

Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R)



Security Sector and Governance Reform (SSG/R) is a nationally led process of improving the provision, governance and oversight of security and justice, principally in terms of ensuring democratic control, accountability, rule of law, and respect for human rights and gender equality. SSG/R complements parallel political, economic, and social developments within the broader context of stabilization and democratization. Recognizing the importance of good governance to maintaining peace and stability, the Mission's works with BiH authorities at all levels of government to increase their capacities to deal with complex threats to national and human security, and to increase BiH citizens' trust and confidence in their legitimacy and decision-making ability.

Key challenges

Security and justice reform in BiH have been overly politicized and framed primarily as a State-building instrument rather than as a practical and

technical reform agenda. This has reduced political will and significantly delayed progress in key areas such as police modernization, inter-agency co-operation, and the meaningful inclusion of civil

society, women, and youth in security and defence affairs.

The BiH Security Policy has not been updated since its adoption in 2006, hampering the country's ability to effectively address contemporary and emerging security threats. Furthermore, understanding of the practical benefits and sheer importance of security sector reform remains limited among the security sector leadership and personnel.

The role of the Mission

The elements of good governance entailed by SSG/R are embedded in the OSCE's core principles and commitments - including those

deriving from its milestone [Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security](#). SSG/R is also integral to operationalizing the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina works across all of the OSCE's dimensions of security in contributing to more accountable, inclusive and sustainable security governance that is responsive to the needs of citizens, upholds the rule of law, and complies with international human rights standards.

The Mission works with authorities at all levels of government to ensure their ownership and leadership on

reform and governance, with focus on fulfilling priorities and adopted reform strategies.

The Mission assists security and defence institutions in developing strategic policies and action plans, as well as in increasing inter-agency co-operation - including on integrated border management, disaster risk reduction, cyber security, intelligence-led policing, and the prevention and combating of terrorism. It also works with legislative partners to advance parliamentary oversight and democratic control of the security and defence capacities – standards that are fundamental to a well-governed security sector.

OSCE support led to the establishment of a single command-and-control structure for the BiH Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of BiH in 2006. Subsequent support also provided for the establishment in 2009 of a State-level parliamentary oversight framework in the form of the Office of the Parliamentary Military Commissioner, the BiH Parliamentary Assembly Joint Committee on Defence and Security, and the BiH Parliamentary Assembly Joint Committee for Oversight of the Intelligence-Security Agency. The Mission serves as a long-term partner to these agencies, strengthening their institutional capacities and fostering sustainable governance in the security and defence sector.

In March 2025, the Ministry of Defence enacted the Code of Conduct on the Use of Social Media for Inspectors of the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina

(BiH MoD) and the Armed Forces of BiH (AFBiH). The Mission supported the Code's development, ensuring an optimal balance between professional conduct online and freedom of expression. The Code fosters a culture of responsible social media use among military personnel, promoting accountability, professionalism, and ethical conduct. Following the adoption, the Mission organized a Train-the-Trainers programme, equipping twenty (20) inspectors with tools to implement the Code and guide its adoption throughout the defence structures.

To help develop a strong basis for effective and sustainable reform, the Mission engages in an array of activities, including training as well as awareness raising on the practical benefits, the responsibilities of authorities, and the required policies and organizational arrangements. It also conducts systematic monitoring of the work of law enforcement and the justice sector to identify and resolve deficits that undermine public confidence. It moreover works to improve mechanisms, tools, policies, legislation and regulation on areas of foremost relevance for good governance, such as integrity, accountability, conflict of interest, human rights and gender equality. Mission support promotes and facilitates public-private partnerships as well as the meaningful participation of civil society, women, and youth in security and defence affairs – complementing efforts on realization of the UN peace and security agendas.

In 2007, the OSCE helped establish an official training

programme on the BiH Security Policy that has benefited 620 participants from relevant ministries and agencies as well as from civil society, media, and academia. The Mission expanded the training programme in 2015 to include a Youth and Security School that has benefited 135 young developing security experts.

Comprehensive support

The Mission's cross-thematic work embodies the SSG/R holistic approach. This is the case with support to justice sector reform and transitional justice, as well as with work to combat trafficking in human beings and terrorism.

Trafficking in Human Beings

In advancing BiH capacities to address the serious crime of trafficking in human beings, the Mission engages with a wide range of local partners and institutions, stretching beyond the traditional security sector actors to include social protection services and other relevant actors. It conducts training, provides assistance to improving legislation, and facilitates peer exchanges among professionals. A whole-of-society and victim-centered approach ensures more effective and sustainable protection and support to the victims of this serious crime, as well as a greater capacity of institutions to combat it.

Countering Terrorism

Holistic Mission support to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization conducive to terrorism (P/C VERLT) helps ensure that this complex

transnational security threat is more successfully addressed. Making full use of its network of field offices across BiH, the Mission brings together a wide range of relevant sectors and actors, providing them with a platform to exchange expertise and to network. The involvement of teachers, psychologists, social workers, religious communities, civil society, youth, and the media is helping to shift the engagement on VERLT from one that excludes key actors to one that ensures their due inclusion and joint work on developing effective and sustainable responses.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Mission addresses critical security risks related to SALW through a range of measures, including integrating gender perspectives to improve community safety and public trust. Supporting women's police networks, the OSCE strengthens women's roles in managing SALW, recognizing their vital contributions to combating crime and promoting stability. A key step was providing IT equipment to these networks, enhancing women's leadership in policing. This initiative reflects the OSCE's commitment to inclusive security in BiH by empowering women through resources, training, and leadership opportunities. Integrating gender perspectives ensures women's voices are included in tackling firearms-related violence, promoting more effective, inclusive policing that addresses gender-specific challenges and fosters safer communities.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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