



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1559

Vienna, 26 March 2026

EU Statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Holtzapple and thanks him for his first report. We commend the Mission for its continued work in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a challenging environment, including under continued budgetary constraints.
2. The EU is unequivocally committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. Sustained efforts by the political leadership in the country to strengthen democratic governance, the rule of law and institutional accountability, based on inclusive dialogue and respect for the constitutional and legal framework, remain essential. We value the Mission's role in exercising its early warning functions, promoting dialogue and supporting de-escalation, as well as its continued advocacy in support of the constitutional order, the functioning of State institutions and necessary reforms.
3. We highly value the Mission's contribution to electoral integrity by supporting election administration, voter education, the use of digital tools and IT systems, as well as capacity-building. We commend its support to the Central Election Commission in the conduct of early presidential elections in Republika Srpska, which contributed to restoring institutional functionality and upholding the constitutional order of BiH. With general elections scheduled in October 2026, we encourage the Mission to continue supporting transparent, inclusive and credible electoral processes. In this regard, we underline the importance of implementing relevant ODIHR recommendations and increasing voters' trust, including by the introduction of modern technologies that improve election integrity.

4. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to undertake further constitutional and electoral reforms to ensure the equality and non-discrimination of all citizens, notably by implementing the *Sejdić-Finci* and related case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The EU reiterates its call for an inclusive process of limited constitutional and electoral reforms, through genuine dialogue and in line with European standards to eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process, in particular in light of the 2026 elections. The EU also recalls that several Constitutional Court decisions have yet to be fully enforced. No steps should be taken which would make the implementation of these rulings more challenging or further deepen divisions.
5. We stress the importance of the Mission's engagement in and across all three dimensions, such as its work to advance gender equality and participation of youth. We note the importance to further focus activities and ensure that resources are aligned with priority areas. In this context, we welcome the adoption of the 2026 Unified Budget. Sustained financial and institutional support remains essential to enable the Mission to continue delivering meaningful results.
6. In the First Dimension, we commend the Mission's comprehensive support in implementing OSCE politico-military commitments, including arms control and SALW, strengthening parliamentary oversight and improving co-operation among security institutions, police modernization, border security and management, and cybersecurity.
7. In the Second Dimension, we commend the Mission's support to anti-corruption efforts, including strengthening a network of specialized anti-corruption bodies and improving the implementation of audit recommendations. We also welcome its efforts to address climate and disaster risks, enhance transparency and public participation, and foster cross-entity co-operation on environmental challenges.
8. In the Third Dimension, we commend the Mission's continued work on fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democratic institutions. We note its engagement in addressing pressures on media freedom and civil society, including legislative initiatives affecting civic space. We further note that political developments, including those affecting state-level institutions and the constitutional framework, have contributed to institutional tensions and stalled reforms.

9. We highly value the Mission's continued engagement in inclusive, non-discriminatory and high-quality education. In this regard, we praise the Mission's tireless advocacy for quality education and inclusive curricula.
10. We commend the Mission's continued engagement in supporting reconciliation, social cohesion and trust across communities, including local-level initiatives. We welcome its work on monitoring war crimes proceedings and supporting transitional justice, as well as its efforts to address hate crimes. We urge all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from and renounce provocative divisive rhetoric and actions, to end the glorification of convicted war criminals, as well as actively promote reconciliation.
11. We commend the Mission for serving as an impartial and reliable partner to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for its close co-operation and coordination with other relevant international stakeholders, including the EU Special Representative, the High Representative and EUFOR Althea.
13. The EU emphasises that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina must be respected. The EU encourages all political actors to focus on progressing on the EU path, in particular by taking all relevant steps set out in the Commission's recommendation of 12 October 2022. Progress on the EU path remains the best guarantee of stability and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina and brings tangible benefits to its citizens.
14. In conclusion, we reaffirm our strong support for the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, we commend Ambassador Holtzapfel and his team for their dedicated work and wish them lots of success for their further work.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, San Marino, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.