



# Economic and Social Rights

Working directly with government officials and civil society members, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina strives to protect, promote and advance the economic, social, cultural and political rights of all people 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 efficient system of social protection are of paramount importance in all societies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), where a large portion of the population lives in poverty and social exclusion, these issues are even more critical.

The Mission focuses its efforts on creating the conditions for everyone to be able to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights as well as their civil and political rights. In this area, the Mission works to:

- Bring a human rights perspective to economic and social development in BiH;
- Assist public authorities in identifying and addressing human rights concerns so that they carry out their mandate in a way that is human rights compliant and aims at the progressive realization of international standards related to economic and social rights; Identify structural focus issues which, if addressed by the authorities, would lead to the realization of these rights for all persons, and in particular for those who are most vulnerable;
- Enhance the work of civil society organizations, international agencies and external donors involved in economic and social development; and
- Empower vulnerable individuals to know and defend their rights.

The Mission advocates for reform of the social protection sector, builds 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 at the state, entity, cantonal and municipal levels to promote economic and social development, there is no government agency with a comprehensive programme for monitoring whether economic and social development is human rights compliant throughout BiH. Given its extensive 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 role in fostering a monitoring and intervention system. In this role, the Mission continues to co-ordinate with and build upon the efforts of other international and local organizations engaged in social protection.

## Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

The Mission places increasing emphasis on the implementation of Annex 6 within the Dayton Peace Agreement which provides that “the Parties shall secure to all persons within their jurisdiction the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Accordingly, the Mission works to ensure that all persons, especially vulnerable and marginalized



groups, are empowered to know, demand and defend their economic and social rights to the fullest extent possible.

## Social Protection

Nearly half of the population of BiH live at or below the poverty line and many of these individuals are socially excluded and live on the margins of society. In response to predominant exclusion and poverty, the Mission works to strengthen the ability of BiH institutions to provide social protection throughout the country. The Mission monitors the legislative framework and practices in social protection in Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH and advocates for necessary reforms in line with international standards aimed at protecting and respecting the human rights of individuals in equal and adequate manner.

With specific attention placed on social welfare centres, the Mission provides capacity building to local authorities in order to assist them in realizing basic social protection rights for the most vulnerable in an efficient and even-handed manner. Recent trainings have focused on human rights and non-discrimination, strategic planning and advocacy, outreach and needs-assessment, co-ordination and networking, and enhancing the capacities of NGOs to demand and defend their basic human rights.

## Social Housing

Although there have been success stories related to property restitution, there are severe housing related issues remaining, since a significant number of people require alternative public housing assistance. However, such assistance is not readily available to the most vulnerable categories such as single parent families, the elderly, women, children, persons with disabilities and Roma. Since there is no legal regime or public policy 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 strongly advocates for the development of a comprehensive national housing strategy. Across the country, Mission field teams continue to promote social housing projects at the local level and, in the process, advocate for more transparent procedures and improved communication and co-operation amongst the responsible authorities.

## Disability

The Mission also directs focus towards the development of a policy framework aimed at promoting and supporting adequate and equal treatment and opportunities for all categories of persons with disabilities. The Mission has assisted the development of entity strategies on disability and will monitor their implementation and advocate for the development and implementation of local action plans.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina assists BiH in meeting its OSCE commitments and in progressing towards its stated goal of Euro-Atlantic integration by strengthening security and stability through completion of peace-building within the Dayton framework and developing inclusive political discourse and democratically accountable institutions that respect diversity, promote consensus and respect the rule of law. The Mission takes a comprehensive and integrated approach through its field presence, reflecting an emphasis on developing cohesive communities and on the timely identification of obstacles to progress.