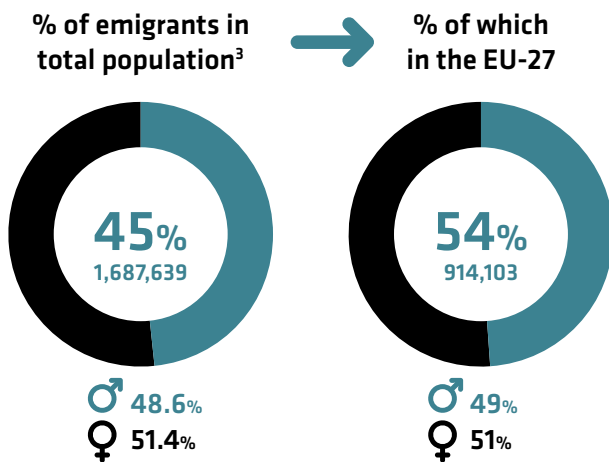


# Diaspora engagement mapping

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA<sup>1</sup>

### Facts & figures

#### Emigration<sup>2</sup>



**Remittances as a share of GDP: 10.1%**  
**Remittances inflow (USD billion): 2.4**

#### Top countries of destination<sup>4</sup>

Croatia	381,100
Serbia	342,526
Germany	221,720
Austria	168,798
Slovenia	122,235

#### Political rights



**Dual nationality<sup>5</sup>**



**Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>6</sup>**  
 at embassies/consulates or through postal vote<sup>7</sup>



Terminology: When the concept of diaspora is used to estimate its size, diaspora is defined as “population with Bosnia and Herzegovina origins living outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. However, policy documents describe diaspora as “population with Bosnia and Herzegovina (or Republika Srpska, in case of Republika Srpska strategy) origins living outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina and feeling attachment to Bosnia and Herzegovina (or Republika Srpska)”.

<sup>1</sup> This factsheet was produced under the ECONIDAS project, which examined diaspora engagement with the Western Balkans. The research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina focused on the engagement of its diaspora from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup> UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 (Destination and Origin). World Bank, Annual Remittances Data (Inflows), November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile 2020 estimates, based on combination of sources (above listed UN data being the main one), the total number of emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina is 1,804,991. The main difference to the UN data is the figure for the number of emigrants in Germany, which according to the German Statistical Office is 304,000.

<sup>4</sup> UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 (Destination and Origin).

<sup>5</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina has bilateral agreements on dual nationality signed with Croatia, Serbia and Sweden.

<sup>6</sup> Secured without restriction, with an obligation to register to the central voting list.

<sup>7</sup> Voting from abroad is also possible by visiting polling stations in municipalities of previous residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Election Day.

Draft 2019 Cooperation Strategy with the Emigrants of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2020-2024. The strategy follows the four goals namely (1) developing legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation with the diaspora, (2) involving the diaspora in the social development of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, (3) involving the diaspora in the economic development of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and (4) involving the diaspora youth in development policies of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2015** ● **2015 Strategy in the Area of Migration and Asylum for the Period 2016-2020**, is the latest comprehensive Strategy on migration, which also included one objective on emigration. Among its six objectives, Measure 6.2 of Objective 6 aims at “the improvement of legal and institutional framework that will contribute to the tracking of migration flows from Bosnia and Herzegovina and creating links between emigration resources and the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina”. Separate strategic documents on emigration were developed after this Strategy.
- 2017** ● **2017 Policy on Cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina Diaspora** is the first policy document on the Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora since independence. According to the Policy, its objective is “the establishment of long-term institutional co-operation with Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora and the maximum increase of its influence on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s development. At the same time, the vision is to communicate the clear commitment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions to assist emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in establishing comprehensive ties with their country”. The Policy is currently in effect until the adoption of 2019 draft **of the Cooperation Strategy with the Emigrants of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2020-2024**.
- 2019** ● **2019 Strategy on Cooperation with diaspora of Brcko District for 2020-2024** was developed with the support of the Diaspora4Development (D4D) project (see spotlight section) and follows the four strategic goals outlined in the 2019 Strategy on Cooperation Strategy with the Emigrants of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2020-2024 (see above), specified for the Brcko District.
- 2020** ● **2020 Strategic Plan on Cooperation with Republika Srpska Diaspora** is the Republika Srpska diaspora strategy, which is predominantly focused on “maintaining the national identity of the Republika Srpska diaspora abroad”. It also mentions attracting investments from “Serb diaspora members who acquired property abroad”.

### » Trends

The current Bosnia and Herzegovina policies on attracting diaspora contributions are strongly geared towards attracting more remittances and channelling the remittances to be used productively, while other diaspora potentials are somewhat underrepresented.

Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted its first policy document on diaspora in 2017, Policy on Cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina Diaspora, after years of discussions and as a compromise for an originally envisaged Diaspora Law. The policy balanced diverging interests in the country in terms of engaging the diaspora.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a draft Strategy on Cooperation with Diaspora for the period 2020-2024, which was initiated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) Diaspora for Development (D4D) in 2017. Initially the strategy was planned to be implemented at the state level, with a request by the Republika Srpska entity to have a "modular" approach i.e. to draft three entity level strategies that will then be combined into the country level framework strategy. However, the Republika Srpska entity eventually withdrew from the work on the strategy, although a modular approach was adopted.

Diaspora Offices have also been introduced at different levels, including in the Sarajevo canton and a number of municipalities.<sup>8</sup> However, in some cases, the drafted strategies seem to still have insufficient resources for implementation, according to recent research. Additional diaspora projects and activities continue to be implemented by international donors and civil society.



## Achievements

**Remittances:** Remittances play a central role as the main development contribution from the diaspora to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 2010, the annual inflows of remittances were about \$2 billion, which is around 11 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina's GDP. Remittances are often transmitted through informal channels, given the lack of specific initiatives to attract remittances and a number of obstacles to developing better international payment procedures.

**Investments:** For many years, diaspora investment was sporadic. However, since the launch of two projects (DiasporaInvest funded by USAID, and Diaspora4Development funded by the SDC, see below), the number of businesses started by diaspora has rapidly increased. There are various possible forms of diaspora contributions through investment. There are also a number of cases where diaspora members who worked for a company abroad opened a subsidiary in their country of origin, or cases where a company established by a diaspora member has been a support (or supplier) to a larger company abroad. This particularly applies to the IT and business process outsourcing sectors. It appears that global trends will support these types of investments regardless of diaspora support policies and mechanisms. However, a key area for future development would be to attract investment in other sectors important to Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as metallurgy, woodworking, agriculture or tourism.

**Skills transfer:** Several international donors and non-governmental organisations recognised the potential of diaspora members' skills and developed different skills transfer schemes (e.g. mentorship for PhD students, or trainers in STEM programmes). These initiatives have been particularly important in a situation of low access to quality education fostering human capital with up-to-date skills in relevant sectors.

**Networking:** Diaspora is increasingly participating in events organised in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including local meet-ups or business to business events. The willingness of diaspora members to invest their money, time and skills in Bosnia and Herzegovina indisputably exists. This has been confirmed by all previous studies on diaspora conducted on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>8</sup> The actual number is changing, but the most recent mapping done as part of this project in spring 2022 found that there were 32 municipalities with offices for diaspora.

## Obstacles



- **Low confidence in institutions:** Diaspora has low trust in government institutions and prefer to cooperate with non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main obstacle for diaspora's enhanced involvement is the lack of available channels for diaspora contributions and the lack of established cooperation from the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina). For example, many skills transfer schemes offered to universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were rejected due to the perceived threat of competition by staff in the country of origin.
- **Business environment barriers:** The diaspora survey implemented in order to develop the first Bosnia and Herzegovina Strategy on diaspora has shown that diaspora investors are not facing obstacles in starting their business any differently from other investors. Administrative barriers, government inefficiency and corruption have been noted by the diaspora as the key obstacles for efficient and sustainable diaspora investment. In addition, the lack of information about investment opportunities is also recognised as a business environment shortcoming that hinders diaspora investments.
- **Divisions among the diaspora:** Cooperation with a dispersed and not very well institutionally organised diaspora community is a big challenge. The Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora is rather spread across the world and does not have organisations representing a large enough number of diaspora members that would make implementation of cooperation between diaspora and country of origin governments less cumbersome. Moreover, even in cases where they are organised, they are often organised around ethnic communities, creating an additional layer of division and complicating cooperation further.

## SPOTLIGHT: Practices



### DiasporaInvest (2017 - 2022) and Diaspora4Development (2016-2021)

These are two larger-scale development projects, DiasporaInvest (DI) funded by USAID, and Diaspora4Development funded by the SDC. The former is a USD 6.2 (EUR 5,6) million project implemented in the period from April 3, 2017 through April 2022. The DI's purpose was to catalyse the economic contribution of Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora to foster the country's socio-economic development by engaging with the diaspora investors in a structured way, providing incentives for diaspora investment through matching grants and technical assistance to investors, and establishing local platforms for business services and investment facilitation. The latter project's second phase, which ran from December 2016 to December 2021 with a budget of CHF 4,83 (EUR 4,8) million, had a goal to increase socio-economic opportunities and perspectives for women and men in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to improve their livelihoods through increased diaspora engagement.

INVESTMENT

### Nasa Perspektiva 2019 - ongoing

Nasa Perspektiva, a local NGO from Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been supported by the DiasporaInvest project to establish a one-stop shop that provides various administrative, legal, market research and consultancy services to potential and actual investors from Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora. It also organises diaspora conferences and business-to-business events to connect diaspora investors and businesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

INVESTMENT

## InQuire 2020 – ongoing

InQuire is a training and mentorship programme by Bosnia and Herzegovina diaspora academics for PhD students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The programme offers a 25-week training in research methods and ongoing mentoring support by matching researchers and scholars from Bosnia and Herzegovina working in leading research institutes abroad with students enrolled in PhD programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is implemented by a research institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CREDI) and offers participants the opportunity of employment after completion of the programme. As such, it is a skills transfer scheme that also contributes to reducing emigration of highly skilled people by offering further education and employment of researchers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who would otherwise need to emigrate to pursue such a career.

SKILLS  
TRANSFER

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