

CESS BACKGROUNDER

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Republika Srpska: Democratic Oversight of Security

Since the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has maintained a delicate peace. A complicated decentralised government system and deeply-entrenched ethnic divisions have hindered democratic development, as well as progress towards the country's European integration ambitions. Security sector oversight tasks are divided among state, entity, and canton level governance systems. This backgrounder outlines security sector oversight at the entity level of the Republika Srpska (RS).

Condition of democratic oversight of security



CULTURE

Majority party dominance obstructs individual responsibility to hold the executive to account.



CAPACITY

Shortage of skills among elected representatives and lack of support staff available.



COOPERATION

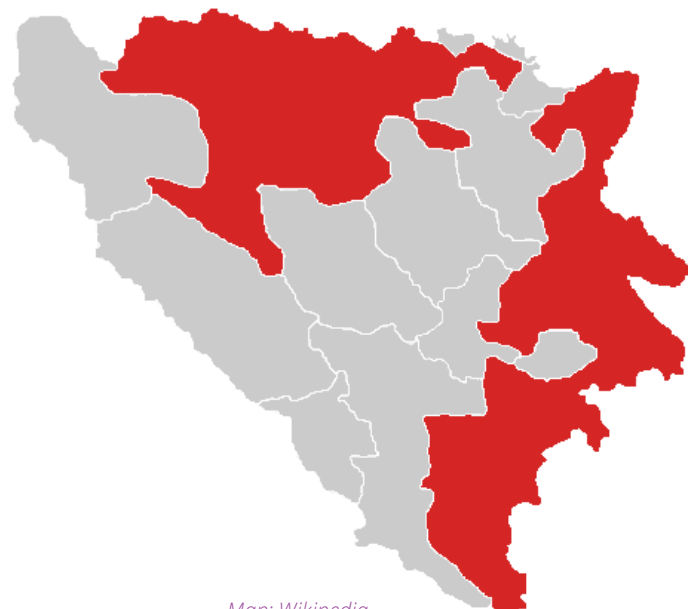
Limited awareness on how and with whom to cooperate in the security sector.

Republika Srpska (Serb Republic)

Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (majority Croat and Bosniak) and the Republika Srpska (majority Serb). The Brčko District of BiH has its own status in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Both the state-level government and each entity have their own political responsibilities. The state-level government is responsible for policy areas such as foreign policy, international obligations, and immigration, while the entities are responsible for most of their own internal affairs, such as education and health care.

The Republika Srpska consists of 64 municipalities, each with their own administration.



Map: Wikipedia

Parliamentary oversight in Republika Srpska is conducted by the following institutions. Republika Srpska has a unicameral assembly:



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- CONSISTS OF 83 SEATS
- 4-YEAR MANDATE
- UNLIKE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, THIS ASSEMBLY IS NOT CONSTITUTED ALONG ETHNIC LINES



Security Committee

- Consists of 7 members
- Met 5 times in 2022 and 6 times in 2023
- Elected from among the MPs of the National Assembly

Is tasked with:

- Examining the current state of security
- Providing suggestions and opinions on security affairs
- Monitoring budget implementation
- Reporting to and informing the National Assembly regarding these matters



COUNCIL OF PEOPLES

- CONSISTS OF 8 MEMBERS OF EACH ETHNICITY AND 4 'OTHERS', TOTALLING 28 MEMBERS
- NOT A CHAMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUT CAN VETO LAWS
- PROTECTS THE VITAL NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE CONSTITUENT PEOPLES IN THE RS REGARDING LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER GENERAL ACTS PASSED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



INDEPENDENT BOARD

- Consists of 7 members: 2 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and 5 representatives of the civil sector
- Appointed by the National Assembly

Is tasked with:

- Selecting the director of the police
- Investigating complaints by citizens
- Cooperating with the Ombudsmen
- Called to work ad hoc by the National Assembly

Human Rights Ombudsman

The Human Rights Ombudsmen handle complaints and investigate human rights violations committed by any organ of BiH, its entities and the Brčko District of BiH. The three ombudspersons (Bosniak, Croat and Serb) have offices in Banja Luka (main seat of the institution), Brčko District, Mostar, Sarajevo and a field office in Livno.

- 6-year mandate, appointed by the Parliamentary Assembly
- Reports to the PA of BiH as well as to entity parliaments and the Assembly of the Brčko District.



Supreme Audit Office of the Republic of Srpska Public Sector

The Supreme Audit Office is an independent institution of parliamentary oversight that provides opinions on:

- Application of the law and other regulations
- Execution of the budget
- Financial reports
- Use of resources
- Management of public property in institutions in the RS public sector



Civil Society



- There are 25,646 registered associations and foundations in BiH. Only a few of these work within the field of security.
- Many organisations are active on a national scale; others focus on a specific entity, canton or municipality.
- Civil society and academia can critically scrutinize the executive and should therefore be considered a stakeholder in democratic security sector oversight.

Increasing contact moments and interaction among oversight actors.

2

Performing oversight within the constraints of the current governance system.

1

Building capacity among elected representatives.

3

About BIHOS

BIHOS seeks to strengthen democratic governance and inclusive oversight of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the state, entity, and canton levels. It does so by:

- Investing in *capacities* through providing tools, skills, and techniques to oversight actors.
- Fostering *cooperation* among parliaments, civil society organisations, and other oversight actors.
- Promoting a *culture* of oversight that is critical and constructive.

BIHOS consists of a capacity-building component (training courses, peer-to-peer consultations, training-of-trainers, fellowship programme, and study visits) and a research component (expert labs, policy-oriented analysis, regular publications). The project is implemented by CESS from the Netherlands, in cooperation with the Centre for Security Studies (CSS), and the European Defendology Center (EDC) from BiH. BIHOS is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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