

Cyber Security



OSCE Mission to BiH (the Mission) engagement in the field of cyber security is focused on improving the capacity of BiH to respond to security threats emanating from cyberspace in line with its commitments as an OSCE participating State. A streamlined and comprehensive approach is taken, entailing a spectrum of support ranging from strategic to operational. These efforts involve support to development of a harmonized strategic cybersecurity framework, establishment of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), and capacity building to fight cybercrime.

BiH's commitments in cyber security

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has committed to implementing OSCE commitments deriving from the *OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions on Enhancing*

*Efforts to Reduce the Risks of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICT*¹ and the agreed set of *Confidence-Building Measures*² (CBMs) to address ICT security in order to enhance predictability and transparency and reduce misperceptions

and conflicts in the cyber domain. In light of the EU accession process, it also has expressed determination to apply measures for a high common level of security for network and information systems across the Union (*NIS Directive [EU] 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council*)³ and to fulfil the *General Data Protection Regulation*⁴ (Regulation [EU] 2016/679). Furthermore, BiH aims to implement the *Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Cybercrime* which serves as a guideline for any country developing national legislation and co-operation in combating cybercrime (i.e. the Budapest Convention).

Unfortunately, BiH lacks an official and agreed strategic

approach and framework for responding to cyber security threats. Although some strategies do partly address cyber security, BiH remains the only country in South-Eastern Europe without a national level cyber security strategy and CERT. Subpar co-ordination, an insufficiently harmonized approach, inadequate capacities, and the absence of a strategic vision remain issues of concern. Moreover, existing legislation remains to be fully harmonized with relevant EU acquis, and there is no overarching law on information security.

1 Available at <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/361561>.

2 Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/t/documents/d/a/227281.pdf>.

3 Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016L1148&from=EN>.

4 Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679>.

The 2017 Decision of the BiH Council of Ministers on Designation of a CERT for Institutions of BiH still requires institutional operationalization. Also, key national priorities contained in the 2017-2022 Information Security Management Policy for BiH Institutions are yet to be operationalized – namely, the establishment of mechanisms to adequately respond to the contemporary challenges of the digital age.

All this leaves the public and private sectors in BiH, as well as individual citizens, highly vulnerable to the evolving threats from cyberspace - including to cyber-attacks and terrorism targeting critical infrastructure.

OSCE Mission to BiH efforts in addressing cyber security challenges

The Mission supported the initiation of development of a cyber security strategic framework in BiH and advocates with decision-makers to ensure its adoption and operationalization through strategies and action plans at various levels of authority. Assistance also aims to contribute to the establishment, capacity building, and

networking of CERTs as key protection and response mechanisms.

As a part of regional OSCE efforts, the Mission supports capacity building of law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners in BiH to effectively fight cybercrime and cyber-enabled crime.

In close co-operation with the EU Delegation and EU Special Representative in BiH, the Mission has established an international co-ordination group (Neretva Group) consisting of experts in cyber security. The Neretva Group has improved information sharing, co-operation and co-ordination in this crucial sphere.

Under Mission auspices, a diverse group of State and entity-level stakeholders developed and agreed *the Guidelines for a Strategic Cybersecurity Framework in BiH*⁵. This milestone document is based on EU national cyber security strategies good practices, operationalizes the OSCE ICT/cyber CBMs, and represents a basis for development of much-needed cyber security strategies and action plans. Overarching and comprehensive in nature, the Guidelines

address priority areas for enhancing cyber security in BiH in accordance with international standards.

The Mission established the **Neretva Group** on cyber security - an open-ended, multi-stakeholder and informal working group that brings together practitioners and experts from different sectors and from all levels of authority. The Group prioritizes and promotes the application of the Guidelines and multi-sectoral co-operation through an action-oriented approach. It is now also the generator of new cyber security initiatives, including development of e-learning courses, and information security for the public administration.

Steps forward

The Mission continues to support and facilitate the work of the Neretva Group as the foremost modality for joint engagement of representatives and experts from different levels of authority and sectors in BiH on advancing cyber security. This also involves the promotion of public-private partnerships as a way of bolstering the security of critical infrastructure, support to the work of the energy

sector sub-group, and greater inclusion of women and youth security experts, as a way of diversifying the expertise base and ensuring its sustainability.

Assistance is provided in operationalizing the Guidelines for a Strategic Cybersecurity Framework in BiH as a basis for the development of strategies - including for a framework strategy at the national level.

In view of the importance of CERTs in the prevention of and response to cyber-attacks, assistance is also provided to their establishment, capacity building and networking in BiH - particularly by facilitating peer support led by the CERT of Republika Srpska. Strategic focus is placed on supporting the implementation of OSCE confidence-building measures on ICT by BiH, to enhance interstate co-operation, transparency and stability, as well as to reduce the risk of conflict that stems from the use of ICT.

As part of regional OSCE activities, the Mission supports the capacity building of criminal justice practitioners to combat cybercrime and cyber-enabled crime through a train-the-trainer approach, and by supporting the development of host-country-owned training programmes.

⁵ Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/a/438383.pdf>.

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH



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