

Anti-terrorism



The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supports BiH authorities in their comprehensive and co-operative approach to counterterrorism (CT) as well as in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (P/C VERLT). The Mission provides targeted policy guidance and expertise, conducts tailored capacity-building, and facilitates the exchange of best practices at all levels of authority. In its assistance the Mission promotes human rights-based and whole-of-society approaches to strengthen co-operation, non-criminal interventions, and rehabilitation and re-integration programmes.

Key challenges

Terrorism and different forms of VERLT are one of the threats to the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). They engender fear and fuel mistrust among citizens, undermining social cohesion.

According to official sources, violent extremist ideology and regional ethnonationalist groups remain potential sources of terrorism in BiH. The country's complex and fragmented governance structure, existing resource gaps, and inadequate inter-agency co-ordination, hamper

its ability to provide effective and efficient response, e.g., by fully implementing multi-year strategies for preventing and combating terrorism (CT Strategies). BiH authorities also need to enhance the institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute the financing of terrorism and to counter terrorist content online. Moreover, continuing mixed migration flows through BiH have also raised the risk of terrorist infiltration.

Returns of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their families from conflict zones also need a co-ordinated response. For the past several years, authorities in BiH have focused their efforts on addressing return of FTFs and their family members. They have also

focused on FTFs who leave the BiH prison system after serving their sentences. The country still expects more than 100 of these individuals to return from various conflict zones. Their processing will be a test of the ability of BiH to effectively integrate them into society and prevent further radicalization.

[According to a 2023 National Risk Assessment on Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism](#), BiH also faces the challenge of terrorism financing through non-profit organizations (NPOs), and the risk of terrorists exploiting weaknesses in immigration management and border security.

The role of the Mission

Guided by the OSCE's Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism and the BiH CT Strategy, the Mission provides targeted policy advice and support at all levels of authority. Our efforts entail multi-stakeholder engagement, awareness raising, and capacity building, all while ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. Given the complex nature of terrorist threats, the Mission also promotes improved implementation of international legal frameworks, travel document security, and capacities to counter the financing of terrorism.

The latest BiH Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Terrorism 2021-2026 represents the culmination of the Mission's long-standing support to BiH in establishing a modern counter-terrorism strategy. The Mission helped BiH authorities identify shortcomings of the previous strategy, map gender aspects, and define key strategic areas - such as FTFs, protection of critical infrastructure, and cyber and border security. The Strategy addresses all forms of potential terrorist ideology. By ensuring the involvement of all relevant partners from the education, health, social protection, and religious sectors, the Mission also helped BiH overcome the over-securitization inherent in the previous strategy. To ensure its effective implementation, the Mission has also supported the development of action plans at the levels of the State, entities and Brčko District BiH.

The Mission helps improve co-operation between the security and financial sectors in countering the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction - towards the implementation of Financial Action Task Force Recommendations on targeted financial sanctions. Building on prior results, Mission assistance is contributing to effective implementation of the BiH Law on Preventing Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (ML/TF) and the National Risk Assessment on ML/TF. The Mission is also strengthening the BiH capacity to prevent the misuse of non-profit organizations to finance terrorism and to prosecute terrorism and terrorism-related cases.

In response to a request from BiH authorities, the Mission assists in building the capacity of front-line officers to improve border screening, check passenger data, collect biometrics, and share related information in a timely manner and within a human rights framework.

The Mission has also been assisting authorities in successful reception, rehabilitation, and reintegration of FTFs and their family members returning from foreign war zones. It has supported building capacities and developing procedures for their effective rehabilitation and reintegration and supported the development and implementation of appropriate R&R policies and programmes. The Mission partners with social protection, health authorities and religious communities in developing specialized trainings that

prepare receiving communities and families. It also trains case workers directly providing support to the returnees.

The Mission's systemic promotion of a whole-of-society approach to CT and P/C VERLT has enabled a wide range of actors at all levels in BiH to address these complex issues in a co-ordinated manner and through greater inclusion of civil society, religious communities, women and youth. For example, by using interactive table-top exercises (TTX), the Mission brought together relevant stakeholders to develop joint responses to scenarios in which an individual's path veers to radicalization and violence. In view of the susceptibility of young people to VERLT and their vital role in countering it, the Mission also works closely with the education sector.

With Mission support, since 2016 the Islamic Community in BiH has been developing and delivering specialized capacity-building trainings for religious officials on P/C VERLT. To date, more than 1,150 imams and religious officials across the country have benefited from these workshops.

As part of its support to the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs and their family members returning from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, in 2021 the Mission successfully advocated for legislative changes in the Federation of BiH that allow for the registration of birth of children born in the conflict zones.

This has enabled these children to access essential rights - such as those to nationality, education and social protection.

With the generous support of the Netherlands and Poland, in 2022 and 2023 the Mission organized innovative TTXs on P/C VERLT. Through scenario-based simulations involving anonymized real-life situations, the TTXs brought together stakeholders and practitioners from different levels of government, civil society, religious communities and media to work on developing effective responses. Scenarios focused on cases of ISIL-inspired and right-wing / ethno-nationalist VERLT. More than 500 participants (240 female, 269 male) from across BiH have benefited, whilst several recommendations resulting from the TTXs have been incorporated into the 2021-2026 CT Strategy.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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