

No. 3	Esmā Frljak - HAF Handmade ArteFacts	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zenica-Doboj Canton	Seoča
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Categories of cultural heritage

Professional craftspeople	Knowledge transfer	Presentation of crafts	Network for preservation of crafts	Local community building	Crafts within tourism
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Description

HAF Handmade ArteFacts was founded in 2022 by Esmā Frljak and is a creative venture dedicated to blending traditional craftsmanship of leatherwork with contemporary design. Esmā established HAF to celebrate and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina through handcrafted leather goods and useful items made of leather (namely leather rugs, leather cushions and stools, goat skin parchment). Each unique piece reflects a fusion of traditional techniques and modern aesthetics, promoting local artistry while connecting the past with the present. HAF's mission is to produce high-quality artifacts that honor cultural identity and innovation, earning Esmā recognition in the regional design scene. She is the fifth-generation leatherworker in her family, and she builds on her ancestors' heritage. Esmā's parents own the FAH leather company, which has been in the family for four generations, and is intricately connected to Esmā's own work.

Types of handicrafts

Pottery Knitting Weaving Woodworking	Embroidery Leatherworking Herbalism Culinary craft	Candle making Glassblowing Copper engraving Quilting Jewellery making	Basket weaving Stonemasonry Blacksmithing Traditional agriculture practice
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Craft touchpoints - where to find?

Workshop of an artisan (directly from the craftsman) Handicraft Centre of more than one local artisan Regular local market Local festival	Shop selling local artisans' products Local tourism agency / souvenir shop Web-shops Social media accounts
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What can we learn?

Heritage preservation / valorisation practice	What do they expose with their practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HAF Handmade ArteFacts plays an important role in preserving and valorizing the leather heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By drawing on five generations of family knowledge and experience in leather processing, the brand bridges the gap between traditional craftsmanship and modern design, demonstrating how traditional crafts can thrive in modern markets. ● HAF exposes the artistry of leatherworking by using time-honored techniques such as cutting, sewing, gluing, and assembling, alongside contemporary production methods, to create functional and aesthetically pleasing items like rugs, cushions, and stools. ● Esma, the owner, also holds an important role as a knowledge holder, being her family's apprentice from a young age, learning the skills and other knowledge, but also building on it and developing it further.
Success factors	Achievements and strengths that make this case inspiring for other attempts in the DR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The company's focus on storytelling through its unique products highlights the cultural legacy of Bosnian leather craftsmanship. ● HAF stands as an example of how generational knowledge and passion can be transformed into a modern, thriving business while preserving cultural heritage. Esma's success lies in her ability to adapt tradition for modern markets, achieving recognition while maintaining artisanal quality. Operating under ISO-certified standards, she demonstrates how traditional businesses can achieve professionalization without losing their roots.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HAF exemplifies how cultural heritage can be a powerful asset for innovation, community development, and global market success. Its commitment to using locally sourced materials and sustainable practices ensures that their work remains both authentic and environmentally conscious. ● The brand's achievements, namely (re)vitalizing leatherworking, creating distinctive high-quality products, and sustaining local economies, offer a compelling model for other craft-based initiatives.
<p>Local community involvement</p>	<p>Fundamental values that help to connect the target groups for the social prosperity of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Esma comes from a rural area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where her family built the company of FAH leather, that bases its operations on a long and successful tradition acquired by working in the meat industry: meat processing, agriculture and leather industry, a tradition that lasts for four, now five generations. This kind of involvement relies on local community cooperation. By focusing on the sustainable use of locally sourced materials, the brand strengthens local and regional economies. ● The longevity and the preservation of traditions foster community pride by showcasing the region's cultural heritage. By adhering to high international standards, the brand aligns its success with local development, improving social and economic well-being.
<p>Link to professional network</p>	<p>Reflecting on its strategic position in the region; making the most of networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Esma's HAF is intrinsically linked to FAH leather company, owned by her family, which is the second largest company in the market in terms of turnover, their vision being the regional leaders in the segment of leather processing and trading. The Frljak family has been involved in the leather industry since 1971 and recognized for having long-time tradition, experience, and knowledge at the municipal court in Zenica. This kind of connection allows her more niche products to be linked to a bigger facility, attracting more clientele and regional or even national and wider recognition. This provides HAF with a strong foundation to position itself as a credible and competitive business in the leather goods sector. ● Her work, as well as her family's (FAH leather) has been recognized and featured on the Made In platform, a network dedicated to contemporary crafts and design. The platform highlights HAF's artisanal leather goods, such as

		<p>rugs, pillows, and stools, crafted through meticulous processes in a dedicated 150-square-meter workspace. This inclusion underscores HAF's commitment to preserving traditional craftsmanship while embracing modern design principles. Additionally, HAF is showcased in Made In's Knowledge Atlas, which profiles crafts and artisans from various regions. This feature emphasizes HAF's role in the leather industry and its dedication to quality and sustainability.</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The use of social networks to disseminate and promote their mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HAF use Instagram to share content and communicate its mission, as well as promote its products by showcasing the artistry and craftsmanship behind their leather goods. Social media allows HAF to communicate the values of tradition, quality, and sustainability, making it an essential tool for growing its brand and further establishing its position in the wider market. ● HAF is also featured on professional networks, namely the Made In platform, further promoting its products to a global audience interested in high-quality, handcrafted goods. Through these channels, HAF attracts customers and builds relationships with other artisans, designers, and businesses, positioning itself as an innovative leader in the regional craft industry.
<p>Sustainability factor</p>	<p>Operations and maintenance that drive the practice forward; opportunities for financial sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HAF emphasizes sustainability in its use of locally sourced, high-quality leather, including raw hides from animals like sheep, goats, and cattle. This supports regional agriculture and promotes a sustainable supply chain by reducing transportation-related emissions and supporting local suppliers. Additionally, the company integrates eco-friendly production processes that minimize waste and environmental impact, aligning with international sustainability standards such as ISO 14001. ● Financial sustainability for HAF is dependent on the sale of the leather products. Her commitment to high-quality craftsmanship justifies premium pricing for the handcrafted leather goods. Her close work with the parental FAH helps with regulated prices etc. The company's ability to scale production while maintaining artisanal quality ensures a steady stream of revenue. By being featured on international platforms like the Made IN network, HAF also increases visibility in different

		markets and this opens up opportunities for growth and export.
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What makes it a best practice?

HAF stands out as a best practice in the artisanal craft sector for its blend of traditional leather craftsmanship, modern design, and sustainable practices, all driven by the Frljak family's long-standing heritage in the leather industry. Esmā Frljak, the founder of HAF, is a key figure in the company's success. Growing up with grandfather and father in their leather processing industry FAH leather, Esmā was included in production facilities and helped along with her brother from a very young age. While finishing school and college, the desire to improve the family business and give it a new dimension brought HAF to life in 2022, in which now four generations of leather craftsmanship are manifested. Being an apprentice for her grandfather, a master leather artisan, and her father, the owner of FAH, she now successfully combines traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation, driving the brand's development.

The company's success is also influenced by its adherence to several key principles, including quality and sustainability. By focusing on high-quality leather sourced from local suppliers, HAF is able to produce premium, long-lasting goods that stand out in the market. This commitment to craftsmanship and environmental responsibility aligns with international standards (ISO).

Esmā's approach to active craftsmanship is rooted in the family apprenticeship model, which has been key to passing down knowledge and skills from generation to generation. Esmā ensures the continuation of traditional leather-making techniques and being innovative with it. The family's success also stems from building strong local and international networks, such as the Made In platform, which enabled the brand to reach new markets and customers.

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