

Disaster Risk Reduction and Protection and Rescue



In line with its mandate and relevant OSCE commitments, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) supports its host country in developing a reliable disaster preparedness and management system in line with the *Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) 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 sustainably increase resilience to natural and other hazards and to reduce the susceptibility of people and property to disaster risk. Owing to its comprehensive approach to security, the Mission is in a unique position to advance co-operation and co-ordination among relevant ministries and agencies at all levels in BiH 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.

Disaster risk reduction challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 2019 World Risk 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 EUR 2.04 billion 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.

Although risks from climate change, natural hazards and human activity cannot

be eliminated, institutions and agencies in BiH face critical deficiencies in disaster preparedness and management, as well as in mitigation of consequences. 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 - often impedes disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency management. This issue was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to the co-ordination of crisis management at the border and in the delivery of international aid.

There is insufficient awareness and understanding of disaster risk among authorities 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, and DRR components in sustainable development strategies.

The role of the OSCE Mission to BiH

The Mission supports the BiH Ministry of Security 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 fulfillment of its obligations deriving from national legislation and international commitments - including the *OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction*¹. 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 fulfillment 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. The focus is also on supporting the development of State, entities' and local-level DRR and sustainable development strategies, in co-operation with the BiH Ministry of Security, entity civil protection administrations, and the Public Safety Department of Brčko District. The Mission's overarching aim is the systemic integration of DRR into the broader development and poverty reduction agenda - a result that would provide for the management of disaster risk and climate change in a manner that facilitates sustainable development.

The Mission supports reducing disaster risk through systematic efforts involving the analysis and management of the causes of disasters. This includes reduction of exposure to hazards, decreasing the vulnerability of people and property, effective management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness.

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 is crucial for strengthening the DRR platform in BiH in accordance with the *Sendai Framework for DRR* and bringing BiH closer to membership in the *EU Civil Protection Mechanism*.

In addition to policy-related assistance, the Mission supports institutional capacity building in areas that are essential for achieving a reliable disaster preparedness and management system - such as disaster risk governance and understanding of disaster risk.

Mission support led to the establishment of the 112 Operational-Communication Centre and the introduction of the unified EU emergency number 112, and 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 better able to address numerous 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 well as on facilitating civil-military co-operation toward the optimal use of limited resources.

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

¹ Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/6/130406.pdf>.

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH



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