

## *Let's Talk About Discrimination!*

Online Launch

### **Opening remarks by the Ambassador Kathleen Kavalec, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- Dear colleagues and partners, ladies and gentlemen
- Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is digitally launching our report *Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Public Perceptions, Attitudes, and Experiences*.
- The ongoing global health pandemic has pushed us all to think of creative ways to advance key goals. For OSCE the Mission, that has meant transforming our intended conference in to this online launch that respects the need for social distancing while also using modern tools to convey important information
- Thank you for joining us today as we share our findings with you.
- The Mission is dedicated to fighting discrimination – a phenomena which our survey shows BiH citizens believe is omnipresent in many areas of life.
- This is a serious problem because discrimination stands in the way of building an inclusive society that can work together to solve urgent challenges, in the interests of all citizens.
- Indeed, the need for this kind of broad cooperation has never been clearer than it is today.
- OSCE continues to play a crucial role in working with authorities and citizens to tackle discrimination – in the interest of all in BiH.
- Starting from the support for adoption of the BiH Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in 2009, the Mission has supported numerous efforts aiming at strengthening mechanisms that address discrimination.

- The Mission supports the BiH Judiciary, Ombudsman Institution, and Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees in exercising their respective anti-discrimination mandates.
- The Mission also supported the adoption of amendments to the Law in 2016 and helped to train more than 800 judges and legal professionals on international and European anti-discrimination standards and mechanisms.
- Other efforts to combat discrimination include *On the Margins*, a multimedia awareness raising and educational project aimed at challenging stereotypes surrounding the Roma community, combatting discrimination against the most vulnerable communities in BiH.
- Last but not least, we wholeheartedly support initiatives for inter-religious dialogue and increasing access of vulnerable groups to their social and economic rights.
- In the development of this report, the Mission conducted a survey to gain a unique, up-to-date, comparable insight into attitudes towards, forms and prevalence of discrimination in BiH.
- This paints a meaningful if troubling picture of the current status in BiH concerning discrimination.
- As the report shows, discrimination is seen as a widespread issue by nearly 90% of the population.
- It was identified as frequently being present in areas such as employment, and discrimination against vulnerable groups such as Roma was found to be rampant.
- This report provides a great basis to shape projects and programmes aimed at combatting discrimination, and to develop fact-based policies at all levels of authority.
- We hope you find the report useful, especially at this critical moment, and that it can help spark many needed conversations and changes.
- Thank you all for joining us online, stay safe and healthy.

