

The country fact sheet was prepared by Lisa Korir in the framework of an institutional collaboration between the European Centre of Social Welfare Policy and Research and the Central European University in February 2024. The content of the sheet does neither necessarily reflect the views of those institutions nor those of the respective Ministry/ies.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Name of the Partner	<p><i>In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH): Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Federal Employment Institute, Federal Ministry of Veteran Affairs</i></p> <p><i>In Republika Srpska (RS): Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Labour, War Veterans and Disabled Persons' Protection, Employment Bureau</i></p>
Policy Framework	<p>Economic Reform Programme of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2023-25) (Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2023).</p> <p>Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union and the accession process (EU candidate country since late 2022) (European Commission, 2022).</p> <p>Development Strategy of FBiH (2021-27) (Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021).</p> <p>Social Inclusion strategy in the FBiH (2021-2027) (Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020).</p> <p>Employment Strategy of Republika Srpska (2021-27) (Republic of Srpska, 2022).</p>
General situation across all policy areas	
Main challenges across all policy areas	<p>Complex constitutional/government structure, including a state government, two entity governments and 10 cantonal governments in FBiH.</p> <p>A political environment that is marked by deep polarisation, affecting the functioning of state institutions and policy coordination between the entities.</p> <p>Modest progress on public administration reform (See below).</p> <p>Lack of a comprehensive policy framework on the promotion and enforcement of human rights, including strategies on human rights, non-discrimination and the protection of minorities.</p>
Main approaches to address challenges across all policy areas	<p>The EU accession process requires deep reforms in the areas of democracy, fundamental rights, the rule of law and public administration.</p> <p>Implementation of reforms in the public administration arena such as the development of the 2018-2022 strategic framework on public administration reform and the 2022 action plan (Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office, 2023) as well as the</p>

	<p>strengthening of the public financial management system. (European Commission, 2022).</p> <p>Measures in the area of public procurement such as amendments to the public procurement law, including anti-corruption provisions, and the adoption of by-laws on the procedure for awarding service contracts to ensure alignment with the 2014 EU Directives (European Commission, 2023).</p> <p>Appointment of missing judges.</p>
Social policy specific situation	
Significant social trends	<p>High rates of poverty, estimated at 20-26% by the World Bank following the COVID pandemic (World Bank, 2022).</p> <p>High unemployment rate, exceeding 16%, and low employment rate of only about 46% of the working age population. Youth unemployment is particularly high at about 36% and female labour participation rate is only 37% (World Bank, 2022).</p> <p>Large gender gap in the labour force, causing significant economic losses. Women are 21% less likely to be employed than men and wages for women are 9% lower than that of men (World Bank, 2022).</p> <p>Low labour productivity and high rates of informal employment at 26% with majority of informal employees having only primary education or less (World Bank, 2022).</p> <p>Over-reliance on remittances amounting to about 9% of GDP to bolster household income (World Bank, 2022).</p>
Key challenges specific to social policy	<p>To reduce the incidence of poverty, measures to create more jobs, especially for women and youth, need to be complemented by an effective social protection framework.</p> <p>Social protection spending is higher than average on account of high levels of spending on pensions, and veteran and civilian war victim benefits. Bosnia spends 12.3% of GDP on social protection benefits, however, the poverty impact and cost-effectiveness of social assistance programs are limited (World Bank, 2022).</p> <p>Non-contributory benefits like veteran and civilian war victim support are putting pressure on the national budget. Spending on assistance to war veterans represented 1.6% of the GDP and more than 61% of the total assistance spending.</p> <p>The social assistance system is fragmented; the ten cantons in the Federation have the authority to redefine the eligibility criteria. This decentralized structure creates administrative inefficiencies and results in different benefits across the cantons.</p> <p>A strengthened institutional framework would be required to improve the provision of social services for persons with disabilities, older persons and children.</p>

	<p>Pension adequacy is low and declining, while ageing of the population and outmigration limit the ability to support pensioners. Average pensions compared to average gross wages represent about 30% compared to about 40% for the other Western Balkan countries (World Bank, 2023).</p> <p>Relatively few resources are devoted to employment and labour market policies.</p>
Main approaches to address social policy challenges	<p>Reform of the education system to increase its links to the labor market (European Commission, 2021).</p> <p>Planned introduction of a Youth Guarantee Programme that is based on the EU model to help the inclusion of youth in the labor market.</p> <p>Implementation of a gender action plan to reduce the current gender gaps in employment and pay (Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018).</p> <p>Introduction of a standardized case management system for children, in both the FBiH and RS (World Bank, 2022)</p> <p>Adoption of a Law on Social Protection Institutions in FBiH, regulating the functioning of social care (FBiH Law on principles of social protection, 2016).</p> <p>Reform of the pension system in FBiH (World Bank, 2022) to strengthen the link between benefits and contributions and improve the long-run systemic adequacy of pensions, while maintaining the fiscal sustainability of the system, through tightened early retirement and disability pension rules.</p>
Target groups	<p>Unemployed persons especially women and youth</p> <p>Poor individuals</p> <p>War veterans and civilian victims of the war</p> <p>Persons with disabilities</p> <p>Pensioners</p> <p>Children</p>
Good practice	
Name of the good practice	Standardized Case Management tools for Centres for Social Welfare (CSWs)
Policy areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Social protection and social security
Description of the practice	Standardized case management tools for CSWs have been developed and Guidelines for Child Protection Case Management

	<p>have been rolled out in the 64 RS municipalities and the 10 Federation Cantons. The development of a uniform, standardized case management system for CSWs has improved the social services for children.</p>
Governance & funding	<p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the FBiH and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in the RS; Federation Cantons; CSWs Budgetary funds, technical support from UNICEF and SOS Children's Villages</p>
Innovation	<p>Implementation of a comprehensive approach, combining the introduction of a systematic tool for case management as well as capacity strengthening of social service workforce and care providers</p>
Challenges of implementation	<p>Social workers within CSWs are overloaded with a broad array of responsibilities, ranging from administration of social protection schemes to welfare issues for older persons, persons with disabilities and children.</p> <p>The quality functioning of child protection system and meeting the needs of children and families with children, is affected by the insufficient capacities of centres for social work / social protection services.</p> <p>The services currently provide focus primarily on financial and in-kind assistance and less on social work and foster care.</p> <p>Preventive services still need to be strengthened to reduce the number of children moving to foster care. This is particularly the case for the children with disabilities. More investment would be needed to de-institutionalize children through preventive care and reintegration efforts.</p>
Outcome(s) and impact	<p>Establishment of a sound system of foster care, with the adoption of relevant legislation and regulations, the professionalization of the social service workforce in foster care and education, and education and certification of foster parents.</p>
Main partner(s)/ stakeholders	<p>FBiH: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy RS: Ministry of Health and Social Protection Ombudsman for Children</p>
Contact	<p>FBiH: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Hamdije Cemerlica 2, Sarajevo.</p> <p>RS: Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Trg Republike Srpske: 1, 78000 Banja Luka</p>

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