

Economic and Social Rights



Working hand-in-hand with government and civil society, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina strives to protect, promote and advance the economic, social, cultural and political rights of all those living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular attention given to vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The realization of the right to social assistance, adequate housing and an effective social protection is a cornerstone of all modern societies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a large portion of the population lives in poverty, these issues are even more critical. The Mission focuses on identifying good practices and creating optimal conditions for everyone to be able to enjoy their rights.

In this area, the Mission works to:

- Incorporate a human rights perspective to economic and social development in BiH
- Assist the authorities in identifying and addressing human rights concerns, assisting them to carry out their mandate in a human-rights compliant manner. By doing this, the Mission aims

at the progressive realization of international standards related to economic and social rights

- Identify structural issues which, if addressed, would lead to the realization of these rights for all persons - including for the most vulnerable in society.
- Enhance the work of civil society organizations, international agencies and external donors involved in economic and social development
- Empower vulnerable individuals with the knowledge they need to defend their rights.

The Mission advocates for reform of the social protection sector, particularly in identifying gaps between the status and the real needs of the most vulnerable.

The Mission helps to build the capacities of social welfare institutions and supports the development of a comprehensive national housing strategy, including a social housing policy.

While there are substantial efforts on all levels to promote economic and social development, there is no single government agency responsible for monitoring whether development is human rights compliant. Given its unique field presence and experience in dealing with citizens and institutions throughout BiH, the Mission is well placed to deal with the human rights aspects of economic and social development, and plays a significant monitoring and intervention role. In this, the Mission continues to co-ordinate with and build upon the efforts of other international and local organizations engaged in this sphere.

Social Protection

Nearly half of the population of BiH live on or below the poverty line. What's more, many of these individuals are socially excluded, living on the margins of society. In response to exclusion and poverty, the Mission works to bolster

the ability of BiH institutions to provide social protection throughout the country. The Mission monitors the legislative framework and practices in social protection in the Entities and advocates for reforms in line with international standards.

In order to ensure equal access to social protection for all vulnerable people, the Mission is supporting the development of several instruments (methodology, questionnaires and by-laws) to conduct social mapping exercises. This is expected to lead to a significant change in policymaking that will move from a status-based to needs based approach.

With specific attention placed on social welfare centres, the Mission is carrying out activities aimed at building the capacity of local authorities, so that they can respond to requests for the exercise of basic social protection rights in an efficient and equitable manner. Recent trainings have focused on human rights and non-discrimination, strategic

planning and advocacy, outreach and needs-assessments, co-ordination and networking, and enhancing the capacities of NGOs to demand and defend basic human rights. Furthermore, the Mission places value on strengthening the newly established BiH Union of Social Workers and Social Work Professionals, as well as cantonal and regional associations of social work.

Social Housing

Although there have been success stories related to property restitution, there are severe housing issues remaining, since a significant proportion of the population requires public housing assistance. However, such assistance is often not available to those who need it most, for instance refugees, displaced persons, single parent families, elderly, women, children, young couples, persons with disabilities, and Roma. Since there is no legal mechanism in place to regulate

eligibility criteria, vulnerable individuals and families can find themselves without housing and in need of urgent assistance from municipal authorities.

The Mission advocates for the development of a comprehensive social housing legal framework, which would be fully aligned with international human rights standards. The Mission continues to support efforts at all levels of government developing social housing laws and policies, action plans, and municipal strategies. Across the country, the Mission's experienced field office teams continue to promote social housing projects at the local level and, in doing this, advocate for non-discriminatory and transparent procedures for the allocation of social housing. Finally, we promote improved communication and co-operation among the relevant authorities.

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