Migration and Development

Linking migration to development in BiH has emerged into a broader concept of Migration and Development. In international documents this concept stands as one of the key pillars for creating migration policy at the national, regional and global level. Major multilateral mechanisms that recommend linking migration and development in the countries of origin include the first and second High Level Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on International Migration and Development (2006 and 2013), the recommendations arising from the Prague Process, launched in 2009 through the adoption of the Joint Declaration on Building Migration Partnerships at the Ministerial Conference in Prague; the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility of the EU - GAMM (2011), the UN Declaration on International Migration and Mobility, adopted in 2013 by the UN General Assembly, and the recommendations of the Global Forum on Migration and Development that brings together government representatives from 150 UN Member States.

The recommendations that these documents make to the countries of origin of migrants include the incorporation of migrant resources into national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies; strengthening the development potential of migrant remittances, through appropriate measures such as reducing the cost of transfers and ensuring easier access to financial products (loans, etc.) and services. They also recommend retention of the highly qualified within the country of origin as well as incentives for the return of migrants. The latter includes temporary and virtual return and brain circulation, encouraging migrants to assist in development by placing savings and investing in their country of origin and their involvement in transnational knowledge networks.

An increasing number of countries of origin have developed appropriate documents and elaborated mechanisms that allow for linking migration and development by facilitating the use of their financial, human and social resources for the development of the country. Good results in this area have been achieved in Moldova, Ireland, Mexico, the Philippines, India, Tunisia and Jamaica.

Most of BiH’s neighbouring countries have already taken a series of measures to link the resources of their diaspora to their own national development. Croatia places emphasis on mobilising educated and professional Croatian migrant staff, while Serbia focuses on the inclusion of its diaspora in the economic development of local communities, remittances and the return of diaspora professionals.

Our goal

To pursue further engagement in policy-making and other activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina that foster certain outcomes.

• The permanent or temporary return of BiH experts from abroad.
• The creation of a virtual network of knowledge.
• Investment by BiH migrants in BiH.
• Development of a programme of Brain Return to BiH.
• Development of a programme for linking remittances and savings of BiH migrants to the development of BiH.
• Raising awareness on the importance and possible role for BiH migrants in the development of the country.
• Development of a programme for the involvement of prominent Bosnian and Herzegovinian migrants in the process of BiH accession to the EU.
• Organisation of mother tongue summer schools for children and young people from the BiH diaspora.
• The establishment of student exchange programmes between the diaspora and BiH.
• Practical training for students of BiH origin at institutions and companies in BiH.
• Improvement of the quality and organisation of mother tongue courses abroad.
• Organisation of vocational, professional and other events for BiH migrants.
• Organisation of activities on the preservation of the cultural identity of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina for BiH migrants.
• Continuous improvement of the quality and dissemination of information for migrants.
• Improvement of communication with the diaspora.
• The development of regional cooperation.

Where to reach us

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Migration from Bosnia and Herzegovina

- According to the number of migrants in relation to its population, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the leading country in Europe and seventh in the world when it comes to migrants with around two million.
- Migrants from BiH live on all continents. The largest number (over 80%) is in Europe, followed by the USA (7%), Canada (6%), Australia (5%), and Serbia and Croatia are not included in this estimate. The average age of migrants from BiH in Europe is 41 and 30 in the United States; hence, the age structure of BiH migration centres on the most economically active population. Migrants from Bosnian and Herzegovina are well integrated into their host countries and the percentage of employment and inclusion in the education system is higher for BiH migrants than for most other migrant communities.
- Migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina represent huge human potential, comprising a considerable number of highly educated professional people successful in different areas.
- The highest percentage of highly educated migrants in the United States, Australia and the Scandinavian countries.
- Great economic potential for Bosnia and Herzegovina rests in its diaspora, as confirmed by the steady and stable inflow of remittances from migrants abroad: in recent years this has amounted to 2 to 3 billion BAM or roughly 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Although no separate data is kept on investments made by the BiH diaspora, the BiH government has resolved their status in their host country by acquiring citizenship, Serbia and Croatia are not included in this estimate. The project “BiH Diaspora in Switzerland: Profile and Possible Contributions to Development” aims to create a clearer picture of the structure and potential of the diaspora in Switzerland. Through this it aims to give greater impetus to the contribution of the diaspora.

Sector for Diaspora within the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the competencies for migration are at the state level. The Law on Ministries and Other Government Authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina defines that the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MoHRR) is the institution in charge of policy-making towards migrants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ministry has a Sector for Diaspora, which is a small sector comprising a total of ten employees in two departments: the Department for Status related Issues and Informing Migrants, and the Department for Economic, Education, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation.

What we do

- We are involved in the drafting of legislation and strategic development documents in areas important to migrants and the inclusion of migrants in development.
- We report regularly to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the state of play in terms of migration and the possibilities that exist for using diaspora resources for the development of BiH and suggest measures to improve the situation in this area.
- We monitor the situation of migrants from BiH and issues relevant to their status in their host country and homeland.
- We continuously collect a range of information on migrants from BiH, which is presented largely in several publications on migration that are printed and published online in a format and thus make such information available to all interested stakeholders.
- We collect data on migrants with PhDs, entrepreneurs, writers and migrants who are successful in different areas around the globe and establish contact with them.
- We collect data on migrant organisations and from the media.
- We prepare the section on migration for the annual Migration Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- We support academic research in the field of migration from BiH (two research workshops were organised on migration from BiH with a special focus on the link to development).
- We aim to further regional cooperation in the field of migration/emigration and development.
- We support local community and NGO projects in the field of migration and development through the allocation of grants.
- We support activities by individuals and/or organisations on the transfer of knowledge from the diaspora to BiH.
- We organise promotional events for writers from the diaspora at the International Book Fair in Sarajevo.
- We organise practical training for students from the diaspora from BiH.
- We provide continuous information for migrants directly through the sector website or via Facebook or other forms of communication.
- We work to improve cooperation with organisations and individuals from the diaspora.
- We have produced several publications on the diaspora including the Who’s Who in BiH Diaspora - PhDs and Research Workers (two publications in 2009 and 2010) and the Who’s Who in BiH Diaspora-Writers. Others include a Business Directory of the Diaspora, a Directory of organisations, associations and clubs of BiH diaspora and an Overview of the Situation of BiH Migrants (two publications in 2008 and 2014). In addition there was the Proceedings of the Workshop on Migration from BiH, the Proceedings of the Workshop on Migration and Development, Migration and Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Success Stories, and Diaspora and Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Research and Recommendations). All publications along with numerous other documents in electronic format are available on the website of the sector.

Migration and Development in BiH

Guided by the recommendations of international documents and best practice in other countries as well as the fact that the country has a sizable human, economic and social capital in its diaspora, BiH has already taken the first steps towards the inclusion of migrants in development. Some of the most important results in this area are described below.

- Following a proposal by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MoHRR), the Council of Ministers of BiH adopted a number of conclusions related to linking migrant resources to development in the country.
- The migration and development concept has been included in national strategic documents: the Country Migration Strategy, the Social Inclusion Strategy and the Migration and Asylum Strategy 2012-2015.
- In order to strengthen cooperation development with migrants, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MoHRR) has earmarked marks for municipalities and NGOs in support of implementation of the BiH Migration and Asylum Strategy.
- Several projects have been launched within the framework of the Migration Partnership between BiH and Switzerland, financed by the Government of Switzerland.

The project “Migration and Development: Mainstreaming the Concept of Migration and Development into Relevant Policies, Plans and Activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” has introduced the concept of migration and development into local development strategies in 10 municipalities. The project plans to strengthen the capacities of other stakeholders for development cooperation with the diaspora and will prepare recommendations for linking migration with development in BiH.

The project “BiH Diaspora in Switzerland: Profile and Possible Contributions to Development” aims to create a clearer picture of the structure and potential of the diaspora in Switzerland. Through this it aims to give greater impetus to the contribution of the diaspora.

The project “Research Workshop on Migration from BiH” was held in 2013 in order to strengthen academic research on migration and its links to development in BiH. A second workshop of this type was held in 2014, within the framework of the project “Migration and Development: Mainstreaming the Concept of Migration and Development into Relevant Policies, Plans and Activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”