



The Directorate
for European Integration
*Assisting BiH on
its path towards
EU membership*





BH MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2014

ISBN 978-92-824-2740-8



OC-80-10-322-EN-C



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ISBN 978-92-824-2740-8

doi 10.2860/22325

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Printed by:

AMOS GRAF d.o.o., Sarajevo

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Dear readers

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the new edition of Teme magazine. In the time since the last issue, the EUFOR team has continued a number of tasks.

One of those tasks is to continue our busy programme of helping to train the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH). These forces are indeed much more than just an army, as demonstrated, in the best way, during the spring floods that afflicted the whole country this year. Not only do they support BiH efforts towards peace and stability, and fulfill their international obligations through missions abroad, but they have the potential to be capable, with all their resources, to protect and provide assistance to civil authorities during natural disasters. After the exercise "Joint Effort", where EUFOR worked together with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as its intermediate reserve companies from Austria, Great Britain and Slovenia, EUFOR continues to develop its capacity building and training programme with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The goal is to create an effective army that in addition to conventional army roles, is also able, if required, to support BiH authorities in a humanitarian role in accordance with the principle of the "double use of forces." In that way, AFBiH will become even more skilled, and much more ready and capable to respond to all challenges awaiting them. This is a key element in BiH's changing role from a security consumer, to a security provider.

Autumn this year is of great importance to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it brings the elections and process of forming a government



Major General Dieter Heidecker

that represent a new opportunity for positive change. I think that in any democratic society, as well as in yours, every citizen has a responsibility to fulfill their civic duty and take the opportunity to participate in the creation of its own destiny. The international community and the European institutions are doing everything to help this country to become part of the European Union as quickly as possible, and I am confident that with the commitment of all, BiH can thrive. EUFOR will continue to provide strong support to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards Euro-Atlantic integration through our capacity building and training programme. And, you, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly young people, can surely be the driving force of BiH progress. As the future of the country, I urge you not to be passive, but on the contrary, to actively participate in the creation of your own future.

Yours Sincerely,

*Major General
Dieter Heidecker
Commander EUFOR*

Operation ALTHEA Commander visits BiH

The EUFOR Althea Operation Commander, and NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, visited BiH from 7-9 September 2014. During his two-day visit, after being

briefed by the EUFOR Commander, Major General Dieter Heidecker, on the progress of the mission, General Bradshaw first visited Banja Luka. There he was received by Major General Husein Tursunović at the Headquarters Support Command of the Armed Forces BiH, and briefed on topics like personnel, administration and logistics.

General Bradshaw also visited a LOT house in Banja Luka, before returning to HQ EUFOR for an update on EUFOR's capacity building and training programme, which was also attended by a delegation led by Major General Tepšić, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff of the AF BiH for Operations.



Exchange of experiences

EUFOR's British sub-unit and the Reconnaissance Company of Armed Forces BiH's 5th Brigade have carried out combined training on 26 August 2014 at Camp Eagle Base, Tuzla. The training program began with a presentation from the EUFOR soldiers, who spoke about their recent operational experiences in Afghanistan. Afterwards, members of Armed Forces BiH were shown the equipment of the EUFOR soldiers, which included medical support kits, weapons and vehicles. They then witnessed four vehicles being used on a simulated patrol, and were able to compare



and discuss their own procedures and tactics with EUFOR soldiers.

Drinking Water for flood affected areas



The Multinational Battalion of EUFOR transported 15 tons of water on behalf of the Red Cross from Pale to Sekovići. The town of Sekovići was severely affected by the floodings in May and June this year. "Upon the arrival of the convoy, the local population immediately helped us to unload the trucks and numerous people were there within minutes to get some water", the convoy commander, Captain Tiller said.

Meeting of the EUFOR Chief of Staff with the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies

The Director of the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies of BiH, Mirsad Vilić, and his deputies Uroš Pena and Mile Jurić, held a meeting on 31 July 2014 with EUFOR's Chief of Staff, Brigadier General András Szűcs. During the meeting they discussed the activities carried out in accordance with the „Memorandum of Understanding“ between EUFOR and BiH LEA's, concerning exchange of classified/unclassified informations and intelligence. At the meeting, next steps in the implementation of this Memorandum have been agreed. In addition Brigadier General Szűcs gave a brief overview of the activities undertaken during the recent floods in BiH and explained that the troops are here to



enhance existing EUFOR activities. This includes road reconnaissance with regard to bridge building projects, capacity building and training with Armed Forces BiH, and supporting LOT's in the interaction with the local authorities. EUFOR LOT's will continue to maintain regular contact with key representatives of the local community in order to accurately inform local authorities in BiH about EUFOR activities.

The EU Recovery Program for BiH

The Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina launched a Floods Recovery Programme worth Euro 43.52 million, out of which EU co-finances EUR 42.24 million to help affected communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Aiming to assist local communities in restoring normal living conditions and ensure help reaches those most vulnerable, this Programme will be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNDP) until October 2015. The funds will be used for restoring public



services and infrastructure, supporting housing rehabilitation for the most vulnerable groups, and revitalizing livelihoods. The EU Delegation to BiH remains committed to assisting people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in overcoming the effects of the May 2014 floods.

EUFOR Medical Team trains EU personnel

EUFOR's medical team, from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, recently conducted medical training for a number of personnel from the EU Delegation and EU Special Representative's Offices.

The training took place at the end of September and was led by Major Irena Dinova, who joined EUFOR from the Regional Medical Training Centre in Skopje, where she is chief. She was assisted by Staff Sergeant



Class 1 Sinisha Petkoski and Corporal Naser Salju. "It was pleasure for me to perform this training. I am very glad that we have good cooperation with the EUSR, that the Medical team members could provide with knowledge on how to perform a first medical aid in case when need it", said Major Dinova.



PSOTC

Peace Support Operations Training Centre



Contributing to global security

The Peace Support Operations Training Centre was initiated in July 2001, as an international project with 18 partners led by the United Kingdom. The Centre was established to provide professional military education and PSO training for the Armed Forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (AF BiH) and other international attendees, and also to promote the benefits of inter-entity co-operation and assist Bosnia-Herzegovina in preparing for operations abroad.

After a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) had been signed, the first Peace Support Operations (PSO) Staff Course started on the 7th February 2005. This date is also considered to be PSOTC's birthday.

The idea from the beginning was to transfer the Centre to BiH ownership, and this transfer of authority took place in December 2012. Since then, the PSOTC has been fully integrated into AF BiH and as such sits within the AF BiH Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).

After two years of existence, the PSOTC became a NATO Partnership Training and Education Centre in 2007. And two years later, it was nominated as one of the Regional Training Centres. Its courses received a Certificate of Training in United Nations PSO (COTIPSO) in 2011 and the UN Police officers' course was accredited by UN in its first iteration in 2012.

PSOTC courses range from PSO related courses for officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), to wider security courses related to gender, Security Sector Reform and building integrity. Five PSOTC

courses are NATO accredited (International Staff Officers Skills Course, Counterinsurgency Course, PSO Staff NCO Course, Building Integrity in PSO Course, Senior NCO Building Integrity Course) while the UN Police course is accredited by the United Nations (UN). The latest project on which PSOTC has been working together with UK Embassy in BiH is the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, for which PSOTC will develop a training package that will be delivered to AF BiH and the region.

PSOTC is staffed by a mix of AF BiH and international staff members. Currently, 38 local and 5 international staff members work in the Centre. The majority of them have experience serving in international missions, UN or NATO.

Promoting world peace

PSOTC's AF BiH members have served in all AF BiH international missions: UN missions in Ethiopia (UNMEE) and DR Congo (MONUSCO) and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Interestingly enough, PSOTC staff members were the first AF BiH members to deploy to ISAF in early 2009.

Proof that the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are capable of making a contribution for a safer world

Major Goran Stokić is Head of the Training Education Department in PSOTC and served as an operations officer with a Danish Battlegroup in Helmand province in 2009/2010. Serving in ISAF was a unique experience for him. "It puts you

to the test in every aspect both physically and psychologically. There are no places for mistakes because mistakes in that environment cost people's lives. You have to take your job seriously and make the maximum effort", he says, adding that this has been recognized by the Danish and other partners, with individuals and contingents from BiH being only praised for their performance.

"The culture in Afghanistan is amazing and sometimes difficult to grasp for a European. It is striking how people live in a harsh environment like this, and yet we see how generous they still are. They live by the codes established thousands of years ago and they are very proud of it", Major Stokic says.

Peacekeepers should be well prepared for different situations, because they have been exposed to various factors before, during, and after serving in a mission. That is why training and reintegration programs are of great importance.

"PSOTC follows the latest doctrinal and operational updates and incorporates them into our training programs. I can say without hesitation that officers and NCOs who go through PSO Staff courses in PSOTC can serve in any multinational mission and effectively contribute to it, thus presenting the AF BiH in a professional manner", Major Goran Stokić says.

Throughout peacekeeping missions, AF BiH soldiers play an active part in the international community

Major Robert Beljan is also one of the officers from the first AF BiH ISAF contingent who deployed with Danish troops in Helmand Province. Over a period of six months, Major Beljan was a staff officer in the Danish Battle Group Headquarters. Major Beljan reflects on this experience: "Although 2009 was a tough year in terms of the security situation, the opportunity to go to the ISAF mission, at that time, was not something to be refused. For the PSO instructor, operational experience is of huge



Major Goran Stokić in Afghanistan

importance, and the complexity of ISAF operations provided an opportunity to complement my UN experience from DR Congo with another perspective, this time with NATO."

From security consumer to security provider

Asked how it felt to be part of a military mission abroad, given that this country has also experienced war, and BiH military members are now the 'exporters of peace', Major Beljan answers: "The training with the Danish contingent was also a unique experience where we were the only international officers integrated within the Danish Headquarters. Our Danish colleagues welcomed us and were hugely appreciative of our past experience. Actually, some of them in the 90's were deployed to BiH as peacekeepers with UN and NATO, so we talked about their experience in BiH. This was an exceptional situation where we had to undergo a sudden change in our mindset: from security consumer to security provider. Once you are able to make that shift mentally, you can be sure that you will understand the needs of the local population much better than those who have not experienced conflict in their own country. This is indeed the main advantage of AF BiH contribution in PSOs."



Major Robert Beljan - UN experience from DR Congo

Lessons learnt from previous missions

“When comparing my two operational experiences, the one from DR Congo, where I worked as a UN Military Observer (UNMO) and ISAF, where I worked as staff officer, I must admit that the UNMO job was far more interesting since you were able to operate freely among the people. Although unarmed, UNMOs operate on a daily basis in the local community. This is a similar approach as that used by EUFOR LOT teams. On the other hand, during my ISAF mission, I was working as a desk officer with limited opportunity to interact with local community. However, working as a staff officer in Helmand Province, Regional Command South-West, required full concentration and I was engaged 24/7 in staff work. The knowledge and experience in terms of military staff work that I gained over my time in ISAF, allows me now to tackle any subject I might face as an instructor in the training center specialized for military staff training”, Major Beljan emphasizes.

“Our engagement gives hope...”

Being part of a military team in countries which, similar to BiH, have recently gone through the ordeal of conflict, led to an incredibly positive experience. The feeling of satisfaction from helping the local population was significant.

“Even though BiH is a small country, we were recognized wherever we went as AF BiH representatives. A lot of people still remember pictures from CNN and other news networks from the 90’s. Despite the fact that people in other countries, like DR Congo, Afghanistan or elsewhere face difficult situations in their own countries, they always ask if the situation in BiH is now calm. Our engagement in this particular crisis area gives hope that one day peace will come. I have always used my own experience to comfort people in these crisis areas and reassure them that peace will come to their home just like it did in BiH”, concludes Major Beljan.

The NGM Mission in Kandahar, Afghanistan Sergeant First Class (SFC) Nihad Makarević has been a member of the PSOTC staff since 2008.

Following 10 years of very successful cooperation and partnership with the National Guard of Maryland (NGM), 26 AF BiH soldiers were deployed to the first AF BiH combat mission in Kandahar, Afghanistan in January 2013, serving there for 8 months together with soldiers from US Army.

Sergeant Makarević explains that the selection of soldiers was done through the AF BiH chain of command, mainly focusing on capabilities to perform certain duties and their English

language skills. The training was conducted in BiH, in the USA and at US Army training centres in Germany. „Predeployment training itself was very mission oriented, very practical, and covered all situations we were likely to face in the area of operations. Of course, PSOTC played its part during predeployment in BiH by running a one week training course encompassing mission experience, counterinsurgency, cultural awareness and the planning process“, he says.

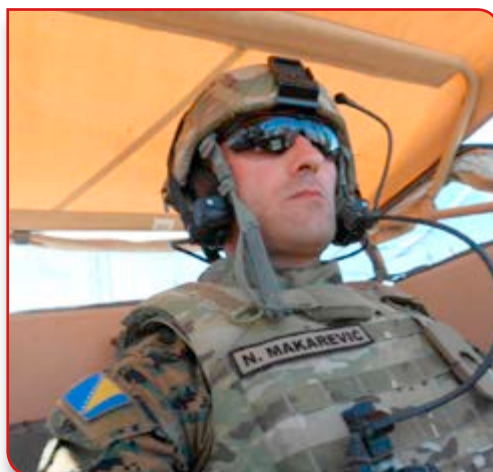
BiH soldiers are well trained and ready

In recent history, Kandahar District has been known to be a stronghold of insurgency in Afghanistan. By conducting counterinsurgency (COIN), and advising, training and partnering with the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces), we provided better security conditions, and better ANSF sustainability and prosperity for the populace of Kandahar.

“This combat mission in Kandahar has proved that BiH soldiers are capable of meeting NATO standards. Going on patrols and missions, being exposed to insurgency, partnering and operating with ANSF, and working in English with native speakers where a small mistake can cause huge consequences is proof that BiH soldiers are well trained and ready. Everything we learned and experienced in Kandahar will be incorporated into future training“, concludes Sergeant Makarević.



A moral responsibility towards the world



Sergeant Nihad Makarević

Sergeant Makarević remarks that the combat experience that he gained in the 90's war in BiH, and the fact that BiH was also receiving International security assistance, means that he and his colleagues strive to reach and operate to NATO standards. Their participation in NATO and UN missions makes them unique in the military world and depicts their commitment to contribute to BiH, and support the aspiration to join NATO.

Deployment to a peacekeeping mission is a challenge but a great personal experience

Thanks to the Peace Support Operations Training Centre, the participation of AF BiH soldiers in future missions is ensured. This center, co-located with EUFOR HQ at Camp Butmir, allows candidates to acquire certain skills and knowledge that will help them in performing their tasks. As well as establishing general stability in their state and the region, every army should be working to establish peace in other areas that need it. Their task is to provide help during natural disasters, and to plan, train and send troops on peace operations. It is time that BiH's AF become more involved in this process. It is a moral responsibility towards the world and the nations that have helped BiH in previous years too.

Assisting BiH on its path towards EU membership

The Directorate for European Integration (DEI) is a permanent, and expert body of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Directorate is responsible for coordination of the activities of BiH authorities and for supervision of the implementation of decisions made by the competent institutions in BiH concerning European integration requirements. It has a significant role in promoting and informing the public about what the integration process signifies and entails.



Mrs. Nevenka Savić

The Director of the Directorate for European Integration, Mrs Nevenka Savić, gave an interview to TEME. She explained the main role of the DEI, the challenges of the organization and the activities that DEI currently worked on. Despite a substantive progress in the past few years, she pointed to some political, social and economic requirements that remained outstanding.

What is the purpose of the Directorate of European Integration within the Government of BiH and what are its tasks?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: The Directorate is a permanent, expert body of the Council of Ministers, which, in a nutshell, coordinates the activities of BiH institutions in conjunction with integration into the EU. The Directorate, amongst other things, provides opinions on the compliance of state level legislation with the *acquis* and acts as a secretariat of the BiH structure for monitoring the implementation of the Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters between BiH and the EU. It also drafts reports, analyses and information for the BiH Council of Ministers regarding the obligations stemming from the integration process. It trains civil servants at all levels to acquire skills relevant for the process, develops and promotes EU accession related terminology and informs the public about the accession process. DEI

is a national contact point for the EU institutions and its Director is also the national coordinator for IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance).

What are the most important activities/projects that DEI currently works on?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: Given that the Directorate is a professional, coordinating body for the process of integration into the EU, most of its activities are regular and periodic, and much less project-oriented. With that in mind, all of these activities are equally important in their own way. The planning of IPA assistance for 2014 has recently been completed and the planning of IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme is in its final phase. The BiH applications for the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) have also been prepared. Together with partners from the neighbouring countries, the Directorate develops operational plans for cross-border cooperation projects financed by the IPA funds. The Directorate facilitates regular meetings of EU-BiH joint bodies for monitoring the Interim Agreement and reports on the implementation of obligations in the process. It provides guidelines for translators in the area of European integration, actively participates in a regional network of experts in the field of EU accession, prepares new training programmes for civil servants, and maintains an intensive communication with the public through new media and social networks.

In the period 2014 – 2020, 620 million EUR are to be allocated to BiH by the EU. Who can access these funds and how are they managed?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: The new EU budget period from 2014 to 2020, includes a new approach with regard to the flexible use of pre-accession assistance. It is no longer possible to calculate in advance the allocation amounts for each year for the beneficiary country as was the case in the past seven years. Countries that are successful in the use of assistance will be able to receive increased funding. During the preparation of the draft BiH Country Strategy Paper for IPA II, the European Commission announced that BiH could count on the annual amount of EUR 80-100 million of IPA II funds, if certain requirements were met. Given that the requirements (effective coordination and the existence of country-wide sector strategies) were not met, the European Commission has planned significant restrictions of funds from IPA II in the proposal of the Country Strategy Paper. Indicative figures for the first four years of IPA II are EUR 40 million in 2014, EUR 41 million in 2015, 43 in 2016 and 44 in 2017. The amount of EUR 15 million has already been reallocated from the 2014 funds to remedy the consequences of the May floods in BiH, and the remaining amount of EUR of 23 million is planned for IPA 2014 national package. The IPA beneficiaries will include public institutions and bodies in the sectors which, under the provisions of IPA II Regulation, have

developed their strategies. Under this rule, BiH cannot count on the IPA assistance in the areas of agriculture, transport and environment, which are very important sectors with high costs of infrastructure investments, as long as BiH has not developed the sector strategies. When it comes to the management of assistance, BiH remains in a centralized (direct) system, which implies that the procurement procedures, contracting, disbursement and monitoring of IPA projects are still conducted by the EU Delegation in BiH.

The last attempt by Mr. Füle (the Commissioner responsible for enlargement) to help BiH authorities to reach a consensus over the Sejdić-Finci ruling has failed. Does that mean that there is no hope of an EU application for the rest of this year?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: The conditions under which BiH can submit a credible application for the EU membership are defined in the Roadmap from the first meeting of the High Level Dialogue on the EU Accession Process held between the highest representatives of BiH and the EU in June 2012 in Brussels. These conditions include harmonization of the BiH Constitution with the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the context of the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the Sejdić and Finci case and the establishment of an effective mechanism of coordination in the integration process.

Since then, one or the other condition has been reiterated from time to time. The latest conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council concerning BiH noted that the primary focus should be on the socio-economic structural reforms in the context of EU integration whereas the BiH leadership after the October elections would be expected to address the challenges in connection with the mentioned ruling. Hence, regardless of the shifted focus, the conditions for the credible EU membership application were neither withdrawn nor changed.



In addition, the response to the recent devastating floods affecting Bosnia and Herzegovina temporarily diverted, as expected, the attention of the decision-makers from the EU accession challenges.

In your opinion, is there any way for BiH politicians to agree on the important issues for the better of this country and its people?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: I believe there is a way, as the highest decision-making level in BiH has repeatedly proven. Let us recall the numerous and very demanding conditions for visa liberalization, which were fulfilled in a short period of time to the great benefit of BiH. Where there is a will, there is a way, as they say. It cannot be disputed that there is a will, but the question of implementation is obviously deeper and more complex in nature.

Do you think it would be simpler to launch a process of the country's European integration created specifically to suit BiH, so that the process of the country's integration with the EU could start?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: This year, there were many public discussions and statements suggesting that BiH needed a special approach in terms of EU integration. The proposals made by Commissioner Füle regarding prioritization and focus of the process and those of Croatian Minister Pusić about separation of the technical dimension of integration from political dimension are even characterized as a "new approach" of the EU. However, in the context of initiatives of Commissioner Füle, this is something that the European Commission presented in the Enlargement Strategy 2013-2014 concerning not only BiH, but the entire region. The focus was placed on economic reforms, the fight against corruption and organized crime and infrastructure investments and their connection with the membership criteria and the resources made available by the EU, primarily the pre-accession assistance. In addition, the European officials presented the initiatives and proposals of the

Union which will, in their words, not lower the bar for BiH, but instead will help BiH to jump over it

Do you think that the EU should provide more efficient and faster assistance in dealing with the difficult economic situation in BiH?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: The EU assistance that BiH can use is related to the fulfilment of the membership criteria. In the previous 2007-2013 budget period of the EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a beneficiary of pre-accession assistance aimed at transition and strengthening of administrative capacity, and cross-border cooperation. To mitigate the recent global economic crisis, BiH was also the beneficiary of infrastructure projects, though the primary purpose of such assistance was not a revitalization of BiH economy. It is the task of local government, primarily through the creation of a favourable investment climate and planning for sustainable growth based on the potential available in BiH. I believe that clear EU rules and procedures, a strong partnership with the European Commission, primarily in determining priorities, and good coordination in planning, are essential for effective use of assistance. After the floods that affected BiH and a part of the region in May, the EU responded with swift rescue measures, followed by disbursement of funds from annual allocations, including those for 2014, to remedy the consequences. However, to make the funds operational, the mechanisms had to be engaged which could facilitate prompt administrative and financial transfers, as in the case of BiH UNDP.

When do you see BiH being part of the European Union?

Mrs. Nevenka Savić: I have been asked this question in almost all interviews. Integration into the EU is the result of individual efforts of each country and therefore it is difficult to say when something will happen that is unpredictable. For example, Austria waited 13 months for EU membership, but it took 12 years to Portugal. I will give you the only objective answer: BiH will be a part of the EU when it meets the criteria for membership.

A Compact for Growth and Jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Renzo Daviddi, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina

In late May this year, the “Forum for Prosperity and Jobs” brought together representatives of government, business and workers, along with international and domestic economic experts and BiH citizens who have insights on running businesses and creating jobs. The conference proposed concrete and urgent measures that can tackle unemployment and corruption, restore the flow of investment into BiH jobs and make the social protection system fairer and more efficient.



These proposals have now been developed into a “Compact for Growth and Jobs”, a practical agenda that will be recommended to BiH legislators and policymakers in the

coming months with a view to implementation immediately after the new authorities are formed following the October elections.

The Compact lists six priority reform measures:

1. High taxes on wages are driving people into the grey economy and undermining the social unity that is necessary to pay for social services. The grey economy does not generate revenue (pay taxes) but people employed in it enjoy services (i.e., health care) that are paid with taxpayer money. Therefore, taxes on working need to be cut, and this will require savings on government spending
2. Laws that protect workers with jobs are making it impossible to hire people without jobs. Too much regulation is preventing young people from getting access to employment. Therefore, labour laws and regulations need to be reformed.

3. BiH has one of the most complicated business environments in the world and it is steadily getting worse. As a result, there is virtually no investment, neither domestic nor foreign. The business environment needs to be simplified and red tape needs to be cut across the board (as other countries have done).
4. Many old enterprises are barely surviving and rely on help from the state (that raises taxes on others to provide them with subsidies). This is not a sensible policy for future growth. Instead, old enterprises need to *face competition, and either restructure or face the prospect of closure* so that new enterprises can take their place.
5. Corruption acts as a serious barrier to investment and undermines growth and social policies. And corruption thrives on complicated regulations and fees that officials can offer to resolve or get around. There needs to be a drive to reduce regulation and to make the remaining procedures clearer to and open to the scrutiny of the public.
6. Social security needs to go to those people who really need help. Instead, many people who are not poor have privileged access to benefits and this puts an unfair burden on working people as well as on those who need help.



This is an agenda for practical action which is non-partisan and which can be implemented quickly. It could change the economic prospects of hundreds of thousands of families in Bosnia

and Herzegovina and at the same time bring the country closer to European Union membership – by preparing BiH companies to compete in the EU single market. Policymakers, businesspeople, academics, unions, employers and NGOs have all come together to produce an agenda for change. The question now is whether it can be transformed into government policy after the next election.

Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Employment Office – A Gateway to Work Experience

Finding a job – busting the myths!

There is a general consensus among the people in BiH that unemployment is the major problem in the country. It has been the decades long “challenge” not only for young graduates, but also for people with many years of professional service. One must keep abreast of global market trends and the increasing requirements. Being in possession of a high school or college diploma, being fully conversant in at least one world language and being computer literate is no longer enough. Employers seek to hire qualified, communicative, cooperative persons, ready to meet any challenge, who show potential for professional development, and who have new creative ideas. The candidate age limit is gradually lowering and people above 35, regardless of their level of expertise, have a harder time landing a job. The rare vacancies released through mass media give a long list of required skills and requirements to be met in the face of stiff competition.

Furthermore, there are a large number of employers who do not register their recruits, and workers are forced into accepting unregistered employment in order to provide for themselves and their families, while their earnings remain irregular and inappropriate. On the other hand, we must be realistic: BiH is a country that for many years has been undergoing a period of structural reforms, fight against corruption, and a lacklustre economy. This is exactly why this country needs all of its people, all its skilled and intellectual assets to kick start the economy and **create the preconditions for quicker European integration.**

To learn more about employment prospects in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNK), we sent a number of queries to Mr. Vlado Čuljak, Director of the Central Employment Office of HNK, who kindly accepted our invitation for an interview.



Mr. Čuljak Vlado - Work experience opens the door to the labor market to young people and makes them more competitive

One of the reasons, why we have chosen this cantonal office is the fact that many young people employed by the agency of this employment office is significantly higher than in other employment offices.

Vlado Čuljak: The employment office of HNK is a public institution, established by the Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. Our business is geared towards the promotion of employment. We do this through a variety of activities, such as: employment mediation, monitoring and briefing of unemployed people, the implementation of an active employment policy, vocational training and retraining, education of people on their legal rights on the basis of temporary unemployment, informing interested parties about the current employment situation and the right to work.

TEME: How many people are unemployed in your Canton, and how many in the whole of the BiH Federation?

Vlado Čuljak: At the end of June, according to the canton employment office evidence, there were about 387.405 unemployed people, including 32.938 people in the area of the HNK. Of that total number

of unemployed people, 21,7% people have been waiting for a job for one year, and over 21,5% have been waiting for a job for more than nine years. People under 30 years old make up 30,9% of the total number of registered unemployed people in the canton, and every fourth person recorded is over 50 years old. 40% of unemployed are searching for a job for the first time. However, on the other hand, we also hear the voices of the businessmen telling us how difficult is to find good working staff.

TEME: So, what's the problem?

Vlado Čuljak: Each year, the Employment Service of the HNK surveys the labor market. The last available data showed that 33% of surveyed employers expressed the need for workers. They expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of qualifications relating to professional knowledge and skills of candidates with whom they worked, namely: the lack of practical work during studies, the problem that qualifications acquired by candidates do not match the real needs of the job, the lack of general knowledge, the lack of knowledge of specific skills, no foreign language skill, few social and organizational skills and lack of knowledge of entrepreneurship.

TEME: Does this mean that the education system does not give unemployed people enough to perform successfully in their job?

Vlado Čuljak: Exactly so. The content of education and the quality is very important, as is monitoring trends and developments in the economy and the inclusion of this information within the curriculum.



The only possible way to achieve this is by close cooperation between business and education sectors to develop curricula and determine enrolment quotas.

One of the tools that is also useful in balancing supply and demand in the labor market is career guidance. The Employment Office of the HNK delivers professional briefs to high school seniors on the state of the labor market, and provides information to students about the possibilities of further education and employment. We do not have enough human resources to get into all the classes, and we rely on the staff at schools to transfer the information provided to them, and give the opportunity to students to come to our office for us to give them individual information and guidance.

These activities, which take place annually, are not enough. It's also desirable to be present from the beginning of students' education and to monitor the development of each individual student's interests and abilities. Also, it is necessary to include both parents and students in the process. We are aware that parents are the ones who, in most cases, directly influence the choice of future profession of their child.

TEME: What professions are currently most in demand? What are the latest economic indicators?

Vlado Čuljak: Poor information about the state of the labor market and employment opportunities, and a lack of familiarity or misconception of some occupations, can cause a huge demand for application for some popular "occupation", while some other occupation, which may have more potential when it comes to employment opportunities, will remain unjustly neglected.

The problem of education not meeting the needs of the market is complex, and in order to solve it, the active involvement all stakeholders is required, together with the willingness to compromise and fundamentally change attitudes.



Our labor market is no different from any other in the world: (un-)employment reflects the situation in the country throughout social, economic and political levels. Conditions for beginning and maintaining new businesses could surely be better, but by multisectoral collaboration it can still be achieved.

TEME: What are the programs and strategies of the Employment office?

Vlado Čuljak: Our office, in cooperation with the Federal Employment Service, implements co-financed employment programs. These programs are designed for employers who need to hire new staff, and through these programs we also provide financial assistance during the first few months of employment. This way, we enable people to acquire the necessary work experience. The programs are strongly supported by employers, especially programs that help young people to get their first job.

TEME: Will cooperation with educational institutions take place in the future, dependent on labor market demands?

Vlado Čuljak: Education and learning in order to succeed in a labor market does not end by acquiring vocational education, though many young people fall into this trap. It is necessary to pay attention to the concept of lifelong learning. Western trends, to which we strive, show a large fluctuation in the working life of a person in relation to his occupations and skill requirements. In our environment, this awareness of the need and possibility of continuous improvement and learning has not been developed

According to the Office for Employment, there are currently some 150,600 people unemployed in the Republic of Srpska.

When looking at the lists of required occupations at the RS Employment Office, it is evident that a large number of financial professionals, economists, lawyers and school teachers are not in demand. Then, there are economic and machine technicians, occupations in the field of metalwork, mechanics and machinists, while the most wanted are the fitters, welders and construction workers.

Amongst educated people, the most sought after are the electrical technicians, energy experts and trade technicians; also people in the education profession, specifically physics and maths teachers, along with teachers of chemistry, biology, the German language and information technology. Last year the demand for electrical engineers and health workers (especially doctors and surgeons) was recorded as well.

In the BiH Offices for Employment in late June of this year, there were 548,307 unemployed people recorded (385,253 in the Federation, 150,601 in the Republic of Srpska, and 12,453 in Brčko District). Of the total number of persons seeking for employment, 276,744, or 50.47%, are women.

yet in sufficient quantity. The fact is that the absence of an adult education act/law certainly does not contribute to the positive development of this field. The legal framework should enable the formalization of non-formal education, to enable the development of short educational programs or modules that could be used by unemployed people to meet their needs, and those of potential employers. Such educational opportunities would bridge the gap during the period of adjustment from 'regular' education, and would also allow educational institutions to modernize their operations and create a new range of services.



Recruitment of young officers

Today, as a large percentage of unemployed young people are registered with employment offices throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, a good job opportunity lies within the military. Getting a job that ensures regular pay, a secure contract, training and career advancement is the dream of every young person in this country. So, it is an attractive option for all those who are unemployed, or students who have just graduated.

Although a large number of young people have decided to leave the country because of high unemployment, some have not given up and their professional potential was recognized within the military, as soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers.

The opportunity showed up when BiH Ministry of Defence and Joint Staffs decided to open the process of recruitment for thirty young civilian

graduates to be trained as Armed Forces infantry platoon commanders. After several months of combined work between the BiH MoD, British Embassy and NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo, working on the design, planning and preparation of the new system selection, training, and education, the competitive recruitment of young officers began. Together, they developed a very tough, merit-based officer selection process that takes place in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Čapljina.

Cadets from all ethnic backgrounds

The importance of the officer candidate training course is huge, as it brings together young cadets from all ethnic backgrounds. Through several days of different training courses, the young girls and boys were tested in different ways, checking their skills (physical and psychological), their strengths, and also their weaknesses too. More than 200 candidates applied to the competition, and only the very best progressed to the final stage.

Young people showed their motivation and desire to become officers because they knew very well that it could offer them an opportunity for continuous development and formation of their military professional capabilities in the future. This initiative from the BiH MoD and AF was a great success in the context of a very important defense reform. Working closely together with the British Embassy and UK MoD, and NATO Headquarters Sarajevo, with this new selection and training programme, the BiH AF will train many excellent young officer cadets.

The new selection process took place over several days, during which the volunteer candidates were tested over a wide range of physical, academic and intellectual tasks designed to identify leadership potential. This process has been adapted for BiH use from similar systems currently used in a number of NATO countries.

Those with the highest scores will be selected for additional 44 week long basic officer training courses. The UK's Royal Academy Sandhurst has offered to provide advice and guidance on the further development of this training.

All of the candidates want to become officers because they think that it is not a type of profession where one stagnates, but instead continuously professionally develops in all segments, physical, psychological and professional. Each candidate was given a combined score reflecting the overall



performance. "To be an officer is a great honor for me. Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to be a part of the military environment. Discipline, moral and honor are great virtues and I want to observe those virtues in life, which I can do through this profession", says one of the candidates. Knowing how difficult it would be to pass all the training, some have been preparing themselves for a long time, and scored top in some competitions. As they say, they certainly see themselves as future officers, otherwise they wouldn't be here.

The anonymity of the candidates protected them and ensured they are assessed fairly throughout. "It is an incredible feeling, you don't think about being tired or anything else. My biggest motivation is that there are no differences, you are a soldier, and this is maybe the only institution where one is not allowed to display those differences. We are all the same here, one uniform, and this is the most important thing for me".





Minister Zekerijah Osmić visits the young cadets

Among numerous candidates, there were only eight selected girls. It was difficult for them, because they were judged equally against boys, so for most of them it was a tough fight. "It is a great experience for any girl. It was more difficult than I expected, but I am happy with my achievement, especially to see how able and strong I am. We didn't have any preferential treatment and that was an additional motivation for us. I consider myself very privileged to be among all these candidates", says one of the girls who made it to the final stage.

The young men and women selected on merit

UK Defense Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Rob Tomlinson, praised the BiH Ministry of Defense, Joint Staffs and, specifically the Commander of Support Command, Major General Tursunović, who is responsible for implementing these new changes. "The newly recruited officer cadets represent the very best that this country has to offer. They come from all parts of BiH and have been

selected, entirely on merit, to train together and to serve their country. I am particularly impressed that the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces are demonstrating that they are both willing and able to reduce the risk of corruption in their selection processes", said Lieutenant Colonel Tomlinson.

"I had no doubt that we would make it, with the will of applicants, and their positive competitive spirit. I want to congratulate to the candidates, TRADOC (training and doctrine) Commander, instructors who have been taking care of these young people, I have only words of praise for them", says Major General Husein Tursunović.

Some of the AF BiH instructors, who conducted the training process, noticed that all cadets were very motivated and willing and interested in getting selected to become an officer in the Army. The selection relied on their qualities, leadership capabilities, their assessment at the test and how they develop further and potentially how they develop as officers.

A demanding selection program



A positive experience

Candidates had a tough and very demanding selection program. Everyone of them is justifiably proud of what they have achieved and for many these selection days will be for them a life changing experience. Anyone who believes that they could make it, is recommended to apply and test their leadership capabilities, how to command a team, and to see what kind of knowledge is important for this profession.

A new generation of military leaders trained to the highest standards

In the future, the selection process will be continually improved and repeated each year in order to replace the hundreds of BiH officers who will be retiring over the coming years. Rejuvenating the officer corps with young leaders, selected from both the civilian sector and from the ranks of serving soldiers and non-commissioned officers, is essential for the future of the BiH Armed Forces. Besides all of that, it is also a great chance for those young university graduates and professionally qualified people to get a job, and to improve their quality of life in this country.



EUFOR's British Sub-Unit

Approximately 100 British soldiers arrived in BiH at the beginning of June with the aim of enhancing existing EUFOR capabilities and activities.

The troops, whose home base is in Norfolk, England, have been assisting the capacity building and training programme of the Armed Forces BiH,

improving situational awareness, and improving the interoperability of the Armed Forces BiH in peace support operations.

The troops use a number of British Army vehicles which were initially the source of some public and media interest. However, the vehicles, known as Jackal, Coyote and Panther vehicles, were not specially selected for use in BiH, and are just the standard vehicle operated by this unit wherever they are in the world. Existing members of EUFOR were given the opportunity to meet the new British soldiers and see their equipment.

Tasks to date

The sub-unit has been involved in a huge variety of tasks since their arrival in country. While the first week was spent on induction briefings and local area familiarization, it wasn't long before they received their first task from EUFOR.



Working together for the common good



The first task was to transport 1500kg of medicine from Sarajevo Airport to Pale. The request came in from the Ministry of Security via the UNDP, and the British sub-unit was well equipped to carry out the job, moving all of the medicine to a medical stores distribution warehouse within the day.

The troops have also carried out a large number of route reconnaissance activities, which were particularly useful following the heavy rain in August, and have engaged with a large number of key leaders (including mayors and police chiefs) throughout BiH.

At the end of August, the sub-unit also carried out some joint training with the Armed Forces BiH at Camp Eagle, Tuzla. The training programme began with a presentation from the EUFOR soldiers, who spoke about their recent operational experiences in Afghanistan. Afterwards, members of Armed Forces BiH were shown the equipment of the EUFOR soldiers, which included medical support kits, weapons and vehicles.

They then witnessed four vehicles being used on a simulated patrol, and were able to compare and discuss their own procedures and tactics with EUFOR soldiers.



Lieutenant Harry Geaves, the EUFOR Troop Commander, said at the time, "This has been a fantastic opportunity for us to share experiences with the Armed Forces BiH, and exchange knowledge and information in both directions. I've been really impressed with the knowledge and professionalism of the Armed Forces BiH and hope we can work together again in the future."

The sub-unit will be based in BiH until approximately December 2014, when they will then return to their home base to await further deployment.

“Arming with knowledge”

– Capacity Building & Training for the Armed Forces of BiH

Interview with the Colonel Hakan Aplak, the Deputy Chief of Staff of EUFOR

As a part of the EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Capacity Building and Training Division is to provide the BiH authorities with military expertise and technical support in the areas of CB&T, by training, mentoring, monitoring and advising the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces BiH throughout their command structure.

Colonel Hakan Aplak (Turkish Army) is the Deputy Chief of Staff of EUFOR and he is responsible for the support to the BiH Armed Forces through the Capacity Building and Training programme. We asked him to explain his work.

Why does EUFOR support the AFBiH?

Colonel Aplak: It is common knowledge that a modern army these days faces various challenges, nationally and internationally. International crises in our globalized world need an international response. A single state wouldn't be able to counteract a crisis with an international dimension. Armed Forces must therefore be able to work with each other. And as any other organization, this must be learned. It begins with simple things such as being able to speak with each other (language skills) and ends with the complex procedures that a big organization needs to go through to fulfill its tasks. In simple words, the more similar the methods of doing things are, the



Colonel Hakan Aplak, the Deputy Chief of Staff of EUFOR

more efficiently people can work together. We call that “interoperable capability”.

While cooperation in international crisis management might seem far away from people living in a peaceful country, natural disasters are not. The AFBiH proved the need in this case to support BiH citizens during the recent flooding. The double use of military forces to assist the civil authorities helped significantly. However, there is always room for improvement. Through its Capacity Building and Training programme, EUFOR aims to develop the Armed Forces of BiH to create an army capable of contributing to international crisis management as well as protecting their people, especially in disaster relief. A well trained and well equipped army is the only force a state has when all its other organizations are overwhelmed.”

What is the aim of the CB&T programme?

Colonel Aplak: "Capacity Building and Training is the main effort of EUFOR. Because of this, EUFOR has established a special division. The main goal of this organization, consisting of around 80 personnel, is to assist the AFBiH in achieving the capability to set up its own self-sustainable training system to develop an army of international standard. We provide BiH authorities with military expertise and technical support in the areas of CB&T as agreed between BiH and European Union. Believe me, a lot of knowledge as well as a proper organizational structure is needed to do this. EUFOR fully supports the AFBiH's effort. We are trying to "arm with knowledge". We monitor, mentor and advise the Ministry of Defence of BiH and the AFBiH through the command structure, in close coordination with NATO.

How does the CB&T programme work?

Colonel Aplak: It all starts with the identification of training needs. This is done together with the AFBiH. After identifying what skills need to be learnt, we determine timings and resources to

execute the training. We develop a training plan for every year, the so called "Capacity Building and Training Calendar". The first draft of the calendar for 2015 was just recently signed by the AFBiH. After the Training Assessment Conference with AFBiH scheduled for 4-5 November this year, the training plan will be finalised and we will ask EUFOR's troop contributing nations to send specialists to Bosnia and Herzegovina to train selected army personnel.

What do the soldiers of the Armed Forces learn?

Colonel Aplak: During the training the participants not only learn how to do things themselves but also learn how to teach others. In short we "Train the Trainers" with Mobile Teams from abroad. After this initial education we support these trainers when they begin to teach their students. We monitor the courses and give the trainers feedback on what was good and what could have been done better.

As well as the Mobile Teams for special training we also have so called "Embedded Advisory Teams". These teams are permanently implemented into the command structure of all levels (Joint Staff, Operational Command, Support Command and Brigade Headquarters) of the AFBiH. They advise the different staffs on military procedures according to international standards.

A large organization like the army requires clearly defined processes to work effectively. EUFOR's Embedded Advisory Teams consist of military experts and their experience should help to develop effective procedures.

As the CB&T Division, we are aware of the importance of our mission. We feel the responsibility on our shoulders.

With close coordination and cooperation with AFBiH, NATO and Troop Contribution Nations we are trying to compile all efforts related to training to enhance AFBiH capacities and capabilities.



Engineers of AFBiH and EUFOR discuss the plans for the bridge in Dokanj



EUFOR and the Armed Forces Build Bridges in BiH

Through the joint efforts of Norway, EUFOR's MTT, Armed Forces of BiH, UNDP, Tuzla Municipality, the bridges could be reconstructed

EUFOR and AF (AF BiH) in the Municipality of Tuzla rebuilt bridges that were destroyed during the floods. The reconstruction of the two bridges ensures that 350 households have regained access to their properties and the rest of the municipality, and enabled farmers to access their agricultural land. This common action done by the Municipality of Tuzla and the EUFOR's MTT engineering team was an opportunity to train AF BiH personnel in bridges reconstruction.

To bringing back normality to the citizens lives – with the assistance of the Embassy of Norway

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has procured the associated materials thanks to funding from Norway, which supports flood relief in this municipality. The Norwegian Embassy, represented by Ms. Anne Havnør, Deputy Head of Mission, participated in the opening of two bridges in Solina and Brđani. She emphasized the contribution of Norway to flood relief and support during the emergency, as well as for the recovery phase. Ms. Havnør especially remarked that important work has been done by the UN, and the



Ms. Anne Havnør participated in the opening of two reconstructed bridges in the Tuzla Municipality

The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo donated approximately 1.000.000 KM for support to flooded areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina





Commander EUFOR, Major General Dieter Heidecker, during the ceremony with other representatives

UNDP in BiH, and added that Norwegian support to local communities will be continued. UNDP is running a multi-million USD Floods Recovery Programme called “Today for us” which addresses immediate community needs after the floods, including the reconstruction of basic community infrastructure.

“The opening of the bridges is as the result of our common work. We started during our disaster relief mission “Joint Effort”, when we started to plan and to train for this job. I am happy to see the results today. It was a combined effort between the EUFOR Austrian Mobile Training Team, the Staff organization of EUFOR and the AF BiH, Ministry, Chief of General Staff and their engineers. It should be a starting point for future missions, following the theme of double use of forces for the benefit of the population”, said Major General Heidecker.



Major General Anto Jeleč, Minister of Defense Žekerijah Osmić and Commander EUFOR Major General Dieter Heidecker hand over a letter of appreciation to First Lt Fuchs, member of the EUFOR Mobile Training Team (engineers) from Austria



The first version of EUFOR's 2015 Capacity Building and training (CB&T) Calendar was recently signed by Major General Mirko Tepšić, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff of AF BiH for Operations, and Brigadier General András Szücs, Chief of Staff of EUFOR. The signing of the calendar is an important milestone in the development of Armed Forces BiH. The 2015 CB&T Calendar is developed together with Armed Forces BiH, with the process beginning in November 2013 at the Assessment Conference, where previous CB&T activity was reviewed. This was followed by the Road Map Agreement in March 2014 which contained an agreement on what support EUFOR shall deliver in 2015. The detailed planning for each area was then further developed and has now been incorporated in the 2015 CB&T Calendar. The final version will be signed in December 2015.



Major General Mirko Tepšić, and Brigadier General András Szücs signing the CB&T Calendar

EUFOR instructs **Armed Forces BiH (AFBiH)** personnel and **members of the Mostar and Zenica Mountain Rescue Teams**

Staff of the Armed Forces of BiH and Mountain Rescue Teams from Mostar and Zenica, recently attended week-long training courses organized by EUFOR. The courses began with theoretical training in the classroom, and afterwards the participants took part in practical exercises as well.

The positive experiences gained during these training, were explained by members of the AF BiH demining battalion, soldier Selma Hasaničević, and Captain Miodrag Janjić.

"During the execution of the exercise, we simulated access to the minefield by air and winched the injured person vertically. In this way, we have demonstrated the highest level of skill and efficiency. We have already enjoyed good cooperation with members of EUFOR earlier this year, during the floods. Every course that enables our further development is significant for us. This training is very good, especially when delivered by people with enormous experience, like the members of EUFOR", said Captain Janjić. Soldier Selma Hasaničević, the only female in the demining



Demining battalion of the AF BiH training



The access to the minefield by air

team, said that this kind of training is very useful for both sides and represents a mutual exchange of experiences.

Successful completion of the course will enable AF BiH attendees to quickly and efficiently rescue an injured person, whilst minimizing the risk to the rescuer.

Chief of the Mountain Rescue Service (MRS) - Cell Mostar, Džemal Ćesir and Ermin Skender, a member of MRS - Cell Zenica, confirmed the importance of mastering the latest rescue techniques in the context of possible engagement in the event of natural or other disasters. Their colleagues were being trained on a separate course, designed to enhance their ability to winch injured personnel into helicopters. While most of EUFOR's training programme is designed for AF BiH, cooperation with life-saving civil authorities is also extremely beneficial.

EUFOR's capacity building and training programme is designed primarily to ensure that AF BiH have the skills to deploy and positively contribute to international missions abroad and humanitarian assistance at home.

EUFOR Commander, Major General Dieter Heidecker, recalled that EUFOR's mandate in BiH is based on two key tasks – an executive one, referring to support the law enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina in providing a safe and secure environment and a non-executive, which includes capacity building and training of the armed forces.

"The purpose of this information campaign is to show to the general public in BiH our efforts in the field of education and training of the AF BiH. The purpose of the capacity building and training campaign, that was launched today, is to promote the good work that is being done between EUFOR and the Armed Forces of BiH, to show they are being trained to international standards and



The valuable role of the Mountain Rescue Teams during the natural disasters



Mountains rescue teams from Zenica and Mostar

continue to grow in ability", said the Major General Heidecker.

EUFOR Commander also underlined that the second segment of the training concerns of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC). As an example of this, the General cited the successful operation during the floods that hit BiH in May.



A touching testimony of medieval Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Radimlja necropolis - one of the most valuable monuments of the medieval period in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bogomils

In Bulgaria in the 10th century, the traveling preacher called Bogumil - "Dear to the God" – founded a new religious doctrine under the reign of King Peter. This religion, inspired by Christianity, found many followers amongst poor farmers who were tired of continuous warfare and under the heavy rule of feudal lords.

They were hopeful of a more humane and just society, inspired by the original themes of the Bible. Like Jesus Christ, they are also called to love and respect fellow human beings, in order to save their souls, and have moral purity, temperance and humility.

Their religion is "dualistic", as human existence is reflected through constant confrontation between good and evil. Evil Kingdom is on earth, as it is under the control and influence of evil. For the salvation of soul and for its peace, you have to rise above this world with asceticism and spirituality.

Bogomils considered the feudalism and the dogmas of the Catholic Church as corrupt, and it was therefore rejected by them. The emergence

of the Bogomil dualistic heresy was the result of protests against the Church's system, which used the concept of God as a means by which its followers were kept obedient. But it was also a protest against the state government, from which the Christian Church received support. This religion, which was an easy way to express discontent from the existing social order, was spreading quickly in Bulgaria.

Between the 11th and 12th centuries, when the country was under the rule of the Byzantine Empire (1018-1185), there was religion. Bogomils criticized the feudal class and the Greek Orthodox Church of Constantinople, which led to an open resistance of peasants against the invaders.

In the early 11th century, the sect was accused of heresy and became a victim of the first wave of persecution. Car Alexis 1st enslaved a large number of Bogomils in Constantinople, among them their most famous preacher doctor Basil, who would later be burned in public in the imperial city square. This was the first execution in a series of many that followed for the crime of heresy.

However, Bogomilism appeared to be spreading across Bulgaria and reaching out to Asia Minor. Convicted of heresy by the Catholic Church, persecuted and in constant battle with the state authorities, Bogomil's teachings resisted all attacks, and spread to the Balkans and further to the West in the following centuries.

In 1250, the Inquisition produced information on the existence of six Bogomil churches: Slavonia's (Bogomil Church in Bosnia), the Latin and Greek churches from Constantinople, in Asia Minor, in Bulgaria and the Dragovička church.

During the reign of Ban Kulin (1139), Bogomilism, although not adopted as a state religion, was protected and accepted. After that, a small number of Bogomils survived until the mid-15th century, and the doctrine remained even without institutions and churches.

A strict lifestyle was not imposed to believers. But a small group of preachers, so called 'the Perfect', who were at the forefront of some communities, adopted a strict way of life (they were not married and ate only bread, fruit and vegetables). These communities were made up mostly of farmers and poor people, attracted by the sermons which condemn violence, as well as secular and religious representatives.

Magnificent tombstones

Some followers accepted the ideal of asceticism modeled by their predecessors, but were married, and didn't abandon their families despite the traveling preaching. Persecuted by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, due to heresy, this doctrine never had a significant number of followers, and in 1463, with the Turkish invasion, completely disappeared.

Photo Radimlja: In Stolac, on the road between Mostar and Trebinje, in a place known as Radimlja, there is a huge necropolis, which is attributed to the cult of Bogomils. These tombstones are carved



A cultural phenomenon of BiH

on all four sides, and are decorated with various ornaments and descriptions:

- Anthropomorphic carvings (depicting an armed man with a raised right hand, his palm widely open in a sign of peace, sometimes in the company of subjects or women whose position is shown in a lower sketch; hunters with bows, men or women, who dance in long dresses).
- Zoomorphic design (depicting horses and deer on the move).

Christian symbols, crosses and swords are displayed with the tip facing down. There are also floral motifs everywhere celebrating nature and life: the tree of life, clover, and vineyards with bunches of grapes. Five of these gravestones have inscriptions written in Old Slavonic and Cyrillic letters, eroded over time.

The tombstones, in the quiet and bright light, are surrounded by cypress trees above which the mountains rise, representing not only an extremely valuable legacy, but also a touching testimony of medieval Bosnia (and Herzegovina).

Share your thoughts, add a comment, we want to hear from you!



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