

## Celebrating 10 Years at Gracanica Learning Center

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Our Gracanica Learning Center recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. While we were there marking the occasion, we decided to ask some of the staff questions about the past 10 years. Here's what GLC coordinator Afrim and learning facilitators Bajram, Demir and Suzana had to say.

What makes Gracanica Learning Center special?

Demir: The Learning Center in Gracanica is special for a few reasons. It's a special building built and equipped for this purpose and we have 10 years experience in tackling educational difficulties. All of this has made the center well recognized and supported by the community.

Bajram: What makes our center special is the 10 years of experience of our staff and our well-motivated tutors, many of whom were once attending the center as students.

What is your biggest success during your years working in the center?

Afrim: When the center started working in our community we had 25-30 children that attended elementary school. Today 101 children [from Gracanica's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities] attend elementary school.

Suzana: The biggest success of the center is the increased number of children in elementary and high school. The number of children attending the center's activities increased as well, and children have learned a lot through the many activities we have.

Bajram: We've had great success in raising awareness with parents about the education of their children.

What is the difference between the person you were your first day of work and the person you are today?

Demir: The difference is that staff working in the center at the moment has more knowledge and experience gained through work and trainings provided by Balkan Sunflowers. A lot of what we learned affects both our work and private life.

Bajram: The difference is that the way staff works. We now have more opportunities to put into practice what we have learned through trainings.

How do you imagine your community without the Learning Center? How would it be different?

Afrim: Awareness about education would be the same as it was 10 years ago. Children in the community wouldn't have role models. Youth wouldn't be familiar with important processes like integration. The connection of communities and NGOs would not exist at the level it does today. We are proud to say that our staff is made out of people from community where we work and without the center we as staff wouldn't reach this level of experience.

Suzana: Without the center the community would not be as close to education as it is now and literacy would be much lower.

What is your biggest wish for the children you work with?

Afrim: Have your vision, your goals, and strive for something more!

Suzana: My greatest wish for the children that I work with is to work hard, dream big and take education as a tool for achieving life goals.

Demir: Continue chasing their dreams through education which will improve their living conditions so they can live much better than today.

Bajram: I wish that our children fulfill their dreams and continue this epic fight for education.

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