

Protection and Rescue



The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina supports Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in developing a reliable disaster preparedness and management system in accord with its OSCE commitments and the Framework Law on Protection and Rescue of People and Property from Natural and Other Disasters. The Mission assists authorities, civil society and other stakeholders to increase their resilience to natural and other hazards and to reduce the susceptibility of people and property to disaster risks. With its comprehensive approach to security, the Mission is in a unique position to advance co-operation and co-ordination among all relevant ministries and agencies on emergency/crisis management and recovery. These efforts complement implementation of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the [2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#).

Key challenges

[The World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Risks Report](#) identified BiH as a country with high exposure and vulnerability to meteorological and geological natural hazards, and with insufficient capacities to cope with resulting disasters. The 2014 BiH Floods Recovery Needs Assessment estimates that the devastating floods and landslides of 2014 caused approximately 2.04 billion EUR of damage. The 2024 floods in central and southern BiH resulted in 27 fatalities. Such disasters undermine local, national and regional stability and security with the potential to generate intra-state and inter-state tensions, or to trigger conflict.

Over the past years, many institutions and agencies in BiH have made significant progress in decreasing the society's vulnerability to risks from climate change, natural hazards and human activity, and in fulfilling the requirements for joining the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). However, the disaster preparedness and management system is still limited by critical deficiencies, including the capacity to mitigate the consequences of disaster. In addition to inadequate material and financial resources, co-operation shortfalls hinder attainment of an integrated, effective, and mutually complementary disaster management system.

The complex and highly decentralized political-administrative structure of BiH - with overlapping and even conflicting interpretations of roles, competencies, and jurisdictions within the protection and rescue system - often impedes emergency management as well as overall disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the challenges in the co-ordination of crisis management at the border and in the delivery of international aid.

Furthermore, there is insufficient awareness and understanding of disaster risks among local administrations and the public, and relevant legislation and regulations in different jurisdictions are not harmonized with the BiH Framework Law on Protection and Rescue. Although prescribed by the Sendai Framework for DRR, there is also an absence of DRR strategies, action plans, as well as DRR components in sustainable development strategies at the different levels of authority.

The role of the Mission

The Mission supports the BiH Ministry of Security's Protection and Rescue Sector and other institutional actors at various levels of authority to develop a reliable disaster preparedness and management system. This includes assisting BiH with the fulfilment of its obligations deriving from national legislation and international commitments - including the [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and

the [Decision No. 3/21 on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change](#).

The Mission also promotes the full implementation of the BiH Framework Law on Protection and Rescue - particularly in terms of strengthening the role and capacity of the BiH Council of Ministers Co-ordination Body for Protection and Rescue, and the harmonization of relevant legislation.

In support of BiH's fulfilment of commitments deriving from the Sendai Framework for DRR, the Mission engages across all levels of authority to support improvement and harmonization of relevant strategies and legislation on disaster preparedness, management, and response - including protection and rescue. To help improve security sector governance, the Mission also supports the development of State, entities' and local-level DRR and sustainable development strategies through co-operation with the BiH Ministry of Security, entity civil protection administrations, and the Public Safety Department of Brčko District BiH.

Mission support to the BiH Ministry of Security in 2019 resulted in an updated Document on Disaster Risk Assessment from Natural and Other Disasters in BiH, which was subsequently adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers. The Document improves BiH's capacities to address threats and hazards such as hydro-meteorological, geological and biohazards, as well as hazards from forest fires, unexploded

ordnance, and terrorism. Its implementation has been crucial for strengthening the protection and rescue system and the DRR platform in BiH in accordance with the Sendai Framework for DRR, and it enabled BiH to become a fully-fledged member of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

In addition to providing policy-related assistance, the Mission is also helping build institutional capacity in areas that are essential for achieving a reliable disaster preparedness and management system - such as civil-military co-operation.

Through application of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, the Mission facilitates co-operation and co-ordination involving all stakeholders that are vital to the effective preparedness for, response to, and mitigation of the consequences of emergencies and disasters. The Mission helps to build partnerships and networks between the private and public sectors, as well as with civil society. Accordingly, particular focus is placed on advancing the role of the Armed Forces of BiH and their capacities in assisting civilian authorities in case of natural and other disasters - as one of its main tasks stipulated in the BiH Law on Defence. This support also aims to improve facilitation of civil-military co-operation, toward the optimal use of the country's limited resources.

In view of the trans-boundary nature of most natural and other hazards, and their potential to trigger conflict,

the Mission partners with the OSCE Office of the Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs on implementation of regional DRR, protection and rescue, and environmental security projects.

The Mission further prioritizes support to the development of DRR strategies as a cornerstone of disaster preparedness and sustainable development, assists in the completion of the introduction of the 112 emergency number, and promotes the harmonization of planning and protection documents across jurisdictions and with EU requirements.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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