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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA COUNTRY PAPER

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Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Country profile	3
2.1. Recent History	3
2.2 Current Socio-economic and Political Situation	4
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU	5
4. Development Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
4.1 Overview of International Assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
4.2 Institutional Arrangements for Aid Coordination	9
4.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Donor of Development and Humanitarian Assistance	10
5. Civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina	10
5.1 Overview of the Civil Society	10
Enabling Environment for Civil Society	10
Legal Environment	11
Financial Sustainability	11
Relationship with Government	12
6. Conclusion	13
Contact Information:	14

1. Introduction

This paper was written in the frame of the project “Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development “, financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation. The project is aimed to raise capacities of Western Balkans’ civil society organization to engage in political dialogue, advocacy and awareness raising of global development issues. Strong and vibrant civil society is crucial for addressing global justice, solidarity and international development; and meaningful involvement of the civil society in processes for the creation of national development policies will be especially important. Involvement of the civil society in development processes is even more important for countries which aspire to become EU members since they are obliged to set up its international development cooperation and humanitarian aid strategies and adopt EU acquis. Bosnia and Herzegovina, being a potential candidate country and an aspirant for becoming an EU member will also have to do so.

This paper gives background on the country’s socio-economic situation and recent history, the EU integration process, the state of play with the Official Development Assistance and the state of development of the civil society. The aim is to provide information for assessing the potentials for civil society’s meaningful involvement in development policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in meeting the country’s commitments related to the EU accession in the area of development and humanitarian aid.

The analysis of the state of play in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the civil society and the environment in which it operates is based on the findings from the monitoring conducted by the Civil Society Promotion Center for 2016 within the unique tool developed by BCSDN and its members and partners – The Monitoring Matrix on enabling environment for civil society development.

2. Country profile

2.1. Recent History

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multi-ethnic country located in the Western Balkans composed of Muslim Bosniaks (44 %), Orthodox Serbs (32.5 %) and Catholic Croats (17%). The country was one of the 6 republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose succession caused atrocious armed conflict that lasted from 1992-1995 leaving severe marks on the society.

The Bosnian war was fought between the Yugoslav army - later renamed into - the Army of Republika Srpska (Composed of Serbs), the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (largely composed of Bosniaks) and the Croatian Defense Council (Composed of Croats).) The war started on April 6th when on the day that the country's independence was internationally recognized, the Serbs declared independence of Republika Srpska and the Yugoslav army laid a siege of Sarajevo. The War was characterized by vicious fighting, unselective shelling of cities and towns and ethnic cleansing. According to the recent estimates around 100,000 people were killed in the war, more than a million were displaced and from 12,000 to 20,000 women were raped most of them Bosniak, making it the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the World War II. The war was brought to an end with NATO's intervention in 1995 when the "Operation Deliberate Force" targeted the positions of the Army of the Republika Srpska. The peace was negotiated at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton and the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. The war left sever permanent marks on the country's society, politics and economy and with tremendous challenges for reconciliation and democratization that still need to be faced.

In accordance with the Dayton agreement, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina was established to be responsible for overseeing the civilian implementation of the Dayton agreement, while the Peace Implementation Council was representing the countries involved in the Dayton Accords. In order to avoid the implementation of the Dayton Agreement being delayed or obstructed by local nationalist politicians the Peace Implementation Council in 1997 granted further substantial powers to the OHR, known as the Bonn powers, and was requested to: adopt binding decisions when local parties seem unable or unwilling to act and remove from office public officials who violate legal commitments or, in general, the Dayton Accords. While considered by many as necessity, The OHR's prolonged interference in the national politics seems to result with low commitment of citizens towards the state (shown by low voter turnout) and of low accountability of politicians (whose actions are finally subject to external review).¹

NATO was responsible for overseeing of the military implementation of the Dayton Accord, for which it deployed multinational peacekeeping mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, first as Implementation Force (IFOR) with a one year mandate, succeeded by the Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR). From December 2004 SFOR was replaced by European Union Force - Althea.

¹ [http://www.cceia.unic.ac.cy/pdf_files/Giulio%20Venneri%20Critical%20Assessment%20of%20the%20EU%20-Driven%20%20Statebuilding%20%202007-07%20\(December\).pdf](http://www.cceia.unic.ac.cy/pdf_files/Giulio%20Venneri%20Critical%20Assessment%20of%20the%20EU%20-Driven%20%20Statebuilding%20%202007-07%20(December).pdf)

2.2 Current Socio-economic and Political Situation

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a liberal democracy, with multi-level political governance in accordance with the Dayton Accord. It is made up of two political entities, namely the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (covering 51%) and Republika Srpska (covering 49%). There is also the Brcko district (as of 2000) belonging to both entities, but governed by neither. The cantons are the third level of the political subdivision in Bosnia and Herzegovina which are total of 10 cantons. All of them have their own government, which is under the law of the Federation as a whole. The fourth political divisions are the municipalities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into 74 municipalities and RS is divided in 63 municipalities, each having its own local governments.

The country has a population of 3.5 million with just over 50% being of Bosniak ethnicity, 30.78% of Serb ethnicity, 15.43% Croats and other smaller minorities (Government Census 2013). Official statistics estimate that 1,471,594 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina reside outside of the country which accounts for approximately 39% of the total country population (and if the second and third generation is considered, this number is even higher). The Bosnia and Herzegovina emigrants are often highly educated and successful individuals and their return represent significant potential for the country's development², however until now the country has not been very appealing for bigger return of its emigrants.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an upper income country with a GDP of 15.36 billion USD, and a GDP per capita of 4338³ USD. The agricultural sector accounts for a relatively high 8% of GDP and 17% of employment, reflecting the many small, fragmented and inefficient farm plots. Industry (incl. construction) provides 27% of GDP and 30 % of employment and the service sector is the largest sector in terms of employment (51%) and value generation - 65.4% of GDP. Direct state influence on the economy has remained significant, with public sector spending accounting for more than 40 % of GDP, and accounts for 31.2 % of employment as of 2015, while 63,2% of employed people were in private sector⁴. The unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina persists to be high at 27.7%, with the youth unemployment rate being approximately 60%. While this exceptionally high percentage might be due to the persistence of informal economy, the youth unemployment is a serious problem in the country. Around 18% of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina lives under the national poverty line which is at USD 1.9 a day⁵.

The Parliamentary Assembly is the lawmaking body in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of two houses: the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives. The House of Peoples has 15 delegates chosen by parliaments of the entities, two-thirds of which come from the Federation (5 Croat and 5 Bosniaks) and one-third from the Republika Srpska (5 Serbs). The House of Representatives is composed of 42

² http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/library/poverty/iseljjeni_tvo-i-razvoj-bosne-i-hercegovine---uspjehi-primjeri.html

³ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina?view=chart>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf

⁵ <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/BIH>

members elected by the people under a form of proportional representation; two-thirds elected from the federation and one-third elected from the Republika Srpska. The Chair of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina rotates among three members (Bosniak, Serb, Croat), each elected as the chair for an eight-month term within their four-year term as a member. The three members of the Presidency are elected directly by the people with Federation voters voting for the Bosniak and the Croat, and the Republika Srpska voters for the Serb.

Bosnian constitution protects minorities; however minority protection and non-discrimination remains a huge challenge for the country. The ethnicities which happen to be minority in a political entity still face discrimination. Especially evident is the widespread intimidation Bosniaks face who are returning to Republica Srpska and to majority Croat cantons of the federation even more so since hundreds of suspected participants in the Srebrenica and other massacres remain in the ranks of the RS police force⁶. Another issue of discrimination, frequently raised by the EU is the restriction set with the constitution and electoral law which does not allow members of ethnicity other than of the “Constituent Peoples’ (ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks) to be eligible to stand for election to either the three-member presidency or the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly. The public administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffers from widespread bribery, nepotism, conflict of interest and favoritism. While Bosnia and Herzegovina has a comprehensive legal anti-corruption framework, enforcement is poor⁷.

3. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU

Bosnia has the status of potential candidate for EU membership, although from all the countries of the Western Balkans aspiring to join EU it seems to be the most far away in fulfilling the EU’s accession criteria due to the slow pace of implementation of reforms.

The country has been part of the Stabilization and Association process EU has launched for the Western Balkan countries promising the prospect of membership once ready. In 2008, the EU Council adopted a European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina to set the priorities for EU assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later the same year the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed, following long negotiations and adoption of the police reforms required by the EU. The SAA is the first step for applying for membership and is aimed to prepare the state to meet the requirements of the EU integration process; however its implementation was frozen until 2015 due to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s inability to comply with the agreed obligations. In the years from 2008-2015 the trade between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU was governed by the *Interim* Agreement on Trade and Trade-related issues signed the same day as the SAA, which entered into force on 1 July 2008.

The main obligations that Bosnia was supposed to meet for the SAA to come into force were: conducting of national census, adoption of a law on state aid and creation of single body responsible for the relations with the EU. EU also required the amendment to the Constitution (in line with the *Finci and Sejdic* ruling of the ECHR) to allow members of minorities to be elected to the Presidency of Bosnia and

⁶ <http://minorityrights.org/country/bosnia-and-hercegovina>

⁷ <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/bosnia-hercegovina>

Herzegovina and to gain seats in the House of Peoples. The adoption of laws related to these issues was prevented by opposition of the government of the Republika Srpska. To avoid the deadlock situation and accelerate the country's accession process, on the initiative of Croatian and later the foreign ministers of Germany and UK, SAA was agreed to enter into force without the implementation of the constitutional amendments required by *Finci and Sejdic* under the condition that Bosnian authorities approve a declaration committing to the reforms required for EU integration. After the approval of the Council of the EU, the SAA entered into force on 1 June 2015.

This new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014 restructuring the EU conditionality in order to boost the country's progress towards the EU, seems to have given a new momentum in the country's EU accession process. In July 2015, a Reform Agenda was adopted aimed to address the challenging socio-economic situation and enhance the rule of law and public administration reforms, and the European Commission has noted a meaningful progress regarding its implementation⁸. After meeting the targets, in February 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina finally and officially submitted the application for joining the EU and received the accession questionnaire by the Commission in December 2016.

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a candidate country the EU Commission does not access the alignment with the European *Acquis* and progress made in specific areas of *Acquis Communautaire*. No information can be found on the country's legislation on development policy and humanitarian aid and its alignment with the EU legislation.

4. Development Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

4.1 Overview of International Assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina

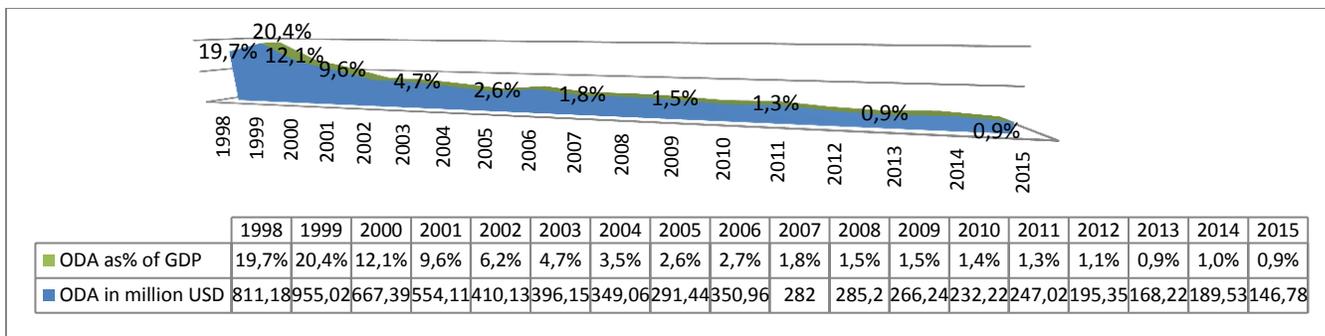
After the end of the Bosnian war the international community invested significant assistance for humanitarian relief, reconstruction, resettlement of refugees, reconciliation and peace building. Later, the focus of the assistance shifted to state and institution building, democratization and economic development. From 1996 to 1999, 3.7 billion USD were allocated by 48 countries and 14 international organizations, according to a 2005 IMF report, and in average, Bosnia's annual aid from 1996 to 2002, amounted to 730 million USD to 1,400 USD per person⁹.

From 2005 onwards there was significant decrease of the Official Development Assistance with a total of 2.65 billion USD distributed in 11 years. The significant decline started from 2007 when ODA dropped to 1.8% of GDP (from the 2.7% from the previous year) and declined steadily in the following years.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf

⁹ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2005/cr05182.pdf>

Aid (ODA) Disbursements in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1998-2015 in million USD

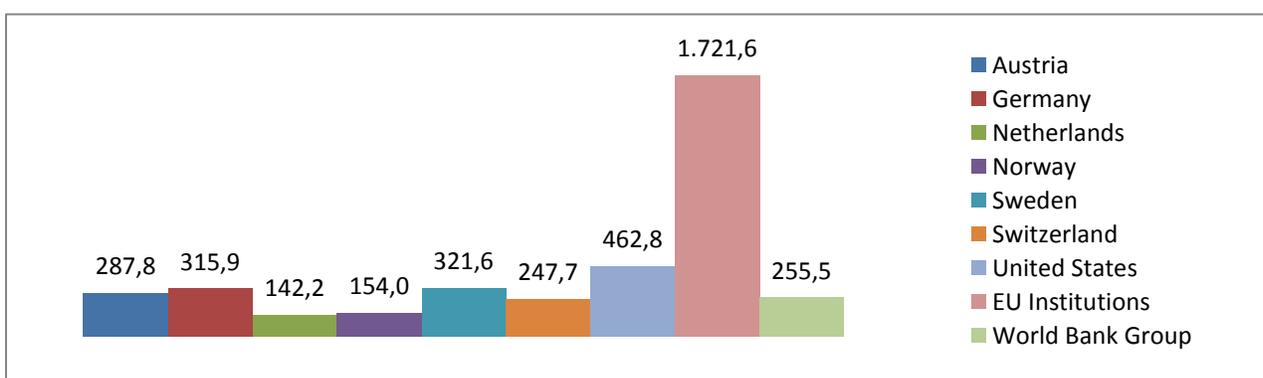


Data extracted on 11 June 2017 from OECD.Stat

The EU has been the single biggest donor to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the immediate post-war period from 1991-2005 the EU has provided 2.6 billion EUR (approximately 3.1 billion USD) for reconstruction and refugee return, while under the different community programmes the EU has distributed 1.7 billion EUR (around 2.03 billion USD) during the period from 2005-2015. More concretely, 199 million EUR (around 237 million USD) under the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stability in the Balkans (CARDS Programme), 610 million EUR (around 727 million USD) allocated from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance - IPA for the 2007—2013 period, and 165.8 million EUR (around 197 USD) were in total allocated from the same instrument for the 2014-2017 period.

The US has been the second biggest donor to Bosnia and Herzegovina with more than 1.35 billion USD distributed till 2005. A significant donor during the same period has been the World Bank with over 1.1 billion US Dollars committed for the same period.¹⁰

Aid Disbursements in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Donor for the period 2005-2015, in millions USD

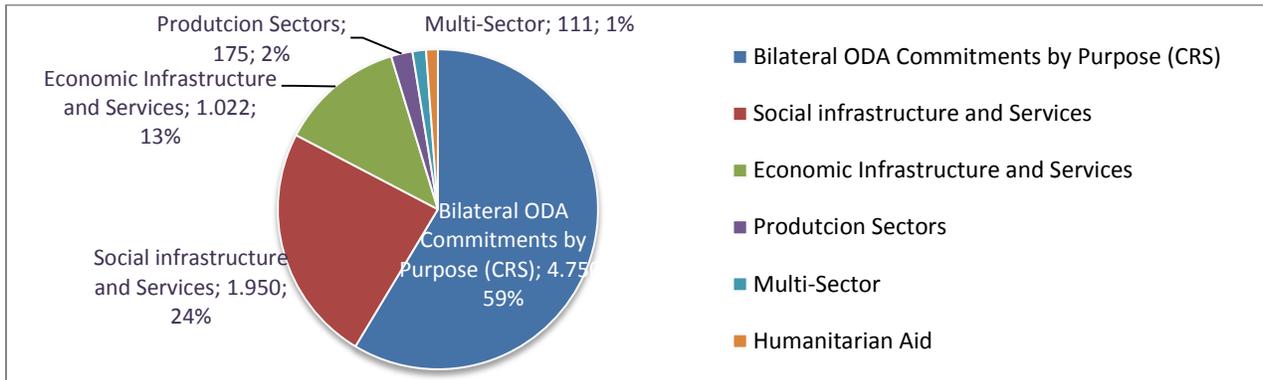


Data extracted on 11 June 2017 from OECD.Stat

¹⁰ <http://donormapping.ba/pdf/DMR%202015%20ENG.pdf>

After 2005 there was a shift in the priorities for aid distribution from the initial post-war reconstruction and reconciliation purposes to aid aimed for economic development and social infrastructure. Direct bilateral aid for specific area has been the predominant mean of aid distribution, followed by aid for social and economic infrastructure and services.

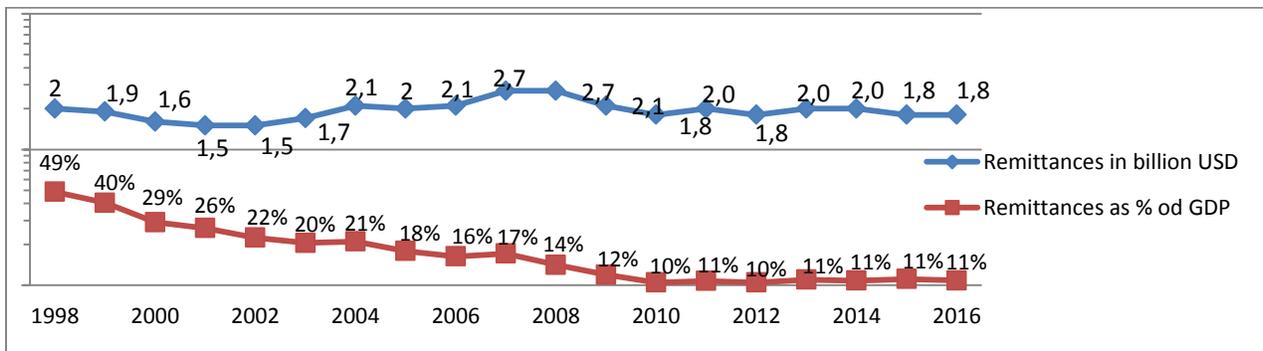
Aid Distributions to Bosnia and Herzegovina by sector for 2005-2015, in millions USD



¹¹ Data extracted from OECD Stat on 11 June 2017

While Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the biggest recipients of development assistance in Europe, the volume of remittances transferred by the country’s diaspora has been much more significant. From 1998 till 2016, the annual remittances transferred through banking system only amounted between 1.5 to 2 billion USD, and the estimates are that the actual numbers are much higher as the majority of flows go through informal channels¹². This is due to the large diaspora the country has as a consequence to the forced migration during the war, making Bosnia and Herzegovina the sixth leading country in terms of receiving remittances as a percentage of GDP.

Remittances received in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 1998-2016 in billion USD and as % of GDP



Data extracted from Worldbank.org; on August 30th, 2017

¹¹ “Bilateral ODA commitments by purpose: The sectoral distribution of bilateral ODA commitments refers to the economic sector of destination (i.e. the specific area of the recipient’s economic or social structure whose development is, or is intended to be fostered by the aid), rather than to the type of goods or services provided. These are aggregates of individual projects notified under the Creditor Reporting System, supplemented by reporting on the sectoral distribution of technical co-operation, and on actual disbursements of food and emergency aid.”

¹² <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/iseljenistvo/Istrazivanje/default.aspx?id=1766&langTag=bs-BA>

Until 2005, the remittances were in average 30% of GDP, and around 15% of GDP for the period from 2005 to 2010. From 2010 onwards the percentage of remittances decreased and account in average about 11% of the country's GDP, which is still a very significant amount of 1.8 billion USD.

Evidently, the annual volume of remittances is significantly higher than the official development assistance and then the foreign direct investments in the country, making the diaspora an important player for the country's development policies; however much of its potential is still untapped¹³.

4.2 Institutional Arrangements for Aid Coordination

The Sector for Coordination of International Economic Aid (SCIEA) within the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry of Finance and Treasury is the responsible institution for coordination of international economic aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina, except for the EU aid. The Sector was established in 2008 with the aim to contribute for greater effectiveness of the international aid in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its main activities is to provide greater synchronization of the donor activities, improve information exchange, stronger partnership between donors and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Government, and better alignment with the national development priorities.

In 2009 the responsibility for the Donor Coordination Forum (DCF) Secretariat previously hosted by the UNDP and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator was transferred to the Sector. The Donor Coordination Forum was formed in 2005 by 17 major donors as a semi-formal platform for information exchange among donors, but soon, the scope of the Forum was expanded and several discussions have focused on how the coordination of donor activities can be further improved. Meetings of the DCF were often complemented by expert presentations from the government and international organizations active in the country, thus providing an opportunity for coordination among donor agencies.

This transfer of responsibilities to the Ministry was initiated to ensure better oversight of donor activities and to further reinforce the government's ownership over its own development. Since then, the SCIEA is responsible for organizing the Forum's quarterly meetings, for providing technical support to the Forum's members and for the Donor Mapping Exercise.

The Donor Mapping previously managed by the UNDP exercise consists of two publicly available components: a) online database for the activities of 20 major donors active in Bosnia and Herzegovina and b) an analytical report, reviewing the contribution of these activities to sectoral reforms. Using these instruments the Ministry is able to better systematize information on official development assistance to the country and to use this information for strategic and resource planning. The annual Donor Mapping Report provides comprehensive information and analysis of the Official Development Assistance which the donors channel in the priority sectors in the country and include insight to the future planned activities. It also helps the country to meet the obligations undertaken with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which Bosnia and Herzegovina has endorsed in 2010. The latest available Donor Mapping Report is for 2015¹⁴.

¹³ http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/migration-and-development1.html

¹⁴ <http://donormapping.ba/index.php#> , Accessed on 26.07.2017

In addition, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury in cooperation with members of the Donor Coordination Forum and competent ministries conducts annual surveys about the adherence to the principles of Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and prepares annual reports.

4.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Donor of Development and Humanitarian Assistance

With accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the EU, the country will go from being a recipient of Official Development Assistance to becoming a donor country. For this, the Government will need to prepare and establish necessary institutional and legal frameworks for the provision of development and humanitarian aid and align with the Chapter 30 of the European *Acquis Communautaire*. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet a candidate country, the preparations towards aligning with the EU policy in the area of humanitarian aid and development policy are likely to start after the country receives official status of a candidate country and prepares National Program for Adoption of the *Acquis*. Currently, EU does not make assessments of the country's legislative alignment in the area of development policy and humanitarian aid and there is lack of information about any actions being undertaken in this area.

5. Civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina

5.1 Overview of the Civil Society

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have an official number of CSOs (until 2016) at all levels and the numbers provided include CSOs registered multiple times on multiple levels and registered CSOs regardless of whether they are still operational. A study published in 2016, found that there are 22,601 civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however 56.4% of all registered CSOs are not active¹⁵. The majority of the registered CSOs work in the area of sports and recreation – 28.81%, promotion of social and economic rights – 21.55%, and professional associations make up for 9.21%¹⁶. The most common legal forms for CSOs are associations and foundations, and the majority of CSOs are local level grass roots organizations. The largest numbers of CSOs are registered in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar¹⁷.

Enabling Environment for Civil Society

The enabling environment for civil society is broadly defined as the conditions within which civil society works. Specifically, enabling environment is viewed as the varied array of conditions – economic, political, social, cultural, legal, and otherwise – that affect the capacity of citizens, whether individually or collectively, to voluntarily participate in civil society. The analysis of enabling environment for civil society development is based on the 2016 Monitoring Matrix Report on the Enabling Environment for Civil society Development in Kosovo, of the Kosovar Civil Society Development Foundation.

¹⁵ Žeravčić, Mapping study of CSOs, 2016.

¹⁶ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/Europe_Eurasia_CSOSIRreport_2015_Update8-29-16.pdf
Accessed on 26.07.2017

¹⁷ Ibid

Legal Environment

The environment for civil society development in Bosnia and Herzegovina is partially enabling, with the legislation satisfying certain standards, while the practice still posing obstacles to CSOs operations¹⁸. CSOs are governed by the Law on Associations and Foundations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, amended in 2016 with anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures in line with Council of Europe recommendations. CSOs can register at the state, entity, and cantonal levels, with relatively simple registration process. However, the registration at many different levels is not interconnected, making it difficult to determine the total number of organizations that operate throughout the country. The legislation does not interfere with CSOs' internal affairs and the pursuit of their missions. A cooperation Agreement between the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers and the Non-Governmental Sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed in 2007 aiming to promote a more enabling environment for civil society and to establish a mechanism for cooperation between the government and the civil society, although it did not bring the intended results. In 2011 a revision of the agreement was initiated along with the development of the Strategy and Action Plan for the Creation of Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development; however they both are still at halt.

According to Bosnia and Herzegovina legislation, CSOs can generate income through economic activities and to compete for government contracts and CSOs are exempt from taxes on the income earned through the provision of services, up to 50,000 BAM (about 28,000 USD). Associations and foundations can undertake economic activities not related to the achievement of their goals through separate commercial legal entities, but should not exceed one-third of the organization's total annual budget, or 10,000 BAM (approximately 5,500 USD). Profit generated from unrelated economic activities can only be used to further the organization's stated purpose.

Financial Sustainability

International donors have been reducing their funding for programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina for several years. According to a December 2014 report,¹⁹ some donors have already ended their financing programs, while others are close to ending them or making them a part of the regional strategic support mechanism, the IPA 2014-2020 (For example, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has ended its programs, and British aid is now being channeled through the EU) . Given the high managerial criteria of EU funded projects, a relatively small group of CSOs have the capacity to apply for such funding in any case. Public funding, primarily grants from municipal governments, remains the main source of financing for CSOs, covering over half of funding needs, especially for organizations working at the grassroots level. However, a big percentage of the public funding allocated to CSOs is given to sports associations and war veterans' organizations, and the manner in which these funds are

¹⁸ <http://monitoringmatrix.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/155-2g-2016-MM-BiH-SBg-08032017FINAL.pdf>, Accessed on 09.06.2017

¹⁹ http://www.balkanccd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Balkan_Civic_Practices_11_Donor_Strategies.pdf, Accessed on 09.06.2017

distributed is unregulated and not transparent. As noted in the 2016 EU Progress Report, “the distribution of public funds to CSOs is not fully transparent and systematic”.²⁰

According to the 2015 World Giving there was significant increase in donations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 53 percent of respondents donating to charities in 2014, up from 33 percent in 2013, which is probably related to “fundraising efforts following extensive flooding throughout Southern Europe in May 2014.”

The legal environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not stimulate philanthropy; therefore, such activities remain relatively rare and limited in scope. The EC Report noted that national laws, including the tax laws, do not incentivize private donations to CSOs. Companies are more likely to sponsor visible activities that help them promote their image. As a result, sports activities receive more support than social, cultural, or humanitarian activities. Several CSOs are working to promote a culture of philanthropy.

Some CSOs earn revenue from services and products, or rent from assets, but the amounts earned through such activities are generally symbolic. Some CSOs receive contracts from the authorities and, to a lesser extent, businesses to provide certain services, particularly in the field of social protection. Although CSOs collect membership fees, they are an insignificant source of revenue for most organizations. Only few organizations use new information communication technologies to raise funds.

Relationship with Government

There was some progress in establishing institutional mechanisms for cooperation between governments and civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as for public financing of CSOs. However, a strategic framework for cooperation with civil society needs to be developed and full use should be made of the e-consultation web platform. Transparent procedures are needed for allocating public funding to CSOs at all governance levels. An institutional mechanism for consultations, the e-consultation web platform, was launched in April 2016 and involved 9 ministries and 14 agencies at state level. Twenty-three institutions at all levels of government designated specific bodies or contact points in charge of dialogue and co-operation with CSOs. Sector-specific consultations with CSOs were occasionally organised through dedicated working groups. However, for the legal framework to be implemented efficiently government representatives and CSOs need an expanded role and there needs to be greater political commitment to the process. A strategic framework for cooperation with civil society has yet to be established at all levels of government²¹.

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf, Accessed on 03.06.2017

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf, Accessed on 15.07.2017

6. Conclusion

In the past 25 years Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a significant recipient of development aid, much of it channeled through civil society organizations. Due to this, the civil society in the country has developed significant capacities and experience in implementation of development projects in various areas. Even more importantly, the civil society has been an important factor in the country's social and political life and driver of change in the country's peace building and democratization processes.

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina will eventually go from aid recipient to aid donor, especially since it aspires to become an EU member, the civil society should be a valuable partner to the government and to donors and driver of the development cooperation agenda. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to further improve the environment in which it operates, its capacities when it comes to development cooperation, and be involved in all cycles of policy making in meaningful and systematic manner.

According to the monitoring reports, the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is operating in relatively enabling environment; there is still much to be done though, in order legal guarantees for freedom of association, freedom of assembly and other related freedoms to be preserved and properly implemented in practice, to have meaningful involvement of the civil society in the policy and decision making processes and the financial viability of the civil society to be stimulated.

Contact Information:

A relevant network of CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina is

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Centre for Development of Non-Governmental organizations (CRNVO) - Montenegro

Civic Initiatives - Serbia

Association People's Parliament - Serbia

Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) – Albania

Croatian Platform for Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL)

Slovenian NGDO Platform for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (SLOGA)

CONCORD – European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

Pontis Foundation - Slovakia

Austrian Foundation for Development Research (OEFSE)

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