

**BREJA PREJA KNITTING COOPERATIVE**, Slovenia

<https://brejapreja.wordpress.com>

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Breja Preja Knitting Cooperative is a sustainable business that connects enthusiastic women entrepreneurs, designers and knitters making cosy and multifunctional wool products. We are based in Slovenia and are following the idea of Made in Slovenia. It means that we use locally-produced yarn and that products are designed and knitted by women who live in Slovenia. We believe in fair trade and equality.

We are also developing and organising projects, processes, workshops and methods to work with women of diverse backgrounds and ages. We are using our knitting and crocheting skills as a therapeutic method, as a way to connect communities and be mindful.

We started our cooperative with four founders – friends and co-workers who are knitters and crocheters themselves, and we wanted to try out our business idea. We also wanted to connect business with social responsibility and, at the same time, to use local resources – materials and knowledge.

We connected with a designer who had an idea to knit pure wool warm hug. Description of the product in a poetic way goes like this: Placed where it suits best. 9 braids for 9 months in a belly. Hugging mother's body and keeping it warm. Embraces baby like an endless blanket. It keeps our back or shoulders warm, lowered to the hips it turns into a skirt. We can always find new forms and settings for it. It can be our companion year after year.



We started with hand-knitted and hand-crocheted products. We had quite some media attention but media appearance never showed in our sales. It became quite clear to us that we would need a marketing person. Plus we found out that we are great at community work. We were continuing to organise intergenerational workshops in our little town. We also did some engaged yarn bombing to show support towards family law that would be more inclusive for diverse families. We started to work with women refugees and asylum seekers, and we have found out how great tools crocheting and knitting is – for communication, for therapeutic purposes etc. It makes us very proud that we managed to reach out to the most vulnerable group, work with



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them and also to host them in our communities. By hosting the refugees in our homes, we believe that we also fight fear and stereotypes about refugees.

We consider our success that we have the courage to try new things and that we did try to swim in business waters, and that in this way, we found out what we really want to do. We are still developing some products in collaboration with Slovenian designers and crafters. We will also try to sell our products internationally through platforms and maybe expand to more than one shop locally. But most of our efforts will be put into workshops and trying to sell them as products. We believe that we will also build community of supporters. Our main goal is developing engaging knitting/crocheting. We don't create because of creating, but through creating we reach out to communities, to individuals, and we also outline the message of tolerance and solidarity by creating.





Challenges in our daily work are mostly tackling bureaucracy and funding issues. We know we are better at getting funds than being good at marketing, but the competition is hard, so we need to be very good not only at knitting and crocheting but also in writing applications and managing projects.





Our future plans are on one hand to continue with what we are very good at. On the other hand, we would also like to establish new ways of reaching out to communities and especially women. We would also be very happy to find funding which would be long term. We are also thinking to create and to sell some of our workshops to have more funding sustainability.