

Environmental Protection



The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina addresses environmental challenges by working with the authorities and civil society in a wide range of areas. The Mission's priorities in this field include improving public access to information and participation in decision-making affecting the environment, strengthening the capacities of the BiH Aarhus Centres and other relevant CSOs, and training justice sector professionals and future lawyers on environmental law. The Mission also supports local-level efforts that strengthen inter-municipal co-operation and directly involve citizens in protecting the environment.

High levels of air pollution, limited water management and waste management capacities,

uncontrolled construction, and other environmental problems combine to make BiH one

of the worst environmental performers in Europe.

By causing disease and premature death, endangering livelihoods, and damaging relations between and within communities, environmental problems compromise the living standards, health, and security of the people of BiH, posing a serious obstacle to sustainable development in the country. An inadequate focus on the environment at the highest levels of political decision-making, weak implementation of environmental laws, and limited public awareness of the negative impacts of environmental degradation combine to hinder positive change in this area.

As a trusted partner of the authorities and civil society in BiH, and with its unique field presence, the Mission works to improve environmental protection by (1) Strengthening environmental governance and the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, (2) Building expertise on environmental law, and (3) Fostering environmental awareness and action at the local level.

Strengthening environmental governance and the implementation of the Aarhus Convention

By adopting the [Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#) (better known as the "Aarhus Convention"), BiH committed

to ensuring the public three key rights relating to the environment. In strengthening the realization of these rights, the Mission works with four environmental CSOs or “Aarhus Centres” based in [Banja Luka](#), [Sarajevo](#), [Tuzla](#) and [Zenica](#). By supporting their sustainability, networking and outreach, the Mission helps the Aarhus Centres in functioning as a vital bridge between the general public, the authorities and the private sector on environmental matters and in providing much-needed independence and expertise in driving environmental action.

The Mission also provides support to the BiH Aarhus Convention National Focal Point (located within the Federation Ministry of Environment and Tourism) in ensuring that civil society and public voices are reflected in the country’s Aarhus Convention National Implementation Reports.

Mission assistance has included expert support to the drafting process as well as the organization of public consultation events during the 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2021 reporting cycles.

Building expertise on environmental law

The lack of legal expertise on the environment - as reflected in the very low number of court cases on environmental matters and the often lengthy delays in processing such cases - undermines both access to justice and environmental protection in BiH. In order to strengthen the expertise of legal practitioners and enhance the impact of the court system, the Mission has trained over 120 judges and prosecutors on aspects of environmental law since 2020. Through an annual semester-long [Environmental Legal Clinics Programme](#) for university law students, the

Mission is also helping to build the next generation of environmental lawyers. The Mission also provides practical training to local associations, community groups and others on the use of legal remedies for protecting the environment..

Fostering environmental awareness and action at the local level

Together with its governmental and non-governmental partners, the Mission regularly co-organizes clean-up and tree planting campaigns, presentations and roundtable events on tackling illegal dumping and other environmental challenges. In order to raise awareness and prompt action in protecting the River Drina, the Mission commenced the project “Citizen Scientist – Assessing the Impact of Water Pollution in the Drina River Basin” in 2022. Implemented in co-operation with the University of Sarajevo

Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and with the participation of the University of Istočno Sarajevo Faculty of Technology in Zvornik, the project comprises a series of participatory scientific exercises to provide local communities, young people, citizens and officials with first-hand insight into water quality and the condition of aquatic ecosystems.



For more information, scan the QR code.



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