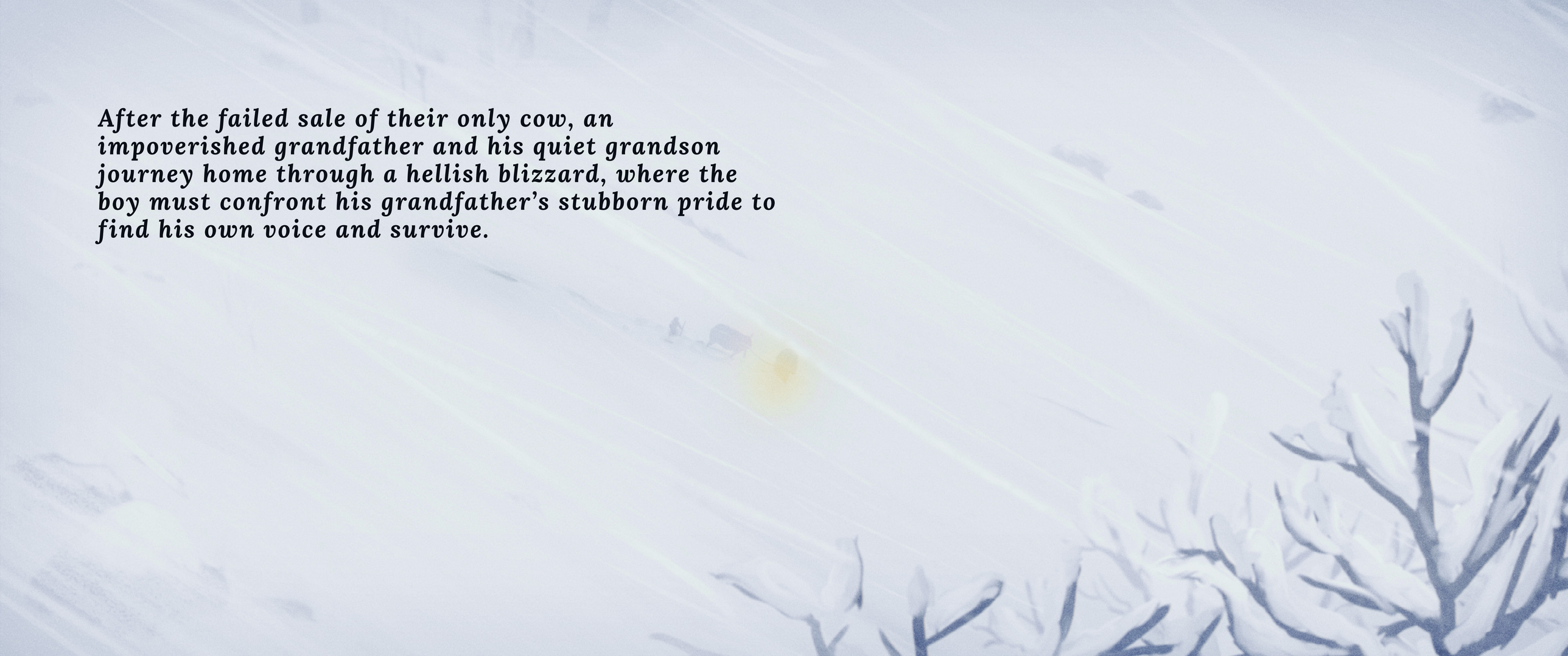

through the blizzard
FILM BY IGOR ĐURIĆ
sonet
DashLook
аудио визуелни центар
РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ
CEE Animation Workshop

After the failed sale of their only cow, an impoverished grandfather and his quiet grandson journey home through a hellish blizzard, where the boy must confront his grandfather's stubborn pride to find his own voice and survive.



Fact sheet

Title	Through the Blizzard (orig. Kroz mećavu)
Director / scriptwriter	Igor Đurić
Producer	Sonja Đurić
Production company	Sonet (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Co-producer	Studio Dashak (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Length in minutes	15 minutes
Genre	Drama
Animation technique	Mix of digital and analogue 2D animation
Target audience	Primary - upper elementary and high school students (ages 13+)
	Secondary - general festival and cultural audiences with interest in national literature, animation, and author-driven film
Estimated budget	148,100.00 EUR (secured 79,000.00 EUR)
Current project stage	Development
Production start	January 2027
Estimated release	2029
Financing Partners	Audio-visual Center of Republic of Srpska (AVCRS)



Synopsis

In a bitter Krajina winter, proud, impoverished farmer **RELJA KNEŽEVIĆ (57)** fails to sell his last **COW**, leaving him unable to provide for his quiet grandson **VUJO (11)**. Heading home at dusk, Relja stubbornly rejects an acquaintance's offer of shelter, forcing a freezing Vujo out into the developing storm. As the snowfall turns into a merciless blizzard, hypothermia triggers parallel hallucinations that expose the raw emotional distance between them.

The breaking point arrives deep in the storm when an enraged, helpless Relja attacks their resisting cow. Shattering his lifelong submission, Vujo screams "No!", defiantly confronting his grandfather for the first time.

Moved by the boy's resilience, Relja's stubborn pride shifts to deep emotional pride as Vujo takes the initiative to push forward. Now truly bonded, they fight the whiteout until a massive snowdrift buries Vujo. Relja returns in a desperate rescue effort, sacrificing his life to shield his grandson from the freeze. Relja perishes, but Vujo's survival is hinted at, by him gripping his small hoe as a symbol of newfound defiance.





Igor Đurić

Director / Screenwriter

Igor Đurić is a director and animator from Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. His graduation film Sužanj / Thrall was selected for the student competition at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in 2021.

From 2021 to 2025, he worked as a teaching assistant in animation at the Academy of Arts in Banja Luka. He is a member of DARES and the founder of Studio Dashak.

Watch Sužanj / Thrall here
Showreel



Sonja Đurić

Producer

Sonja Đurić is a producer and assistant professor at the Academy of Arts, University of Banja Luka. Working across theatre, music, film and audiovisual production, she has extensive experience in developing and coordinating cultural projects, festivals and artistic initiatives.

She is the founder of the production company Sonet and co-founder of The Association for the promotion of Culture and Arts - CreArt. Since 2023 has been working with Studio Dashak, specializing in animated film production. Sonja holds an MA in Cultural and Media Management from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, where she is currently pursuing a PhD in the same field.

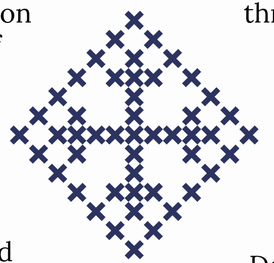
Director's note

A few years ago, at a family gathering, my father and I had a bit to drink. We were dancing side by side. At one point, I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Dad, I love you." Dad just stayed silent, frozen, staring ahead. He couldn't bring himself to say the words back.

Petar Kočić's short story Through the Blizzard was part of my required reading in elementary school. That image of an ominous snowstorm mirroring life's hardships etched itself into my memory. Years later, the profound impression of Relja Knežević's fate and human defiance remained untouched. Ever since I started working in animation professionally, I knew this was a film I would make one day. Kočić is a pillar of the cultural heritage of Krajina and Republika Srpska. Through this adaptation, I want to bring his work closer to new generations growing up in today's equally harsh life storms.

However, adapting this classic forced me to find my own voice and avoid a dry, textbook interpretation. In the original story, the boy Vujo is a passive victim blindly following his uncle Relja. Looking between the lines, I realized Vujo's untold story was hidden there.

Remembering that silent dance with my father, I realized: I am actually Vujo. Through the Blizzard stopped being just a survival story; it became an intimate exploration of the struggle to be truly seen and heard by those closest to us.



Relja is a *fallen king*, a man who lost his family to illness, leaving him with nothing but a cow and his grandson. He represents an unresolved paradigm in my society, a world where blind obedience is a virtue and questioning authority is a sin. Relja loves his grandson, but expresses it exclusively through cold, practical actions.

Vujo carries the weight of a child who feels he fails to meet his grandfather's high expectations, trying to act like an adult to prove his worth. The family tragedy reflects through the sharp tension of their immediate relationship.

This film is also my love letter to the region where I grew up. We bring the authenticity of Krajina to life through its specific dialect, traditional clothing like ornate vests with silver plates, and a visceral soundscape. Sound is an equal character here; the sharp crunch of snow and howling wind alternate with traditional, polyphonic *ojkača* singing, a shared cry of defiance and pain that merges past and present.

Developing this film was a journey through a blizzard of its own. While the first draft was a literal retelling, subsequent revisions shifted the focus tightly onto Vujo's coming of age and internal rebellion. At the end of the film, Vujo finds his voice when he stands up to his grandfather, picks up the discarded hoe, and defiantly pushes forward.

Metaphorically, this brings hope that there is salvation for my society if we finally re-examine the long established patterns leading us to ruin.

Igor Đurić

Producer's note

The short animated film Through the Blizzard is the first animated project of Sonet, initiated with the intention of bringing a classic work by Petar Kočić, one of the most significant South Slavic writers, to life through the contemporary language of animation. Through Igor's screenplay, which remains faithful to the spirit of Kočić's timeless prose and a distinctive visual approach inspired by the landscapes and atmosphere of Zmijanje region, the film seeks to offer a fresh interpretation of a literary classic.

At its core, however, Through the Blizzard is not a film about the past. It is an authorial reflection on themes that remain deeply relevant today: freedom, dignity, resilience, isolation and the fragile relationship between human beings and nature. The story also questions inherited ideas of masculinity, particularly the expectation that strength means endurance, emotional restraint and the ability to withstand everything alone. Set against an unforgiving natural environment, the film explores what happens when that ideal of resilience is pushed to its limits.

Although rooted in the landscapes, traditions and language of our region, these questions are universal. The film's regional specificity is therefore not an obstacle to international audiences, but one of its defining strengths: a very particular landscape and cultural context become the setting for an emotionally recognisable human experience. Our ambition is not simply to adapt a literary work, but to create a cinematic experience in which animation, visual poetry and music become equal storytellers.

The project has already received development and production support from the Audio-Visual Centre of Republika Srpska and was subsequently selected for the prestigious CEE Animation Workshop 2026, where it is being further developed with leading European mentors and animation professionals. As we continue developing the film, we are seeking international co-production partners who share our vision and can contribute to bringing this distinctive story to audiences beyond its place of origin. Through collaboration with European partners, we hope to expand the creative potential of the project while building a strong international path for its production, distribution and festival presence.

As 2027 marks the 150th anniversary of Petar Kočić's birth, the production process will be accompanied by a dedicated promotional campaign celebrating his literary legacy and introducing his work to new audiences. The film is planned to have its international premiere in 2029, followed by a targeted festival strategy focused on leading international animation and short film festivals, as well as auteur and arthouse festivals with strong animation programmes. Following its international festival premiere, the film will have its domestic premiere in 2029 at Kočić's Gathering (Kočićev zbor), the oldest and most important cultural manifestation dedicated to Petar Kočić, held annually in his birthplace. We also plan educational screenings in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture, introducing new generations to Kočić's work through the contemporary language of animation.

Ultimately, we hope Through the Blizzard will become not only a distinctive authorial animated film, but also a bridge between regional cultural heritage and contemporary international audiences.

Sonja Đurić

Production company profile

Sonet is a boutique production company based in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, founded in 2023 by producer and assistant professor Sonja Đurić. The company produces author-driven projects across animation, film, theatre and multimedia, with a focus on distinctive artistic voices, interdisciplinary collaboration and international partnerships.

Since its establishment, Sonet has produced projects in the performing arts, most notably Višnja sa zlatnom košticom (The Cherry with the Golden Pit), the first contemporary chamber opera created in Banja Luka, while also building a slate of original film and animation projects currently in development. Alongside its production activities, the company actively supports emerging artists through mentorship and collaboration with students and early-career professionals.

Sonet's first animated short film, Through the Blizzard, is currently in development at CEE Animation Workshop, marking the company's entry into the international animation scene. Through its work, Sonet aims to develop distinctive, author-driven projects that connect regional stories with international audiences.

Sonet Instagram Page

Sonet Facebook Page

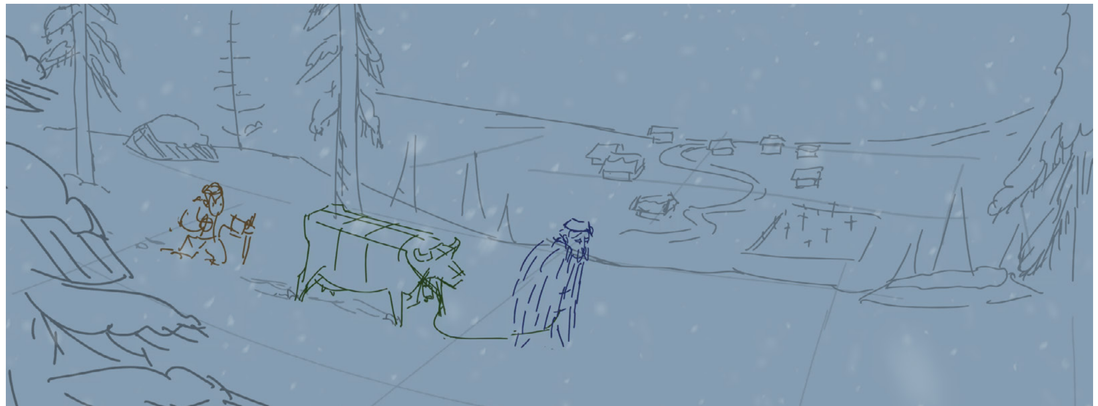
sonet

Treatment

Cold winter tones and traditional *ojkače* singing introduce a chaotic market day. **VUJO (11)** plays with his **COW**, laughing even when she playfully knocks him into the snow. His gaunt grandfather, **RELJA (57)**, desperately tries to sell the pregnant heifer, but people dismiss him as a fool.

When potential buyers finally show interest, Relja turns to find Vujo and the cow have wandered away, leaving him humiliated and empty-handed. Locating them, a stern Relja gets right in Vujo's face, declaring they must sell the animal, fading into the title: *Through the Blizzard* (*Kroz mećavu*).

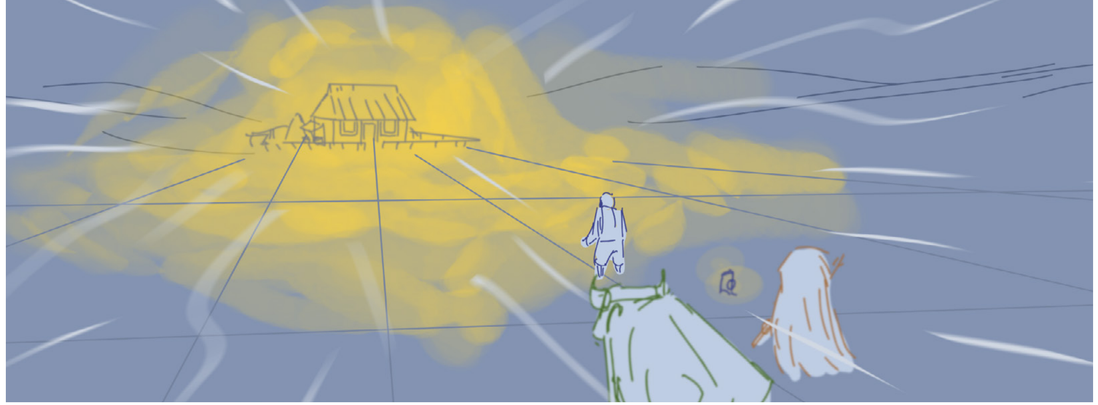
At dusk, light snow falls as the trio journeys home, with the cow walking between Relja and a freezing Vujo. Relja coldly ignores Vujo's longing glances at a warm, lively roadside guesthouse. The cow gently butts the sad boy from behind to cheer him up.





After passing a graveyard where Relja pauses heavily, they cross a freezing stream. Vujo falls in while trying to vault it with his small hoe, hiding his shivering from his grandfather. They reach an acquaintance's house who offers them shelter from the coming storm. Driven by stubborn pride, Relja flatly refuses, boasts of his past resilience, and forces Vujo back into the coming whiteout.

A violent blizzard erupts over Zmijanje as they enter a dense forest. Relja loses his way, briefly chasing a hallucinated golden light and phantom *kolo* dancers before freezing darkness slams back. Seeing Vujo shivering against a tree, Relja's harsh facade cracks; he wraps his heavy *gunj* cloak around the boy, throws Vujo's small hoe into the snow, and walks on. Defiant, Vujo runs back to retrieve his hoe and follows his grandfather's distant call into the mounting drifts.



The storm reaches its peak. When the cow refuses to move, an enraged Relja grabs her horns, aggressively mirroring Vujo's and cow's market game until the beast shoves him into the snow. As Relja rises to strike her, Vujo shatters his silence, screaming "No!" and standing defiantly with his hoe. Stunned, Relja looks at his grandson with newfound respect.

Suddenly, their minds fracture into dual hypothermic hallucinations: Relja sees a light drenched estate filled with his lost family, while Vujo enters a freezing, derelict version of the same house, finding his grandfather standing utterly alone, clutching at empty air.

Vujo crashes back to reality against the real cow. Nearby, Relja blindly mimics sharpening a scythe until a vision of dust devours his phantom family, leaving him kneeling in despair. Vujo places a hand on Relja's shoulder, asking, "Can we do it, Grandfather?". Relja touches Vujo's hand, rises with intense pride, and screams into the whiteout for help.

They push through a brutal whiteout montage until a distant fire and calling voices appear. Hypnotized by the illusion of rescue, Relja lunges forward, completely missing the moment a massive snowdrift hits Vujo.

Realizing he is holding only a loose lead rope, Relja frantically runs back, uncovers the freezing boy, and wraps his body around Vujo. Relja catches a final glimpse of the cow walking toward the fire, as a warm light approaches. Following an animated transition, a long static shot shows Relja's frozen body draped over Vujo.

Slowly, Vujo's trembling hand rises and firmly grips his small hoe. We fade to black, as the sound of enduring footsteps echoes through the howling wind.



Characters in short

Vujo Knežević (11)

Vujo is still a boy, trying to act like an adult. Vujo feels he is not Relja's "favorite descendant," but he does not express it. Vujo knows the reason for this is the fact that he does not fulfill Relja's expectations enough, and that he is too different in character. Vujo needs a father figure, as he was left without a mentor after losing his parents and siblings.

Despite the mask of a more mature person, Vujo retains a boyish playfulness within him. Vujo has a very close relationship with the cow, as if the cow is some kind of maternal figure for Vujo. Vujo is Relja's grandson.



Relja Knežević (57)

Relja is a fallen king. Relja demands obedience. Relja is stubborn and defiant, to his and Vujo's detriment. Relja loves the boy, but cannot express his love verbally. He shows his love in a way he considers adequate - by providing for Vujo. This approach is rather cold and expresses love exclusively through concrete actions.

Although he loves Vujo, and cares for him, Relja knows deep down that Vujo is not his "favorite descendant". Relja appears distant, impenetrable. Relja's inner world is filled with constant worry and sadness for his lost family and past. Relja is Vujo's grandfather.



Our film combines various 2D painterly animation techniques, to achieve the tactility of the life threathening blizzard.

View our Proof-of-Concept teaser here

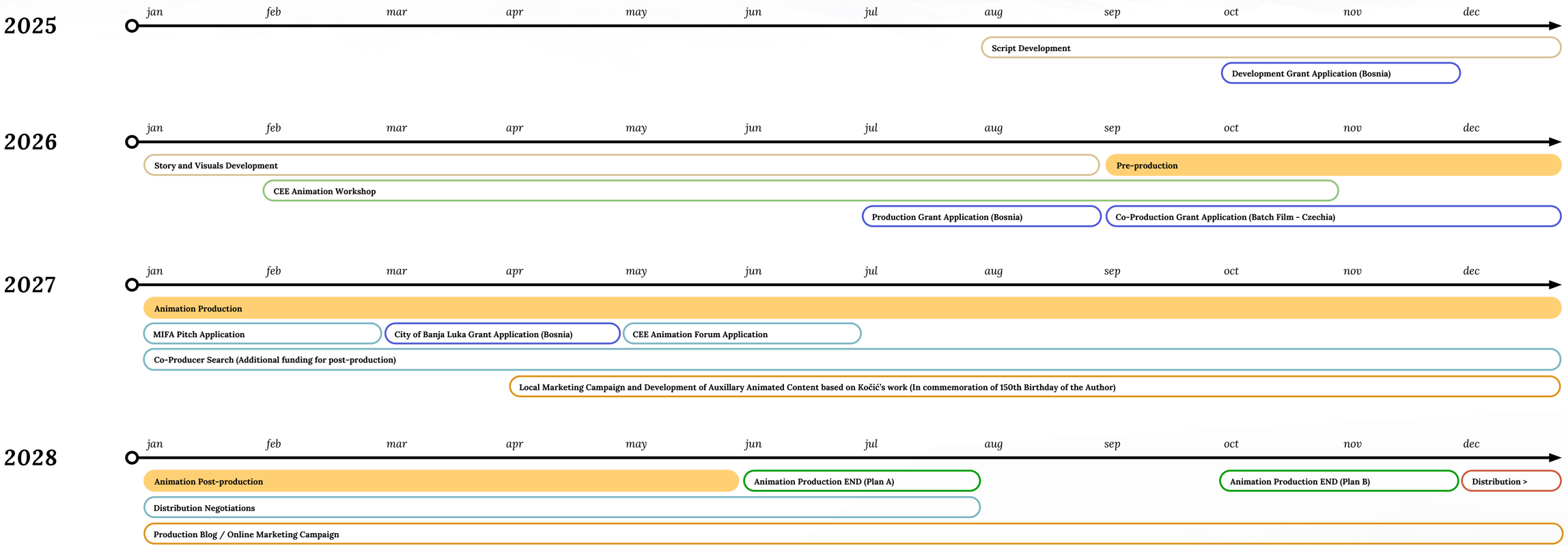
Production Budget Top Sheet

No.	Source	Amount (EUR)
1.	Total Script	1,500.00
2.	Total Development	10,100.00
3.	Total Director	10,700.00
4.	Total Producer	8,400.00
5.	Total Animation	81,900.00
6.	Total Post-Production	7,150.00
7.	Total Sound	9,050.00
8.	Total Marketing and Distribution	8,500.00
9.	Total Administrative and Equipment	10,800.00
TOTAL (EUR):		**148.100,00 EUR**

Financing plan

No.	Source	%	Amount (EUR)	Note
1.	Own Funds	13,92%	20.619,89	Funding Secured
2.	AVCRS (BH - Development)	6,91%	10.225,84	Funding Secured
3.	AVCRS (BH - Production)	32,51%	48.150,61	Funding Secured
4.	The City of Banja Luka	9,53%	14.103.66	Applying Spring / Summer 2027
5.	Co-producer #1	13,50%	20.000,00	We reached a verbal agreement with Batch Film (Czechia) to apply for Co-production funding in fall 2026.
6.	Co-producer #2	13,50%	20.000,00	
7.	Sponsors and donors	10,13%	15.000,00	
TOTAL (EUR):			**148.100,00 EUR**	

Timeline


2025
jan feb mar apr may jun jul aug sep oct nov dec
Script Development
Development Grant Application (Bosnia)
2026
jan feb mar apr may jun jul aug sep oct nov dec
Story and Visuals Development
Pre-production
CEE Animation Workshop
Production Grant Application (Bosnia)
Co-Production Grant Application (Batch Film - Czechia)
2027
jan feb mar apr may jun jul aug sep oct nov dec
Animation Production
MIFA Pitch Application
City of Banja Luka Grant Application (Bosnia)
CEE Animation Forum Application
Co-Producer Search (Additional funding for post-production)
Local Marketing Campaign and Development of Auxillary Animated Content based on Kočić's work (In commemoration of 150th Birthday of the Author)
2028
jan feb mar apr may jun jul aug sep oct nov dec
Animation Post-production
Animation Production END (Plan A)
Animation Production END (Plan B)
Distribution >
Distribution Negotiations
Production Blog / Online Marketing Campaign



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