

# Protection and Rescue



In line with its mandate, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) supports Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in developing a reliable disaster preparedness and management system in accord with its OSCE commitments and the Framework Law on Protection and Rescue of People and Property from Natural and Other Disasters. The Mission assists authorities, civil society and other stakeholders to increase resilience to natural and other hazards and to reduce the susceptibility of people and property to disaster risk. With its comprehensive approach to security, the Mission is in a unique position to advance co-operation and co-ordination among all relevant ministries and agencies on emergency/crisis management and recovery. These efforts complement implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#).

## Key challenges

The [World Economic Forum's 2019 Global Risks Report](#) identified BiH as a country with high exposure and vulnerability

to meteorological and geological natural hazards, and with insufficient capacities to cope with resulting disasters. According to the 2014 BiH Floods Recovery Needs

Assessment, the devastating floods and landslides of 2014 caused approximately 2.04 billion EUR of damage. Such disasters significantly undermine local, national and regional stability and security with the potential to even generate intra-state and inter-state tensions, or to trigger conflict.

Over the past several years, competent institutions and agencies in BiH made significant progress in decreasing vulnerability to risks from climate change, natural hazards and human activity, including through fulfilling the requirements for joining the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). However, the disaster preparedness and management system still faces critical deficiencies,

including in terms of the capacity to mitigate the consequences of disaster. In addition to inadequate material and financial resources, co-operation shortfalls hinder attainment of an integrated, effective, and mutually complementary disaster management system. The complex and highly decentralized political-administrative structure of BiH - with overlapping and even conflicting interpretations of roles, competencies, and jurisdictions within the protection and rescue system - often impedes emergency management as well as overall disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the challenges in the co-ordination of crisis management at the border and

in the delivery of international aid.

Furthermore, there is insufficient awareness and understanding of disaster risk among local administrations and the public, and relevant legislation and regulations in different jurisdictions are not harmonized with the BiH Framework Law on Protection and Rescue. Although prescribed by the Sendai Framework for DRR, there is also an absence of DRR strategies, action plans, as well as DRR components in sustainable development strategies at the different levels of authority.

### The role of the Mission

The Mission supports the BiH Ministry of Security's Protection and Rescue Sector and other institutional actors at various levels of authority to develop a reliable disaster preparedness and management system. This includes assisting BiH with the fulfilment of its obligations deriving from national legislation and international commitments - including the [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction](#). The Mission also promotes the full implementation of the BiH Framework Law on Protection and Rescue - particularly in terms of strengthening the role and capacity of the BiH Council of Ministers Co-ordination Body for Protection and Rescue, and the harmonization of relevant legislation.

Toward fulfilment of commitments deriving from the Sendai Framework for DRR, the Mission engages across all levels of authority to support improvement and harmonization of relevant

strategies and legislation on disaster preparedness, management, and response - including protection and rescue. To help improve security sector governance, the Mission also supports the development of State, entities' and local-level DRR and sustainable development strategies through co-operation with the BiH Ministry of Security, entity civil protection administrations, and the Public Safety Department of Brčko District.

In 2019, Mission support to the BiH Ministry of Security yielded an updated Document on Disaster Risk Assessment from Natural and Other Disasters in BiH, subsequently adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers. Its implementation has been crucial for strengthening the protection and rescue and DRR platform in BiH in accordance with the Sendai Framework for DRR. It has also enabled BiH to attain full-fledged membership in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in September 2022.

In addition to providing policy-related assistance, the Mission is also helping build institutional capacity in areas that are essential for achieving a reliable disaster preparedness and management system - such as civil-military co-operation.

Mission support led to the establishment of the 112 Operational-Communication Centre within the BiH Ministry of Security, to progress on the introduction of the unified EU emergency number 112 in BiH, as well as to the development and subsequent updating of the Document on Disaster Risk Assessment from Natural and Other Disasters in BiH. As a result, BiH is now better able to

addresses threats and hazards, such as hydro-meteorological, geological and biohazards, as well as hazards from forest fires, unexploded ordnance, and terrorism.

Through application of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, the Mission facilitates co-operation and co-ordination involving all stakeholders that are vital to the effective preparedness for, response to, and mitigation of the consequences of emergencies and disasters. The Mission helps to build partnerships and networks between the private and public sectors, as well as with civil society. Accordingly, particular focus is placed on supporting the role of the Armed Forces of BiH in assisting civilian authorities in case of natural and other disasters - as one of its main tasks stipulated in the BiH Law on Defence. This support also aims to improve facilitation of civil-military co-operation, toward the optimal use of the country's limited resources.

In view of the trans-boundary nature of most natural and other hazards, and their potential to trigger conflict, the Mission partners with the OSCE Office of the Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs on implementation of regional DRR, protection and rescue, and environmental security projects.

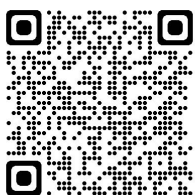
### Looking ahead

In the period ahead, the Mission will prioritize support to development of DRR strategies - key for strengthening disaster preparedness and for sustainable development in BiH. It will also continue

assisting BiH to complete the introduction of the 112 emergency number and to further harmonize planning and protection documents among the different jurisdictions as well as with the EU requirements.



For more information, scan the QR code.



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