Security Sector and Governance Reform (SSG/R) is an integral part of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security, embedded in core OSCE principles and commitments - including those deriving from the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. It entails progress toward a well governed security and justice system, and is a political and technical process of improving state and human security within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law, and respect for human rights. SSG/R includes both formal and informal influences of all the structures, institutions, and actors involved in the provision, management and oversight of security and justice at national and local levels. A nationally-led effort forming part of a broader process of stabilization and democratization, SSG/R complements parallel political, economic, and social transformations. It is fundamental to promoting trust, confidence, and stability, and so to preventing outbreaks or the recurrence of violence, crisis and conflict.

SSG/R challenges in BiH

Security and justice reforms in BiH have been highly politicized and framed primarily as a State-building instrument rather than as a practical and technical reform agenda. This has led to a lack of political will, and subsequent slow progress on some issues. Many problems continue to negatively affect governance and reform of the security sector in BiH, including shortfalls in inter-agency cooperation, policing reform, and the inclusion of civil society, women, and youth. The BiH Security Policy has not been updated since its adoption in 2006, a circumstance which hampers the country’s ability to effectively address contemporary and emerging threats to security, such as cybercrime.

In parallel, understanding of security sector partners on the practical benefits of holistic and inclusive security sector reform based on the principles of good governance is limited. To overcome political sensitivities and alleviate related fears and concerns, there is a need to effectively convey the fact that a well-governed and democratic system confers greater capacities to deal with security issues, increases the legitimacy of authorities, and builds trust and confidence in security actors - all translating into increased security and stability.
The role of the OSCE Mission to BiH (the Mission)

To enhance the country's ability to address complex threats to national and human security, and to increase public confidence in security, defence and justice sector institutions, the Mission supports development of accountable, inclusive and sustainable security governance that is responsive to the needs of citizens, upholds the rule of law, and complies with international human rights standards. The overarching aim is to ensure a high degree of host country ownership and leadership on reform and governance, with focus on fulfilling priorities and reform strategies adopted at different levels of authority. To help develop a strong basis for effective and sustainable reform, capacity building activities supported by the Mission aim to familiarize key security stakeholders with their role in leading reform, as well as with key political and organizational requirements and the practical benefits of an inclusive and co-operative approach to development.

The Mission assists security and defence institutions in developing strategic policies and action plans, and in increasing inter-agency co-operation - including on integrated border management, disaster risk reduction, cyber security, intelligence-led policing, and the prevention and combating of terrorism. This also involves facilitating public-private partnerships and increasing meaningful participation of civil society, women, and youth in security and defence affairs - support that is complementary to the UN Agenda for Women, Peace and Security, and to the Agenda for Youth, Peace and Security.

The Mission conducts systematic monitoring of the work of law enforcement and the justice sector to identify and resolve deficits that are likely to undermine public confidence. It also works with executive and legislative partners to develop parliamentary oversight and conflict of interest legislation - crucial to ensuring that security sector good governance principles are respected.

Mission support also involves SSG/R training of key stakeholders in the wider security and defence establishment. The BiH Council of Ministers' Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Monitoring Implementation of the Security Policy of BiH is assisted by the Mission to oversee implementation of the Policy, hold regular trainings, and facilitate dialogue on potential updates. Support is also provided to the annual Youth and Security School which provides future security experts with the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the foremost security and defence institutions, and to embed their age- and gender-specific priorities in the policy-development process.

The Mission's cross-thematic work embodies the SSG/R approach. This is for example the case with support to justice sector reform and transitional justice, as well as with work to ensure a holistic, inclusive, and victim-centred response to trafficking in human beings.

OSCE support led to the establishment of a single command-and-control structure for the BiH Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of BiH. Subsequent support also provided for the establishment of a State-level parliamentary oversight framework in the form of the Office of the Parliamentary Military Commissioner, the BiH Parliamentary Assembly Joint Committee on Defence and Security, and the BiH Parliamentary Assembly Joint Committee for Oversight of the Intelligence-Security Agency.

To help with the realization of the 2017-2020 BiH Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the Mission partnered with the BiH Gender Equality Agency to support the BiH Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces (AF) of BiH to harmonize internal acts governing military service with the BiH Law on Gender Equality. As a result, the AF BiH Code of Ethics and its rulebooks on promotions, deployment to peacekeeping missions, and service in the armed forces, now include gender equality principles and increase prospects for greater representation and retention of women in the military.

Mission support to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism (P/C VERLT) represents a benchmark example of applying SSG/R to address a complex transnational security threat more effectively. By making full use of its unique network of field offices across BiH, the Mission's support brings together various sectors at all levels and provides a specially-tailored platform for the exchange of expertise and best practices. The multi-stakeholder initiatives include teachers, psychologists, social workers, religious communities, civil society, youth, and the media. This is helping gradually change discourse on VERLT toward one of a complex multi-dimensional issue, leading to more effective and sustainable responses.

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH

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