



# Bosnia and Herzegovina: a 'phoenix rising from fire'



Archive of EC Delegation  
in Bosnia and Herzegovina

*Much of what was best about the former Yugoslav Federation could be found in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a rich multicultural, multi-ethnic milieu of cohabitation and tolerance in which people of all denominations prospered. Sarajevo, the capital and home of the 1984 Winter Olympics, epitomised this achievement: a skyline of minarets, Orthodox domes and Catholic spires set against a quasi-Alpine backdrop.*

*Unfortunately, the worst of what lay hidden beneath the surface of the old regime emerged, after its break-up, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there was a three-way ethnic struggle, with atrocities committed on all sides. The Sarajevo 'Survival guide' described life for the 'Sarajevo woman' during those years: 'She cuts wood, carries humanitarian aid, smaller canisters filled with water, does not visit a hairdresser nor a cosmetician. She is slim, and runs fast. Girls regularly visit the places where humanitarian aid is being distributed. They know the best aid-packages according to their numbers. They get up early to get water, visit cemeteries to collect wood, and greet new young refugees. Many wear golden and silver lilies as earrings, as pins, on necklaces.'<sup>(1)</sup>*

*Fortunately there has been enormous progress since the end of the civil war in 1995. Sarajevo, like the whole country, is rebuilding itself and the Old Town is now as new as ever, with its numerous cafes and atmospheric houses and mansions. Even the National Library, the most beautiful building of all Bosnia, is rising again, like a phoenix from fire.*

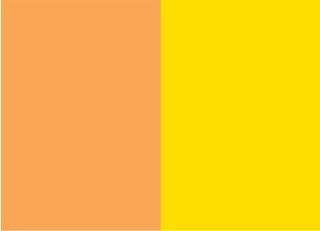
With widespread support, in particular from the EU

This regeneration of the country is the result of massive efforts from many quarters, not least of course the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who have shown great courage, persistence and good humour in the face of adversity. But beyond that, the main outside support and assistance comes from the European Union (EU), which has committed almost EUR 2.5 billion to Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1991. This assistance is intended to help Bosnia and Herzegovina continue its reconstruction and undergo transition into a modern, democratic society that is on its way towards the EU.

How is the European Union helping Bosnia and Herzegovina?

The EU's support for Bosnia and Herzegovina is centred on the stabilisation and association process (SAP), which was agreed in 1999; it offers Bosnia and Herzegovina (and the other four countries of the region) the clear prospect of EU integration and clear guidelines about how this can be achieved. At the Thessaloniki summit (June 2003), the stabilisation and association process was enriched with new instruments, inspired by the experience of the EU's recent enlargement.

<sup>(1)</sup> Used with permission. The Sarajevo 'Survival guide' was written between April 1992 and April 1993; it was part of a project by FAMA International, a Sarajevo-based media house.



The stabilisation and association process also provides a framework for EU assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The almost EUR 2.5 billion that the EU has contributed has been used to support the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote EU integration in many areas:

#### **Promoting democracy, social cohesion and development**

The EU supports two bodies in the country, the Constitutional Court and the Ombudsperson, which were set up to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. It also funds projects that promote the rule of law, respect for human rights, protection of minorities, and political pluralism via the European initiative for democracy and human rights.

#### **Institution building**

The EU is helping Bosnia and Herzegovina State institutions to strengthen governance, including drafting and implementing new laws, in particular in the fields of foreign trade and investment and commercial legislation. This is a critical area if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to acquire the necessary working structures and capacity to function as a country and to meet the challenges and opportunities offered by the stabilisation and association process.

#### **Economic regeneration and support for integration with the EU**

EU assistance is increasingly shifting towards support for sustainable economic development and preparing Bosnia and Herzegovina for EU integration by helping the country to create a single market in line with that of the EU. This also implies the strengthening of the market economy and development of private enterprise.

#### **Return of refugees and displaced persons**

The EU funds a comprehensive housing reconstruction programme covering all parts of the country: for instance, over 33000 houses have been rebuilt so far, along with health centres and schools and the revival of small businesses. The EU has also supported the sensitive and difficult process of restoring property to its rightful owners.

#### **Poverty alleviation**

The EU is supporting a number of local development initiatives to underpin economic revival and generate sustainable jobs in certain key regions (Brcko, Tuzla, eastern Republika Srpska, Posavina and western Herzegovina).

#### **Reconstruction of infrastructure**

The EU has helped with the reconstruction of both Mostar and Sarajevo, with programmes covering public buildings, houses, and water, energy and transport networks. The EU has also funded countrywide projects in the transport, telecommunications, energy, and water sectors as well as extensive de-mining and other programmes in support of returnees — an area in which the EU leads.



**CARDS allocation 2002-04  
(by priority sector)**



EU financial assistance provided through CARDS (Community assistance for reconstruction, development and stabilisation) underpins the objectives and mechanisms of the stabilisation and association process.

Priority sectors	Million EUR
Democratic stabilisation	50.0
Administrative capacity building	44.0
Justice and home affairs	58.0
Economic and social development	29.9
Environment, natural resources	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>199.9</b>

But there is still damage to be repaired

Despite the huge amount of work already undertaken, there still remains much to be done. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs first to become a self-sustaining State, able to meet the basic needs of its citizens by assuring them security, institutionalised freedom and economic well-being. Despite important advances, particularly in the last 18 months, this is not yet guaranteed. What is guaranteed, however, is that Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoys the EU's fullest support in this process. As European Commission President Romano Prodi said: 'No wall, no barrier must divide the Balkans. That would be unthinkable. We know only too well how much suffering such divides have caused. ... it is time to build bridges in the Balkans, not destroy them. To open borders, not to close them. To restore relations and trade links, not to sever them.' This is particularly important to Bosnia and Herzegovina and is the essential foundation of its future stability and prosperity.



Dejan Vekić



## Where can I find more information?

Further information on the EU's relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other countries of the western Balkans is available from the Commission's dedicated web-site:

**[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/index.htm)**

If you have a specific question concerning the European Commission's external relations policies, please e-mail the 'Relex feedback' mailbox through the following web address:

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