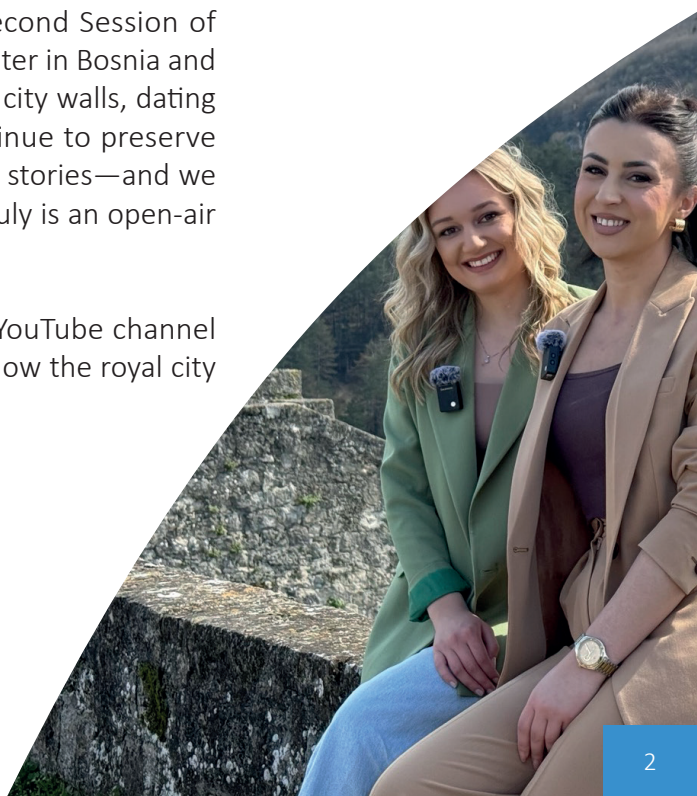


In the premiere episode of our YouTube series [“With Proud Steps Through Bosnia and Herzegovina”](#), we visited the royal city of Jajce. This historical gem of central Bosnia offered us breathtaking views and an unforgettable day in the company of Hastor Foundation alumna Adelisa Begić, a proud citizen of Jajce.



The Jajce Waterfall, located in the heart of the city, captivates not only with its stunning beauty but also with the features that make it one of the most attractive waterfalls in the world. Formed by the confluence of the Pliva and Vrbas rivers, it is listed among the 12 most beautiful waterfalls globally. This means that one of the world’s most beautiful natural sights is nestled right in the center of our country—and it is far from the only treasure this city holds. Jajce rightfully carries the title of royal city, as it was here that the last Bosnian king, Stjepan Tomašević, was crowned. The city’s historical significance stretches from medieval royal times to the Second Session of the AVNOJ, another crucial chapter in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s history. The royal city walls, dating back to the 13th century, continue to preserve many important and fascinating stories—and we can confidently say that Jajce truly is an open-air museum!

Watch the full episode on our YouTube channel (Fondacija Hastor) and get to know the royal city of Jajce!





“I Breathe Through Dance.”—The Story of Young Ballerina Iman Nur Smailbegović

“Ballet isn’t just an art form—it’s my way of life,”—begins **Iman Nur Smailbegović**, a scholarship recipient of the Hastor Foundation, student at the Second Gymnasium in Sarajevo, and a passionate ballerina. Her journey started at the age of three: “My first steps were playful, but I quickly realized the seriousness of this path.”

Iman also shared the first moment that truly marked her ballet career:

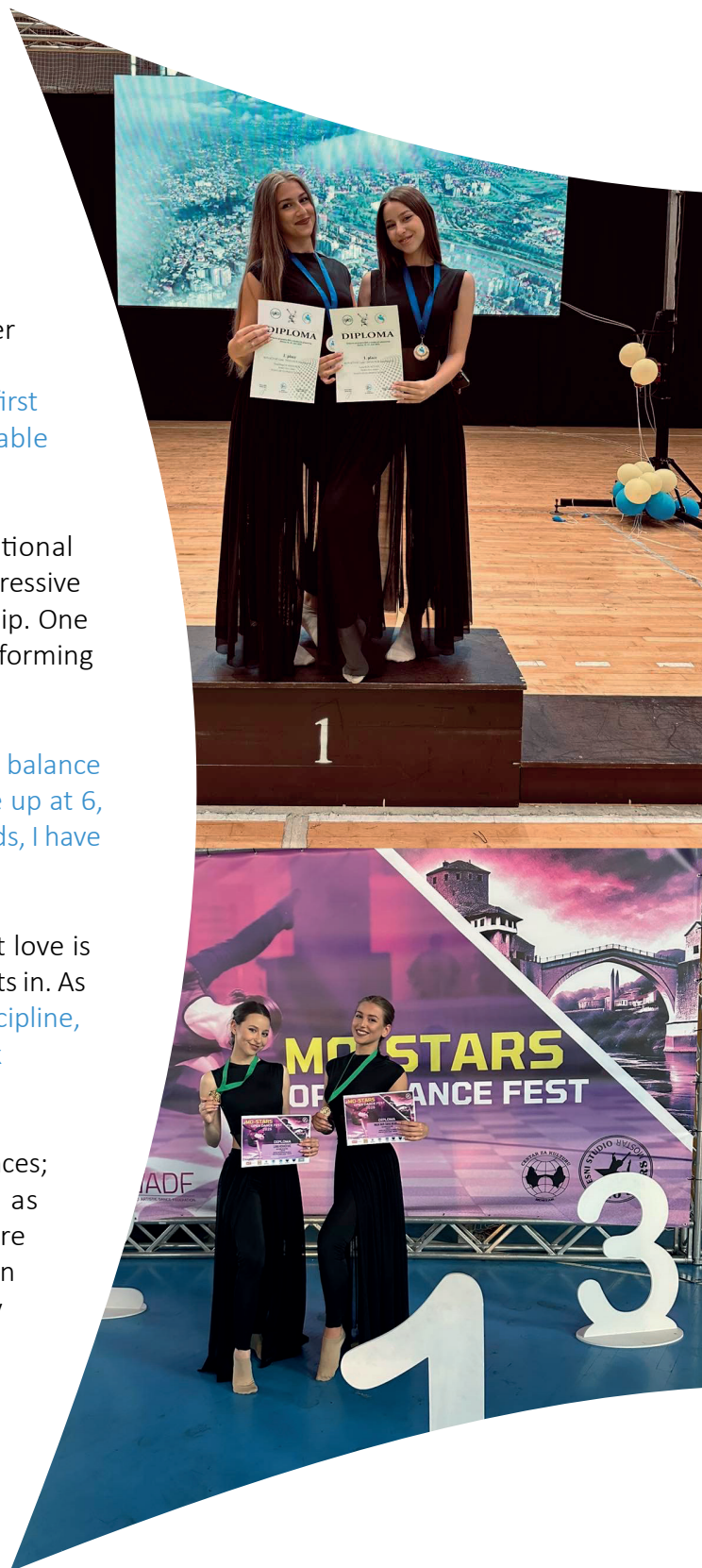
“...it happened on the stage of the National Theatre. The first time I stood in front of an audience, I felt an indescribable energy. I knew this was my calling.”

Alongside her studies - she is enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in English- she has built an impressive dance career, including winning the national championship. One of her biggest goals in ballet has already come true: performing her favorite choreography, “Kitri,” in various venues.

Iman also shared a glimpse into her daily routine: “I try to balance school, training, and a normal life... and I manage. I wake up at 6, school lasts until 2 PM, then I head to training. On weekends, I have additional rehearsals as well...”

While the schedule is demanding, Iman emphasizes that love is the key- it helps her stay focused even when exhaustion sets in. As she explains, ballet is a school of life: “It has taught me discipline, patience, and that every bit of persistence and hard work pays off.”

She especially stresses that ballet is not just about appearances; strength, technical precision, and passion are just as important. With that in mind, Iman hopes the pressure placed on ballerinas regarding physical appearance will soon ease. Ballet, she believes, should not be reduced to body standards, but should instead highlight talent, dedication, and artistic expression. Her next big goal is to perform at the World Championship, and she offers heartfelt advice to all aspiring ballerinas: “Don’t let failures discourage you. Every mistake is a lesson. What matters is to love what you do- and never stop practicing.”



Economics and Studying Economics from the Perspective of a Professor at the Faculty of Economics, UNZE

Alem Merdić, PhD in Economics and alumnus of the Hastor Foundation, is a professor at the Faculty of Economics in Zenica. In addition to his academic work, he is actively involved in projects related to the economy, collaborations with the local community, financial expertise and evaluations. These activities stem from Alem's strong desire to contribute to societal development. Economics and the study of economics were at the center of our conversation with Alem.

◆ *How does university curricula align with the actual needs of the labor market?*

A continuous challenge for educational institutions is aligning curricula with labor market needs. Currently, the Faculty of Economics in Zenica (as well as other faculties in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina where I am involved) has a curriculum that is fairly well aligned with real labor market demands. This is not just a subjective impression—the fact that graduates quickly adapt to organizational processes, and often the best among them take on leadership roles, speaks for itself.

There is certainly room for improvement: the adjustment period after graduation could be shortened and made more cost-effective. However, as I have already mentioned, this requires more proactive involvement, especially from educational institutions, the government, and the business sector, with the aim of incorporating key practical areas directly into the curriculum. Ideally, the final year of study should be organized as a dual program—part at the faculty and part within a company. Public faculties of economics in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are trying to achieve this through economic-business councils involving industry representatives, but I believe there is still room for more active collaboration.

◆ *How do students handle quantitative subjects, and how can they be supported in overcoming these challenges?*

When it comes to subjects requiring more quantitative analysis, there are generally two groups of students: those more inclined toward quantitative topics, and those who prefer reading and learning content without a lot of calculations. Economics

demands both quantitative and qualitative knowledge, and both are necessary to master. Ultimately, disciplined, dedicated, and hard-working students are able to overcome both types of challenges during their studies. In my opinion, difficulties with quantitative subjects mostly stem from gaps in earlier education—either elementary or high school. The only way to help students is to identify these gaps, address them, and build the necessary foundation in order to perform more complex quantitative analyses later.



◆ *How would you assess the quality of practical instruction and research projects (e.g. analysis of foreign investments), considering your experience with mentorship and project work?*

At universities, the level of practical instruction is currently minimal, which can and should be improved in the future. Still, I believe it is crucial to emphasize the importance of theoretical education, which tends to be undervalued in our society. Theoretical knowledge is a prerequisite for effective practice. I often give students practical tasks—such as analyzing a company’s declining revenue—but already in the first year, most of them cannot clearly define the theoretical concept of revenue. This shows how essential theory is. At the same time, theory without practical application is meaningless. So while practical training is currently underdeveloped at faculties, the situation is different when it comes to projects. Success in this area largely depends on the students’ motivation and willingness to engage. With our partner companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we implement high-quality practical projects and involve students who are eager to participate and grow. These students quickly find employment and achieve impressive results in practice.

◆ *What is your advice for future economics students?*

The period of studying is definitely one of the most beautiful phases of life. In life, academics, and work, there are universal values—kindness, discipline, diligence, dedication, and responsibility—which always produce results when applied. Take advantage of student exchange opportunities, connect with your peers, and be good people. And yes—have fun! Studying is a beautiful journey that significantly shapes the rest of our lives.

In life, in studies, and in work, there are universal values — kindness, discipline, hard work, dedication, and responsibility — that undoubtedly lead to results wherever they are applied.



***Interviewed by: Lamija Sejdić
Translated by: Ivan Rajić***



Summer magic in the Netherlands: How just one adventure can change your entire perspective on life?

Sometimes, simply changing your surrounding is enough to get to know yourself better, to dare to dream bigger, laugh more openly, and believe more strongly in your potential. That kind of transformation happens every year through the project “Summer Vacation in the Netherlands,” which the Hastor Foundation has been implementing in cooperation with the Dutch organization Stichting Kinderhulp Bosnië since 2007. Just like in previous years, a selected group of elementary school students, accompanied by scholarship recipients Sevla Kopic and Selma Krivokapa, had the opportunity to return home with plenty new stories, smiles, and golden memories.

For both Selma and Sevla, this was their first experience with the project, but they fulfilled their duties just as expected: with dedication, care, and a strong sense of responsibility. The first week in the Netherlands was more dynamic and filled with tasks compared to the second.

The scholarship recipients visited the children staying with Dutch host families every day, and surprisingly, they adapted quickly to their new environment, even though they missed their families, which is completely understandable. The following week brought visits to a cornfield, a zoo, and the famous “Efteling” theme park. The children were thrilled, it was their first time seeing elephants, pandas, giraffes, penguins, and a special sea lion show was organized just for them.

In addition, there were many other incredible attractions: bingo games with various prizes, roller coasters, swimming in the lake during a picnic, houses of famous fairytale characters, and finally an evening where everyone performed something special. The children enjoyed singing some of our well-known hits. All of these activities left a lasting impression on our scholarship recipients.





“What touched me the most was when the children gave me gifts. Some of them gave me toys they had won at fairs they’d visited with their Dutch families; the girls made bracelets and wrote letters... This was truly an unforgettable experience, accompanied by a dose of fear and concern for the children, as well as a great sense of responsibility. Experiencing new cultures, customs, and traditions is truly invaluable and an incredibly enriching experience”, Sevla shared with us.



Selma saw her application for the project as an opportunity to step out of her comfort zone and experience something completely new: a new country, a new culture, and a different outlook on life.



“This trip was a special experience for me, one that brought new acquaintances, valuable lessons, and unforgettable memories. I would recommend everyone to embark on such adventures because, besides helping others, you gain so much yourself. Above all, you grow as a person by learning patience, teamwork, and gratitude”, Selma concluded.



Prepared by: Aida Suljić
Translated by: Zerina Kosovac

“Spin the story—your bike, your adventure!”

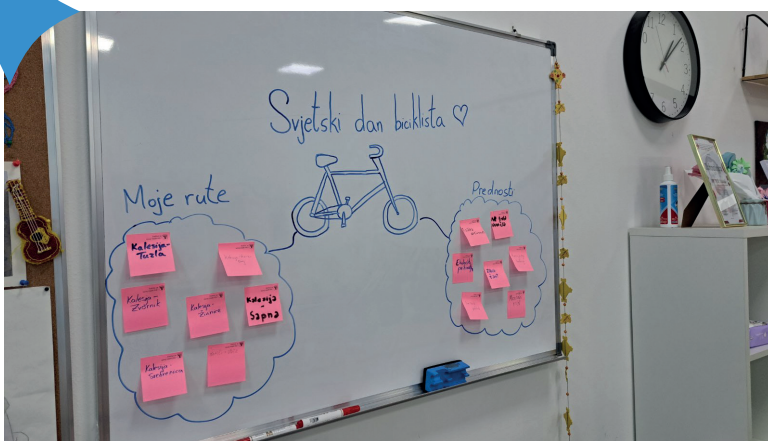
– an inspiring volunteer story from in the local community

A volunteer activity titled “[Spin the story—your bike, your adventure!](#)” was held at the Kalesija Sports Hall, organized by mentors Muharem Ibrić, Lejla Joldić, and Amina Ibralić. The two-hour event for high school students aimed to promote a cycling culture by highlighting its benefits, including being environmentally friendly and supporting a healthy lifestyle.

Participants had the opportunity to share their views on cycling and a healthy lifestyle through various activities. The mentors delivered a brief lecture about the history and interesting facts related to cycling. Through a quiz, participants demonstrated their knowledge of eco-sustainability and traffic rules. The final activity was the “**Bicycle Appreciation Wall**”, where students listed their

favorite cycling routes and the advantages this mode of transport offers. Among the shared experiences, the story of **Haris Halilovića**, a scholarship recipient who has been cycling for many years, stands out. He mentions that cycling helps him explore the nature and history of his and the surrounding towns. He also highlights the importance of meeting others who share his passion for the sport. Haris’ story can serve as inspiration for all young readers.

This volunteer initiative fostered creativity, unity, and awareness of the importance of healthy habits, demonstrating that volunteer work can be a powerful force for positive change in the local community, even without pedaling!



Prepared by: Lorens Stranjak
Translated by: Maida Avdić



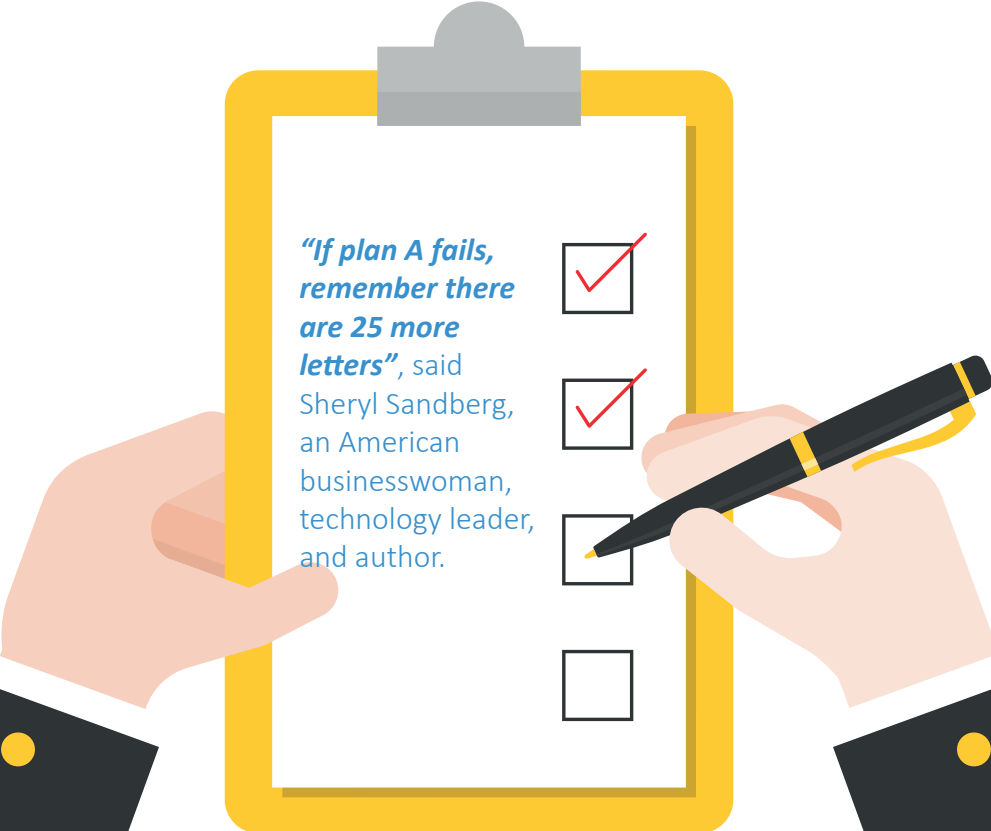
Plan B is not a defeat, but a sign of intelligence

Life is unpredictable. We follow a path that we create for ourselves, guided by a plan that we write down in detail in our schedule, and we believe that anything outside of that plan violates what we are striving for. However, is it really so? In this world, where determination, persistence, and a strong belief in a goal are often celebrated, we forget how important it is to be flexible, and that is precisely the point of everything. Having a plan B does not mean that we have given up on our original idea; rather, it simply encourages us to think ahead.

Today many young people feel the pressure to find the right college, job, life partner, and everything else that worries us in our day-to-day life—on the first try. However, life rarely follows a straight line, and we should recognize that sometimes we need to reorient ourselves. In the very process of creating

a backup plan, there is no disbelief in your first choice but a simple realization of reality. The reality is that we may not be accepted into the desired study program. We also may not secure the job we hoped for. Perhaps, along the way, we will realize that what we thought we loved no longer fulfills us. In those moments, plan B should not be seen as a defeat but as a ticket to move on to something better and more daring.

It is vital to send a realistic message to young people (and to older people who are hesitant, too). There is no shame in changing plans; it is permissible to have a plan B, and even a plan C, D, and many others if necessary. They do not diminish the value of plan A nor imply that we are less ambitious. On the contrary, they are an indicator of strategic thinking and a willingness to take responsibility for our path, regardless of obstacles.



"If plan A fails, remember there are 25 more letters", said Sheryl Sandberg, an American businesswoman, technology leader, and author.

Prepared by: Aida Suljić
Translated by: Maida Avdić



We invite you
*to join our mission and help
fulfill the dreams of talented
students and young people
who need our support.*



If you would like to support the work of the Hastor Foundation,
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