

OSCE Mission to BiH, OHR, US Embassy, UK Embassy and EU and EUSR urge all institutions to make prevention of corruption integral part of fight against COVID-19



The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office of the High Representative, the U.S. Embassy in BiH, British Embassy in Sarajevo, the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU Special Representative note the introduction of a number of measures by the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) aimed at combating and preventing the spread of COVID-19, and also alleviating its negative socio-economic impacts.

While swift measures are necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19, measures must also be proportionate, lawful, and transparent. Governments must also take measures to minimize the risks of corruption by avoiding duplicative or uncoordinated action, which can increase opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse. Corruption has the potential to undermine efforts to combat the virus and could considerably erode public trust and confidence in the conduct of

authorities in BiH at a time when this is most needed.

In order to ensure that public trust is preserved, all emergency response measures should be taken in a fair, accountable, verifiable and transparent manner. To this end, it is critical that institutions in BiH invest significant efforts to conduct emergency public procurement procedures, in line with the applicable legislation in order to prevent any misuse of such procedures. This is particularly relevant for procurement in the health sector, but also in all other sectors adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. It is similarly vital that any potential misuse of external emergency assistance be avoided, particularly by ensuring transparency and accountability in all distribution processes.

It is crucial that institutions in BiH include a clear anti-corruption perspective when devising such measures. The OSCE Mission to BiH, the Office of the High Representative, the U.S. Embassy in BiH, British Embassy in Sarajevo, the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU Special Representative reiterate their support for BiH authorities in addressing COVID-19 pandemic and urge all BiH executive structures and their anti-corruption teams to develop plans for minimizing corruption risks, and calls for the inclusion of clear anti-corruption safeguards for all public interventions both now, and in the aftermath of COVID-19.