



# Inter-Municipal Learning and Support

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina encourages municipalities to form partnerships and regional networks to address issues of common concern, consolidate and improve good governance standards that have been achieved, and develop new approaches to current and future challenges in local governance.

Inter-municipal learning and support was conceptually formalized as a means to encourage municipalities to identify and meet their own development needs. It is one of the seven main components of the Mission's *Local First* initiative which was launched in 2009.

Many municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) face similar problems which directly impact their performance as local self-government units. Despite this reality, there are a number of municipalities that have introduced improved or innovative practices and, as a result, there are opportunities for municipalities to pool their expertise and experiences to jointly solve common issues. Over time this type of inter-municipal learning and support can create the foundation for a sustainable municipal development strategy that is not dependent on international support. It also encourages innovation in problem solving and provides municipalities with the capacity to identify and address issues together and in partnership with higher levels of government.

Inter-municipal learning and support involves more than an exchange of good practices. It requires structured co-operation between two or more municipalities as it is a learning process with multiple activities and not simply a one-off event. A strategic approach is therefore needed that involves identifying a problem or issue, agreeing on

a solution or end state, and developing a plan to link the two. This approach can take many forms. It may involve a relationship between two municipalities where the need for support or learning in a certain issue area is matched by the supply of knowledge in the same field. On the other hand, it may involve the creation of a network where municipalities work together to find joint solutions to common problems. Irrespective of the form it takes, the effectiveness of inter-municipal learning is determined by the extent to which it leads to improvements in participating municipalities and increased satisfaction of citizens with municipal performance.

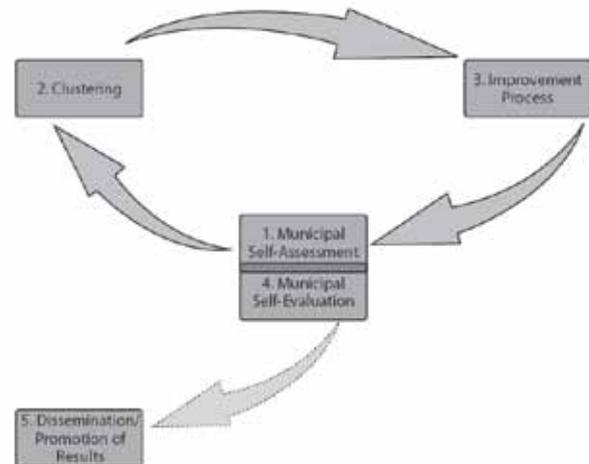
Currently, over two-thirds of BiH's 143 local government units are involved in 22 networks focused on topics such as strengthening ethical standards in the community, human resource management, leadership, strategy and planning. Networks generally consist of 6-12 municipalities where thematic experts or focal points from each participating municipality meet on a monthly basis to learn from each other and to improve relevant municipal practices.



## The Common Assessment Framework

To facilitate the establishment of inter-municipal learning and support networks and partnerships, the Mission introduced a self-assessment tool known as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in September 2009. CAF is widely accepted in the public sector across Europe and it provides local governments with the opportunity to conduct self-assessment to identify areas for improvement, and to co-operate in meeting corresponding development needs. The self-assessment process is the first step in the five step inter-municipal learning cycle, which is followed by the clustering of municipalities, the improvement process, municipal self-evaluation, and the optional stage of disseminating and promoting results.

1. **Municipal Self-Assessment** - to determine areas where improvement or consolidation is necessary or where innovation is possible.
2. **Clustering** - to link municipalities that have identified areas where they can co-operate to improve their performance.
3. **Improvement Process** - to identify the aim of the network, develop an action plan and implement the action plan.
4. **Municipal Self-Evaluation** - to review the results of municipalities and the network and whether or not goals have been achieved and practices improved.
5. **Promotion of Results** - to enable municipalities to publicize the results so that other municipalities can benefit.



To participate in inter-municipal learning and support partnership networks, municipalities must have the capacity to self-assess their performance (via CAF or other means), have the political will to reform practices, and the interest to provide and receive support from other municipalities.

Interested municipalities should contact their nearest OSCE field office to learn more about the process and opportunities to join or create networks and partnerships with other municipalities.

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.