

PROJECT SUMMARY

Enhancing Institutional Capacities on Freedom of Expression and Information (EFEx) in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Project title	Enhancing institutional capacities on freedom of expression and information in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Project area	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Budget	1.000.000,00 Euro
Funding	Voluntary contribution from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Implementation	Division for Co-operation on Freedom of Expression Information Society Department- DG I
Duration	1 February 2022 – 31 January 2025 (36 months)

I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Freedom of expression (FoE) and its corollary freedom of access to information (FoI) are cornerstones of a democratic society. They enable critical tools which allow for democratic participation, oversight, transparency, and monitoring. Obstacles in the effective and practical exercise of these freedoms create a plethora of enduring problems, which have a negative impact on society at large.

The existing constitutional, legal, regulatory and institutional framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), including treaty ratification and domestic legislation and institutions, already lays the foundations for the protection of freedom of expression and access to information. However, various sources, including the reports of the European Commission for [2020](#) and [2021](#) as well as the Needs Assessment Report commissioned under this project, confirm that along with legislative gaps, an implementation deficit exists in this area. In this framework, a limited capacity at the national level to comprehensively monitor and assess the implementation of such rights, and report on it, are key impediments to progress toward the full realisation of those rights.

Therefore, the need has emerged to support the development of capacities of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) of BiH for an effective exercise of its specific mandate in coordinating human rights monitoring and reporting of the full spectrum of human rights with respect to FoE and FoI. This shall go hand in hand with raising awareness and strengthening the capacity of other institutions and actors (duty-bearers and right-holders) with a stake in freedom of expression and access to information to fully and effectively contribute to this process.

This project's objective is thus to enhance the protection of FoE and FoI in BiH by making a contribution towards human-rights based legal framework and practices, through enhancing the capacities of key duty bearers (the MHRR and other institutions with responsibilities in this area) and right-holders representatives (media actors and CSOs), to integrate a human rights-based approach in

their work. The action builds on past and current Council of Europe (CoE) activities in the area of Freedom of Access to Information/Media and Freedom of Expression in BiH, including a pilot project funded by SIDA and implemented in 2019/2020.

The **Theory of Change** of the project is that effective implementation of a human rights-based legislative framework on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Information is critical for the progress of the Rule of Law in BiH.

The **objective** of this project will be achieved through three inter-connected components focusing on:

- (1) freedom of expression,
- (2) freedom of access to information and
- (3) capacity building of MHRR,

All actions shall be encompassing targeted inputs such as awareness-raising and training, legislative analysis, development of guidelines and tools, monitoring and reporting, and advocacy.

The fully-fledged intervention logic, presented through the Workplan and Calendar of Activities detailing all project actions, engagement of international and national consultants/experts and of responsible government institutions represent the finalised reviews and start-up activities of the inception phase of the project (February and May 2022).

II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

Impact	Enhanced protection of freedom of expression and freedom of access to information for all in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Intermediate Outcome 1	Enhanced effectiveness of the MHRR and other key actors in BiH to address freedom of expression/media (in particular hate speech).
Immediate Outcome 1.1	The MHRR and other relevant actors have enhanced substantive awareness/knowledge and methodological skills/capacity available (i.e. legislative drafting, capacity development, advocacy) in the field of Freedom of expression, especially on hate speech.
Intermediate Outcome 2	Enhanced effectiveness of MHRR and other key actors in BiH to address freedom of information
Immediate Outcome 2.1	The MHRR and other relevant actors have enhanced substantive awareness/knowledge and methodological skills/capacity available (i.e. legislative drafting, capacity development, advocacy) in the field of Freedom of information.
Intermediate Outcome 3	The MHRR, as a key duty-bearer institution, implements a human rights-based approach in the execution of its mandate.
Immediate outcome 3.1	Enhanced organisational management capacity and procedural tools available to MHRR to manage and coordinate action on Freedom of Expression and Information within a human rights approach.

III. PROPOSED PARTNERS/BENEFICIARIES

The project will work primarily with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the proposed main beneficiary and partner. In accordance with specific core themes, the project will extend its intervention to other duty-bearer institutions, with a stake on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Access to Information such as: the Ministry of Communications and

Transport, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Civil Affairs, and other agencies and institutions, including the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman, the Communication Regulatory Agency, Gender Equality Agency, Data Protection Agency, Public Administration Reform Coordinator’s Office, State Statistics Agency, Press Council BiH, other Ministries of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Rights-holders, including media actors and journalists and civil society organisations, will be included in the activities throughout the project’s duration, as direct and indirect beneficiaries.

IV. PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

This project will be implemented by the Council of Europe’s project team composed of one local Project Officer (70 % of FTE) and one Long-term Adviser (LTA) based in Sarajevo and one Project Officer based in Strasbourg (70% of FTE). A Programme Manager based in Strasbourg will be supervising and managing the project team from substantial and administrative aspects. T

The team based in Sarajevo will work directly with the beneficiaries while being supported and guided by both the Office of Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) and the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DG I). The overall project management and supervision will be ensured by the Division for Co-operation on Freedom of Expression of the Information Society Department.

The Council of Europe will ensure the active participation of a suitable mix of European and local experts in all project activities. All local and international experts/consultants are to be independent and free from conflicts of interest.

V. CONTACTS

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