

Bosnia and Herzegovina Building Inclusive Oversight of Security (BIHOS)

Strengthening democratic governance of the security sector by investing in capacities, fostering cooperation, and promoting a culture of oversight in BiH.

Many hands make light work: Parliamentary oversight of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A study into state and entity level parliamentary oversight of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on practitioner and observer views.

Three findings

1. Bosnia and Herzegovina's security sector underwent reform two decades ago, but development has since stalled and earlier achievements are now at risk due to weak security sector governance.
2. Parliamentary oversight of security in Bosnia and Herzegovina is hampered by a complicated governance system and a lack of political will, while citizens, civil society, and the European Union appear increasingly disengaged from the legislature.
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislatures can be characterised as *perfunctory* at the state level; *inconsequential* in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and *docile* in the Republika Srpska.

Ten recommendations

1. The *European Union*, its member states, and partners should devote increased attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislatures through targeted and conditional support programmes, recognising parliaments as a lynchpin in future accession talks.
2. The *Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina* should be encouraged through concrete projects that push parliamentarians, staff and committees out of their comfort zones.
3. The *Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina* should be encouraged to assume greater responsibility by supporting legislators who are willing to exercise oversight.
4. The *National Assembly of the Republika Srpska* should be exposed to peers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Europe, which could help foster greater independence in performing oversight functions.
5. Develop a country-wide, civil society-managed network of elected representatives and parliamentary staff to cooperate, exchange experiences, and train together.
6. Train elected representatives on budget oversight and support the establishment of a process of Post-Legislative Scrutiny.
7. Increase the capacity of staff to address urgent security issues, particularly on disinformation and cybersecurity.
8. Help develop a scheduling system for security-related committees and promote the use of knowledge agendas with a view to boosting security expertise within committees.
9. Organise peer-to-peer exchanges for parliamentary staff with colleagues from EU member state parliaments focused on security oversight and harmonisation with EU legislation.
10. Promote inclusivity by ensuring that security-related committees work closely with audit, ombuds, and anti-corruption institutions, as well as NGOs, think tanks, and investigative journalists.

One conclusion

The legal framework for security sector oversight is solid; both state and entity parliaments employ dedicated staff, and elected representatives are inclined to cooperate – in sum, offering opportunities for positive change toward more *active, responsible, and independent* legislatures and security oversight.