

Anti-terrorism



**ANTI
TERRORISM**

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) facilitates a comprehensive and co-operative approach to counterterrorism (CT) as well as to prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (P/C VERLT). The Mission provides policy guidance and expertise, conducts tailored capacity-building, and facilitates the exchange of best practices. It also promotes and applies 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 pose a serious threat to the security and stability

of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), engendering fear and mistrust among citizens and undermining social cohesion and reconciliation. Owing to

sustained efforts to prevent VERLT and terrorism, BiH has not experienced a terrorist attack since 2015. However, according to the latest [U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism](#), “Violent extremist ideology and violent regional nationalist groups remain potential sources of terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” The complex and fragmented governance structure, resource gaps, and inadequate inter-agency co-ordination continue to hamper implementation of the Strategy of BiH for Preventing and Combating Terrorism (CT Strategy). CT co-ordination bodies at all levels of authority require greater inclusion of non-security sector actors to complement the expertise of security, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies.

For the past several years, authorities in BiH have focused their efforts on addressing the return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their family members, as well as FTFs leaving the prison system. The country still expects more than 100 of these individuals to return from foreign conflict zones. Their processing will test the ability of BiH to effectively integrate them into society and prevent further radicalization. According to a 2018 [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 policy advice and support entailing multi-stakeholder engagement, awareness raising, and capacity building. Given the complex nature of terrorist threats, it also promotes improved implementation of international legal frameworks, travel document security and capacities to counter the financing of terrorism.

The Mission assists the development and implementation of strategic CT and P/C VERLT documents at all levels of authority, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law. The new 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 to 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 will support the development of action plans at the levels of the State, entities and Brčko District.

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

Continuing mixed migration flows through BiH have also raised the risk of terrorist infiltration. 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 also assists authorities to successfully receive, rehabilitate, and reintegrate FTFs and their family members returning from foreign war zones, including by supporting the development of operational procedures for their treatment as well as effective and appropriate R&R policies and programmes. The Mission also partners with social protection and health authorities in developing specialized trainings to prepare receiving families and train 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 coordinated manner and through greater inclusion of civil society, religious communities, women and youth. Using interactive table-top exercises, the Mission brings 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, the Islamic Community in BiH developed and delivered specialized capacity-building training for imams on P/C VERLT. To date, these workshops have benefited more than 1,100 imams across the country. Support to strengthening media literacy amongst imams has yielded an online learning platform comprising modules on non-discrimination, hate crimes, and P/C VERLT.

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, 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, the Mission continues to organize innovative table-top exercises (TTXs) on P/C VERLT. Through scenario-based simulations involving anonymized real-life situations, the TTXs bring together stakeholders and practitioners from different levels of government, civil society, religious communities and media to work on developing effective responses. Scenarios focus on cases of ISIL-inspired and right-wing / ethno-nationalist VERLT. More than 300 participants from across BiH have benefited from this project so far, whilst several recommendations resulting from the TTXs have been incorporated into the new CT Strategy.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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