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Austrian Institute for
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Bosnia & Herzegovina

On the path back to conflict or to progressive
reforms?

Policy Paper

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Summary & Policy Recommendations

- The situation within BiH can be cautiously described as a fragile stability. War rhetoric and ethno-nationalism, which never disappeared became more aggressive and fuels the perception of a possible escalation within the citizens of BiH. However, there seem to be a real danger that BiH could break apart.
 - The educational curricula should be renewed and a multi-perspective approach towards history which aims to encourage the young generation to think, discuss and question should be introduced to better understand their common past and shared future.
 - The fight against corruption is one of the major preconditions for a future accession to the European Union. It is also assessed as one of the biggest problems by all ethnicities and therefore could serve as a uniting link to overcome societal disintegration and to foster a multi-ethnic state building.
 - The European Green Deal could be an opportunity for development in BiH and the country could modernize its energy system and make it competitive and sustainable with regard to the environment by providing access to funds for BiH.
 - Infrastructure is in a poor state, which hinders the exchange of goods between the regions of the country as well as the mobility of the population. More contacts between the inhabitants of different regions would be an important building block on the stony path to reconciliation in the country. To boost railway passenger transport BiH will need more investments that could come from the EU.
 - Reconciliation is a big word, but it is crucial to understand that it is not an event, not even a process, but it has to become a way of life. Without a minimum of understanding of the experiences of all victims – no matter what ethnicity – it is very difficult to form a multi-ethnic, progressive, democratic, and prosperous society that the young generation does not want to leave, but where it wants to stay.
 - External actors like the EU and US on the one hand, and Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and China on the other hand, highly influence the economic but also political landscape within BiH. Considering the low resilience of BiH, external actors should refrain from “geopoliticalization” in order not to destabilize the fragile peace.
 - The ruling coalition in Republika Srpska led by Milorad Dodik is threatening to re-establish their own army, intelligence service and tax-unit, declaring state-level institutions illegal. This would lead to de-facto secession of Republika Srpska and collapse of legal and institutional architecture of BiH that was developed since 1995. The EU and the US should be very vocal and clear that this is un-constitutional and poses a threat not only to BiH but to the stability of the whole WB region.
 - The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina was created as part of negotiations to end the war that led to the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. At the moment, EU and the USA are pushing for a limited constitutional reform coupled with a wide-range electoral law reforms. Nowadays, the constitution is regarded as outdated. The European Court of Human Rights considers it discriminatory towards others who do not self-declare as constituent peoples. If the reforms are agreed upon and implemented, it would result in a crucial and positive change in BiH’s political and social situation.
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From 15th to 20th of October 2021, a group of young experts from the region in cooperation with a team of the Austria-based think tanks – International Institute for Peace, the Karl-Renner Institut and the Austrian Institute for International Affairs – went on a study trip to Sarajevo, Jajce and Mostar. The group met with diplomats, politicians, head of states, the EU, the OHR and civil society representatives to discuss alternative horizons which ultimately could pave a way for BiH to become more prosperous and more democratic and to provide a perspective for the people to stay in the country instead of leaving it for good. With all the difficulties and challenges BiH is facing, it is important not to give up hope and to look for alternatives.

Context

Twenty-six years ago, the Dayton Peace Agreement ended the war and laid the foundation of the constitutional and institutional architecture of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina consisting of two entities, the Federation of BiH and the Republika Srpska. Today, the country not only still faces enormous challenges but is also going through one of the biggest political crises. Corruption is widespread, ethnonationalism is rising and it influences the educational and political system on a large scale, infrastructure is lacking, economy is weak, the health-care system is insufficient, and pollution is extremely high.

High Representative of International Community Christian Schmidt warned in his report to the United Nations Security Council in early November 2021 that BiH is in imminent danger of breaking apart, and there is a “very real” prospect of a return to conflict. Ruling coalition in Republika Srpska led by Milorad Dodik, member of the state-level tripartite Presidency, is threatening to re-establish their own army, intelligence service and a tax-unit, declaring state-level institutions illegal. This would lead to de-facto secession of Republika Srpska and collapse of legal and institutional architecture of BiH that has been developed since 1995.

All those challenges hinder the path of BiH to become closer to the European Union and to become a prosperous market-based economy and democratic country. The lack of perspectives drives many people to leave the country in search for a better life (mostly to EU countries) - with the intention to never come back. Especially in rural areas, the lack of human resources becomes ever more evident and poses serious problems for the continuation of the important work done by civil society organizations and NGOs, and by enterprises in general.

While the Dayton Agreement ended the war, it did not bring peace to BiH. The origins of the violence which occurred during the war – including crimes against humanity experienced by all three ethnicities – the Muslim Bosniaks, the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs, to different extents, were prosecuted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and are on-going before the local courts. Unfortunately, they were never processed at a wider societal level and in an inclusive way. The buzzword “reconciliation” is something that people look at with suspicion. Emotions are an important tool for politicians to gain political capital based on victimization of the own group while not acknowledging or diminishing own crimes.

In addition to the already difficult constellation of the state of BiH, there are regional and international actors involved. Croatia has an eye on the Bosnian Croats, Serbia is supporting Republika Srpska. The European Union is facing criticism for stabilizing the political stalemate while the existence of the Office of the High Representative with extensive external executive

power is questioned in general. Furthermore, Russia, Turkey, the Emirates, and China are active in the region – economically but also on the political level.

In July 2021, the UN High Representative Valentin Inzko who was serving in BiH for 12 years imposed a law to ban the denial of genocide and the glorification of war criminals, as one of his last acts in office. This contributed to escalation between Republika Srpska on one hand, and the rest of BiH and international community. War narratives, which never disappeared, are high-up on the agenda again and one can feel that many people in BiH are fearing violent outbreaks to an extent which was not seen after Dayton was signed.

EDUCATION

The situation within BiH educational systems, especially due to the non-existence of a state-level strategy on how to deal with the past, is difficult. While it is often assumed that only Serbs live in Republika Srpska, this is not the case anymore. Due to internationally backed process of a return of property to pre-war owners, BiH's multi-ethnic character has been restored to some extent. Today, every fourth citizen of BiH lives in a municipality where his/her own ethnic group is not in the majority. Some 200,000 non-Serbs live in Republika Srpska. In an attempt to make the return more likely and easier, OSCE has established the so-called two-schools under one roof with an aim to enable education of returnees' children. However, two decades later, there are still 51 primary schools in the Federation of BiH where Bosnian Croats and Muslim Bosniaks are separated at the entrance and educated according to different curricula. One dealing with Croat history, geography, and language, the other in Bosnian history, geography, and language. Even though the initial idea was to take into account that a Muslim Bosniak should not be forced to be taught about Croatia and vice versa about BiH, today it fosters the already widespread nationalism and hinders the idea of a multiethnic state in which everyone has the same rights and duties.

*Educational curricula
need to reflect realities
of all citizens of BiH*

The Southeast European Joint History Project which was running since 1998 by the CDRSEE (Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe) tried to offer an alternative to the ethno-centric versions of learning material which was produced in the past throughout the region. By focusing on training teachers and therefore reaching the youth via education, the young generation would be provided with different points of view on history. The rationale was to encourage the youth to think, discuss and question to better understand their common past and shared future. Due to lack of financial support, the CDRSEE does not exist anymore, but the products of their work – the teaching books – still do, and they are widely acknowledged by historians and pedagogues worldwide.

What is lacking is the political will to reform the educational system to educate the young generation towards multi-perspectivity, critical thinking, different points of view about the past and ultimately to better understand their common past and shared future. Progressive governments, such as one we met in Canton Sarajevo, should be encouraged to introduce such education and hopefully inspire others to follow.

JUDICIARY AND CORRUPTION

Perception of corruption among citizens of BiH puts this country at the top of the worst performing countries in Europe and Central Asia. The very de-centralized federal system alone with two entities and Brcko District, which in the Federation of BiH is then further de-centralized with 10 autonomous cantons, makes BiH vulnerable to corruption. In addition, a lack of political will, patronage combined with weak law enforcement mechanisms hinder the ability to prosecute corrupt activities. Absence of a unifying narrative, nationalism and ethnic division thrive, and they are often used as a political tool by self-interested politicians. As a result, societal integration has not received much public support, with citizens voting almost exclusively along ethnic lines. This creates the ideal conditions for patronage networks to emerge and become embedded, which is a serious obstacle to tackling corruption in the country.

The fight against corruption is a major precondition for a future accession to the EU

The fight against corruption is one of the major preconditions for a future accession to the European Union. It is also assessed as one of the biggest problems by all ethnicities and therefore could serve as a uniting link to overcome societal disintegration and to foster a multi-ethnic state building. However, non-surprisingly, there is not much political will to tackle these issues seriously in practice.

The Opinion on BiH's EU membership application, published by the European Commission in May 2019, set conditions in this area for the country to move forward on the accession path. Among other, BiH is expected to adopt a new law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. This draft law should be submitted to the state-level parliament as soon as possible, enabling more independence and more efficient internal scrutiny over prosecutorial and judicial system. Furthermore, a new law on the Courts of BiH is another requirement and legislation on conflict of interest as well as whistle-blowers' protection are on the EU agenda. All these and similar legislative changes, coupled with non-legislative measures necessary to boost coordination between different levels of BiH governance, have been deemed important and have been advocated for by progressive politicians and civil society organizations in BiH. They should be made priority of the EU's work in BiH.

ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the most polluted areas in Europe and the world, with some cities having air-pollution comparable to Teheran in Iran or Lahore in Pakistan. This is mainly due to the existence of coal power plants and the widespread practice of burning solid fuels in homes. The geographical position of Sarajevo, located in a valley where air circulation is limited, adds to the wider problematic.

A World Bank report from October 2019 estimates that about 3,300 people die prematurely every year because of exposure to ambient PM2.5 air pollution in BiH¹. The estimated

¹ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/571891579547481576-0080022020/original/AirQualityManagementinBosniaandHerzegovinaExecutiveSummaryeng.pdf>

economic cost associated with mortality from exposure to air pollution in BiH was up to 5.9–10.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016, the report states.

The European Green Deal could be an opportunity for improvements of this and related issues in BiH and the country could modernize its energy system, making it competitive and sustainable ecologically. The EU could provide the necessary funds. BiH's constitution does not provide for the establishment of a country-level environmental protection ministry or agency, which is important for effective tackling of air pollution. Harmonization of the existing legislation and standards across BiH could be helpful in this context. EU funds foreseen for this area in the coming period could be used to improve harmonization among different levels of governance in BiH.

However, even though air pollution is a concern for every citizen in BiH, apart from some notable exceptions such as in Canton Sarajevo, it is not yet widely a priority for people who are struggling with so many other aspects in their everyday life.

Electricity infrastructure has become an increasingly sensitive subject of discussions for several

BiH is one of the most polluted areas in the world. Support in green transition is mandatory.

years in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thanks to its thermal (coal-fired) and hydro power plants, the country is in the position of a net exporter of electrical energy to the neighboring region. The flip side is that the coal power plants are badly equipped when it comes to filters and lead to an alarming scale of air pollution (see above). What is more, they are the main cause of high emissions. BiH emits almost as much CO₂ per capita as countries like Austria, despite a much lower GDP. Most of the coal-fired plants will be outdated in the next few years. Chinese and Russian companies stand ready to invest in these plants, which would contradict the global efforts to phase out coal.

Renewable energy production (hydro, solar, and wind) is the future, also in BiH, all the more in the light of the great potential for renewables in the country. International and national companies are keen to invest in new hydro power plants. Some of these projects conflict with environmental protection and conservation of natural river valleys. In several parts of the country, civil society initiatives, often overarching ethnic divisions, have been formed in order to prevent the construction of (small) hydro power plants. In Jajce, in central Bosnia, for instance, national investors planned to build two additional hydro power plants and gained political support for this project, despite its potential negative impact on flora, fauna, and tourism in the region. About 30 local organizations joined forces and succeeded in stopping the project.

As mentioned above, the environmental problems also lead to serious health issues for which a functional health system is needed. Especially since the outbreak of Covid-19 the deficiencies in the healthcare system became even more obvious.

While Republika Srpska has a rather centralized healthcare system, the federal system is predominantly organized at the cantonal level with 10 (cantonal) healthcare systems. It is mandatory for everyone in BiH to have healthcare coverage and insurance, but it is financed through contributions by the people. Furthermore, the decentralization of healthcare in BiH results in regional differences when it comes to available funds, depending on wealth. When it comes to registered deaths from Covid-19, BiH has ranked among the worst countries in Europe and the world. The initial problem with slow pace in purchasing vaccines has in the meantime

turned into a slow pace of vaccination. BiH, together with Bulgaria, is among EU and Western Balkans countries with lowest percentage of vaccinated citizens.

Additionally, BiH is also facing another dilemma today. The country is relying on the WHO-COVAX system to receive vaccines and donations from other states. In contrast, Serbia got supplies from China and Russia and therefore was even ahead of many EU countries in terms of vaccinating its population already at an early stage. The decision of Serbia to supply its neighboring countries with vaccines has to be seen in a geopolitical context. Russia and China are gaining influence in the region through their vaccination policy, but so does Serbia that is following its political influence on a regional level as well. An estimated 100,000 Bosniaks were killed during the war; most of them by ethnic cleansing which makes it, also due to the lack of a reconciliation-strategy within the region, difficult to accept Serbian vaccines for many.

Encouraging examples, such as Canton Sarajevo, where authorities have implemented policies to fight air pollution and where the vaccination campaign goes almost twice as fast as in the rest of BiH, should be supported and used as good examples in this regard.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The road and rail infrastructure in BiH are, overall, in a poor state. This hinders the exchange of goods between the regions of the country as well as the mobility of the population. However, more contacts among the inhabitants of different regions would be an important building block on the stony path to reconciliation in the country.

The A1 motorway, also known as part of the pan-European Corridor Vc, is the most important road project. The approx. 340 kilometers long motorway is aimed at linking the country to the main European traffic network. Beginning in the north at the Croatian border near Svilaj, A1 is to connect the important cities of Doboj, Zenica, Sarajevo and Mostar and to end again at the Croatian border close to the important port of Ploče on the Adriatic coast. Although construction began already 20 years ago, only 115 kilometers have been opened to the traffic so far; works will not be finished before 2028. The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development ensure important parts of the financing.

Investments in rail infrastructure are as important as in road infrastructure.

Railroad infrastructure saw only limited investment in the last 25 years. The fact that next to a state-level Railways Public Corporation each entity has its own railways company (Željeznice Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine in the Federation; Željeznice Republike Srpske in the Republika Srpska) is an additional disadvantage. Whereas rail plays a considerable role for freight transport, passenger services are of minor significance. There are currently no international passenger services. It is regrettable that despite the European Green Deal and other commitments and initiatives such as the European Year of Rail in 2021, no EU funds seem to be available for the necessary investments in the rail infrastructure in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Priority is given to the road infrastructure.

To boost railway passenger transport BiH will need more investments that could come from the EU. Examples like introduction of railway line between Sarajevo centre and the nearby town of Hadzici should be followed by other areas in BiH. For example, a passenger railway line

could be introduced in Tuzla Canton, as a start between Tuzla and Lukavac. Other similar lines could follow.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina was created as part of negotiations to end the war that led to the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. The constitution concentrates on the key functions of the state and representation of the three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs). At its creation in 1995, the priority was to establish peace between the three ethnic groups and to secure a peaceful future within the newly established country. Nowadays, the constitution is regarded as outdated, and the European Court of Human Rights considers it discriminatory towards others who do not self-declare as constituent peoples. Several attempts to reform the constitution were made between 2006 and 2014 but all of them failed. Except in 2009 when amendment to the constitution was made to include the outcome of the Brčko District final award.

Negotiations between many political actors with different interests and visions for BiH future are needed.

At the moment, the EU and the USA are pushing for limited constitutional reforms coupled with a wide range of electoral law reforms. If agreed upon and implemented, they would ensure that elections are conducted in line with European standards by implementing OSCE/ODIHR and the relevant Venice Commission's recommendations, ensuring transparency of political party financing. Furthermore, the electoral law reforms would result in a crucial and positive change in BiH's political and social situation: others would be allowed to run for elections for the state-level Presidency and upper-house of peoples. However, some of the reforms debated and supported by the EU would further enshrine the ethno-political principle. They would ensure that only HDZ candidates would be elected for the Croat seat in the three-member Presidency.

At the moment, there is no consensus on the constitutional and electoral law reforms, neither the necessary nor the doubtful one. The main three political parties (SNSD, SDA and HDZ) do not have the necessary number of votes in the state-level parliament which are required to change the constitution and adopt electoral law reforms. This means that negotiations between many political actors with different interests and visions for BiH future are needed. Even though this makes potential deal harder, it is not impossible.

This is why EU and US facilitators should focus on working with more than three main political parties and with the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH on finding proposals for constitutional and electoral law reforms – however without giving in to nationalist demands. Since this is also part of the EU conditions laid out in the European Commission's 2019 opinion, its implementation would boost EU process for BiH.

RECONCILIATION

Unfortunately, little has been done in terms of introducing a holistic approach when it comes to dealing with the past. This is characteristic not only of BiH but also of the region as a whole. Regrettably, a strategy on reconciliation has not been included in the Dayton Agreement. Issues pertaining to reconciliation have been addressed primarily through the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) and domestic courts. This was surely important

when it comes to establishing facts, documenting the number of victims, and issuing verdicts for war crimes. Unfortunately, this was not enough to shape public perception about what had happened in the 1990s.

Ethno-nationalism is on the rise today and so is victimization and recrimination. For a post-conflict-society it is especially important to find a way to deal with the past in order to go forward. This is only possible if critical self-examination is supported and if new narratives are created. Education in this context is key, but as already mentioned above in the section on education, the curricula are still based on ethnicity rather than on multi-ethnicity and on mutual understanding. Moreover, the nationalist narratives are still prevailing in the media which is one of the most important tools for opinion-shaping.

There are many important initiatives which tried to deal with national myths, rights of veterans

Reconciliation is a way of life rather than a process with a beginning and an end.

or rights of expelled people, but they got relatively low support from the political leaders and even from international actors. Unfortunately, many of the key people in power are the same people who fought on different sides during the wars. Additionally, they also profit from a nationalistic narrative because it seems to give simple answers to complex and deeply rooted problems. The origins of the escalation of violence have never been tackled and therefore people are still caught in this circle of strong and understandable emotions after experiencing gross human rights violations and the inability to put oneself in the shoes of the “other”. Similarly, to Israel and Palestine where it is now difficult to talk about peace at all (rather people talk about stability and security), in the Western Balkans and also in BiH it is difficult to talk about reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a big word, but it is crucial to understand that it is not an event, not even a process, but it has to become a way of life. Talking to each other about the past, listening to the other`s stories is as important as telling one`s own story. Examples of regional solidarity are also present. One can recall the regional response when Tirana was hit by an earthquake or mutual support among countries when the COVID-19 pandemic reached the region. Travelling for work or leisure to the neighboring countries and engaging with each other is no less important for reconciliation – especially for the young generation that did not experience the war. Reconciliation is not an end in itself and accepting the other`s grief does not undermine one`s own grief. Without a minimum of understanding of the experiences of all victims – no matter what ethnicity – it is very difficult to form a multi-ethnic, progressive, democratic, and prosperous society that the young generation does not want to leave, but where it wants to stay.

ROLE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS: EU, OHR, EUFOR, CHINA, RUSSIA, TURKEY, EMIRATES

There is probably no other country – at least in Europe – where we can find so much external influence as in BiH. Sometimes it is even difficult to differentiate between what comes from the outside and what is domestically driven. The three constitutive communities have their outside allies. These alliances are particularly strong for the Serb and Croat communities, because the external influences are coming from the immediate neighborhood. Unfortunately, these influences are strengthening the authoritarian forces inside Republika Srpska and the Federation respectively. Additionally, these alliances strengthen the status quo by fostering the

ethnic division or may even question the fragile balance created by the Dayton Peace Agreement which is still supported by the US and the EU. The result could be new disputes and fights instead of progress towards unity and accession talks with the EU.

The recent plans to undermine institutional and legal architecture created in the Dayton Agreement undertaken by the member of the tripartite presidency of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, is a dangerous setback in this regard. It would undo all the changes which have been agreed upon since Dayton, which intended to create step by step a functional state. This time, the Serbian President Alexander Vucic showed in public an intention to exert moderate influence on Milorad Dodik, as Vucic is interested in a certain degree of stability in BiH/Republika Srpska and because he does not want Dodik to play a too strong and independent role.

Furthermore, Serbia and Republika Srpska are experiencing a rising influence by Russia. This could be observed when the recent decision on extending the EUFOR mission was made by the UN Security Council. It was done under the Russian condition of deleting any references to the Office of the High Representative of the EU. Russia seems to primarily have an interest in stopping the path of the region towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

On the Croat side, there is a strong alliance between the governing HDZ in Croatia and its sister party in Bosnia and Herzegovina: HDZ BiH. Although even the Croat President and former president of Social Democratic Party Zoran Milanovic has been recently playing the nationalistic card. Turkey is also trying to enhance its influence on both the Bosniak and Serb sides but is obviously geographically and politically further away than Croatia or Serbia. However, overall, it is strengthening its activities in the region.

In addition to old external actors, like Russia, the US or the EU, China, a rather new actor, has

External actors should refrain from “geopoliticalization” in order not to destabilize the fragile peace.

entered the scene. While its engagement has to be seen in the context of its main foreign policy concept the One Belt One Road Initiative – which mainly aims to create corridors to export products and goods into the EU - Beijing has also stepped up its engagement in other areas, like science, media-cooperation and culture. Still, China essentially provides loans, not grants, for big projects in such sectors as energy, infrastructure and communication. Especially in BiH, the investments in power plants have to be seen critically due to environmental concerns, a big problem for the country which not only has implications for the general pollution, but in consequence also for the health system (see above). Recently, when it comes to the newly elected High Representative of the International Community, Christian Schmidt, China took the side of Russia and that of Milorad Dodik in the UN Security Council.

Unfortunately, the influence of the West has also been weakened in the last years because of Trump's lack of engagement or very particular interest in the region. Additionally, the European Union was preoccupied with its internal affairs (Brexit, new Government in Germany, upcoming elections in France, etc.) and in combating the Covid pandemic. The new US Administration shows a rising interest in the region, which is also demonstrated by the nomination of well-known figures as ambassadors. However, the focus of the US seems to be in first place directed at combating organized crime and corruption. If successful, this could be a strong contribution to democracy and modernization in the region.

With the new government in Germany just established, and the forthcoming presidential elections in France next spring, there are some uncertainties about whether these two major actors will develop a more stringent and cohesive policy for the Western Balkans. It would be in the EU's interest to counter the influence from Russia, China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. BiH constitutes a particularly weak link between the Eastern part of the EU and the Western part. Still, from the geopolitical side the EU has an interest in a stable country, meaning stability based on democracy, media freedom and an independent judiciary.

CONCLUSION

The situation in BiH unfortunately is far from stable, prosperous, and democratic. The political situation within Republika Srpska and the recent actions of its strong man Milorad Dodik, which can be interpreted to follow a separatist path, are continually threatening the fragile stability within the country. The ethno-centric and ethno-nationalist rhetoric, however, can be observed throughout the whole country and its political elite which adds fuel to the already volatile atmosphere. Still, there are many civil activists and there is a vibrant civil society tackling issues like climate change, corruption, health system and ethnic divisions, challenging the old-fashioned stereotypes and nationalism in order to contribute to a society which is enabled to reconcile and look hopefully into the future.

The EU and the International Community needs to look at the situation within BiH from an honest and realistic perspective. If BiH is to become an EU member in the future, it needs to be clear that human rights, including minority rights and the rule of law are non-negotiable. In exchange it needs to offer support to those within the country, looking for alternatives to nationalism and separatism, while not neglecting the necessity of investments in the transition period to modernize the energy and infrastructure sector.

Even though this policy paper treated the most pressing issues for BiH separately, it is important to underline that all of these challenges are interconnected. There is not one solution when it comes to education, healthcare system, reconciliation, or any other issue. A comprehensive all-encompassing strategy which acknowledges the intertwinement of all the aspects is desperately needed to bring BiH closer to the European Union and to support it in becoming a prosperous and democratic country.

List of participants

<i>Maja Bjelos</i>	Belgrade Center for Security Studies, Serbia
<i>Vilson Blloshmi</i>	student, Tirana, Albania
<i>Luka Cekic</i>	project assistant, IIP Vienna, Austria
<i>Adnan Cerimagic</i>	Senior Expert, European Stability Initiative, Germany/BiH
<i>Laura Crnic</i>	Student, Zagreb, Croatia
<i>Stephanie Fenkart</i>	director IIP, Vienna, Austria
<i>Gerhard Marchl</i>	Karl-Renner-Institut, Vienna, Austria
<i>Denis Miskic</i>	volunteer Srebrenica Memorial Center, BiH/Austria
<i>Hannes Swoboda</i>	president IIP, MEP ret, Austria

For inquiries, please contact: office@iip.at



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