

Strengthening Good Governance



The OSCE Mission to BiH (Mission) works on safeguarding the main principles of democratic governance at all levels of authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It supports governance-related activities aimed at increasing the capacity of executive and legislative structures to work in the interest of citizens, and by assisting the country to achieve its critical reform policy goals. The Mission helps ensure that institutions and governments adhere to good governance principles and standards so that they are responsive, transparent, effective, representative of, and accountable to, citizens. Our efforts focus on promoting evidence-based, participatory decision-making by assisting institutions in implementing reforms that strengthen integrity, transparency, and accountability, with a particular focus on the local authorities.

In recent years, this assistance has been particularly focused on two processes – the introduction and application of codes of ethics (CoEs) for elected representatives and strengthening the participation of citizens in decision-making through improved regulation and practice in this area. We recognise the critical role of cantonal governments in BiH and the Federation of BiH as they are expected to implement significant parts of the reform agenda spanning from the rule of law, to democratisation and to service delivery. In this regard, the Mission

engaged nine cantons in 2025 so as to identify critical challenges and potential areas for improving cantonal governance. These findings will inform and guide the development of future partnerships.

Strengthening the integrity of elected representatives

The Mission remains committed to strengthening the ethical accountability of elected legislative members at all levels of authority through the implementation of codes of ethics (CoEs). To this end, it supported entity associations of

municipalities and cities in developing and promoting model CoE regulations. Equally important is the establishment of mechanisms within legislatures to promote and enforce these CoEs. This, in turn, helps safeguard institutional integrity. In parallel, when needed, the Mission also provides tailored guidance, counselling, and training to institutions on ethics, integrity, and corruption prevention; as well as assistance in developing effective oversight and compliance mechanisms.

In 2025 the Mission supported entity associations of cities and municipalities in organizing capacity-building workshops for over 200 participants, primarily councillors. The workshops provided practical guidance on implementing CoEs, on ethical decision-making, and on strengthening accountability within local institutions. As a result of Mission efforts, 33 cities, municipalities, and cantons have now adopted CoEs aligned with good governance principles, demonstrating tangible progress in embedding integrity and transparency across multiple levels of local government.

Strengthening the participation of citizens and transparent governance

Citizen participation in decision-making is a cornerstone of good governance. Their involvement enhances transparency and decision-making effectiveness, improves the quality of governance outcomes, and it helps boost public trust in institutions. However, despite numerous projects and initiatives by various actors, progress in this area in BiH has been challenging — particularly at the local level.¹

Based on guidance, lessons learned and recommendations from practitioners, the Mission works on strengthening the regulatory framework governing citizen engagement. With the Mission's assistance, entity associations of municipalities and cities developed a model regulation on citizen participation in local decision-making. This regulation addresses existing legal gaps and allows the municipalities to adapt and adopt their own regulations – always with the on-going support from the Mission.

Strengthening legislatures for advanced laws and working procedures

The Mission has been engaged with state- and entity-level parliaments since 2001. Our focus has primarily been on strengthening their efficiency, transparency and accountability; as well as citizens' participation, co-operation and constructive dialogue. Among some of the important initiatives implemented are the adoption of the BiH Law on Parliamentary Oversight in 2018 and the introduction of the Open Parliament programme of citizens' visits to the State Parliament in 2005.

The Mission works to strengthen co-operation between various secretariats and services from legislatures at different levels of government. The overall aim is to improve their working procedures in order to be able to address contemporary challenges e.g. including ethical procurement and data security in legislatures. The on-going monitoring of the relevant sessions of legislatures helps the Mission to identify trends in legislative work and decision-making and thus

hone in, and report on, required interventions.

As an illustration of this work, in 2024, the Mission supported the committees on human rights, gender equality and security of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH (PFBiH) in implementing three thematic sessions dedicated to the issue of gender-based and domestic violence. The recommendations from the thematic sessions led to government-initiated amendments to the Criminal Code and defining femicide. The changes now enable authorities to respond more effectively to cases of violence against women

The Mission's engagement in the domain of the oversight and outreach of legislatures remain priorities in line with the recommendations of ODIHR's Assessments which were carried out in 2020 and 2021 with the Mission's support.

¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Assessment of the Legislative Process: <https://odlhr.osce.org/odlhr/561499>

For more information, scan the QR code.



OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Fra Andela Zvizdovića 1, UNITIC Tower A
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tel: +387 33 952 100
Fax: +387 33 442 479
press.ba@osce.org
<https://bih.osce.org/>

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH

