

Executive Summary

**2018-2023 External Evaluation of the Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia and Climate Programmes (funded by the German Foreign Office and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation) of the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation's Office in Sarajevo**

Evaluator: Vera Devine

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## List of Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (German Foreign Office)
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMZ	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEE	Centar za Ekologiju i Energiju/Centre for Ecology and Energy
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HBF	Heinrich-Böll-Foundation
IPE	Institute for Political Ecology
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung
MK	North Macedonia
OHR	Office of the High Representative
REIC	Regional Education and Information Centre
SOC	Sarajevo Open Centre
SDSM	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
ToR	Terms of Reference
VMRO–DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This report presents the findings of an external evaluation of the Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and North Macedonia (MK) 2018-2023 country programmes and the Climate programme of the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation (HBF), implemented by the foundation's office in Sarajevo, and funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and the German Foreign Office (AA).

### Political Framework Conditions

The programme contexts in BiH and MK are very different: while MK ceded from Yugoslavia in a largely non-violent way, BiH's political governance set-up, brought about by the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), is the direct result of the 1991-1995 wars, and which has also resulted in a protracted and invasive presence of the international community accompanied by aid dependency. The DPA has been credited with establishing and maintaining peace. But it has also cemented ethnic divisions, and ethnicity now permeates every aspect of the operation of the state: ethnicity is the determining parameter for membership in the major political parties, and which, in turn, control and distribute the country's administrative resources, including jobs in public institutions. At the time of the evaluation (autumn 2022), confidence in the political system and its ability to affect deep reforms had been eroded, *inter alia* leading to an exodus in particular of young people from the country, and to a palpable level of exhaustion, disappointment, and resignation of activists, including HBF partners.

MK, in the programme period, has been governed by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), which, after the 2017 political crisis, ended the almost decade-long rule of Nikola Gruevski's Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). However, the SDSM's promises of deep governance and institutional reforms with view to NATO and EU membership, and its pledges to decisively tackle corruption and organised crime did not materialise. This led to SDSM's poor election results in 2021, and to a re-emergence of VMRO-DPMNE as a dominant political force, along with another surge in ethno-nationalist sentiments fuelled by falsified historical narratives, as well as the emergence of right-wing, illiberal actors, including an "anti-gender movement." Dashed hopes in the SDSM have led to a deep disappointment among liberal forces, including HBF partners and, similar to BiH, they report resignation and fatigue, as well as a deep fragmentation of civil society.

### Methodology

The evaluation was conducted between October 2022 and January 2023, and responds to the evaluation questions of the Terms of Reference, which were adjusted and rearranged into an Evaluation Matrix. The evaluator adopted a three-pronged approach, combining desk review of documentation, including HBF's social media presence; in-depth internal and external stakeholder interviews; and synthesis of findings. She also used the opportunity to observe cooperation activities where this was possible to arrange within the evaluation schedule.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Observation of a Women in Politics Conference in Sarajevo and discussions, on the margins, with 6 participants; a farmers' market facilitated through a cooperation with HBF in Lukavac/Tuzla in October 2022; participation in an arts performance in Skopje/MK in November 2022.

## Findings

### Organisational set-up

The HBF Office in Sarajevo oversees the implementation of the country programmes in BiH and MK, as well as part of the BMZ Climate programme. Owing to the differences in the budget size, the majority of the programme's activities take place in BiH, while the portfolio in MK is considerably smaller, although relatively stable with, on average, 8 cooperations or own initiatives per year.

Human resources allocations correspond to 9.5 full-time positions; at present, due to one staff member being on parental leave, these are temporarily used to an equivalent of 9 full-time positions, as follows: 3 full-time programme coordinators; 1 programme coordinator with partial (50%) responsibility for general office management/secretarial tasks; 1 temporarily full-time project assistant (this will revert to a part-time position on return of the programme coordinator currently on parental leave); 2 financial coordinators; and 1 technical/logistical assistant/driver; and the office director. The office has the possibility of accommodating one programme intern annually, for a three to six months-period each; given capacity constraints, this position is filled on an irregular basis. Since early 2021, the office is headed by Judith Brand, who took over from Marion Kraske, who occupied the post from 2016 onwards.

The MK country programme is managed remotely (i.e. there is no staff present in MK); given the counter-intuitively complex itinerary involved in getting from Sarajevo to Skopje, this is a challenge both in terms of human resources as well as the environmental impact each trip to meet HBF partners or to conduct own activities entails.

There were a number of issues staff have expressed some disquiet about. A recurring issue was the lack of career development and advancement options—while there was acknowledgement that, to some extent, this was in the nature of a country office in an organisation that does not practice rotation of staff, a number of ideas were floated: these included the potential for short placements in other HBF offices or in the head office in Berlin, and which could lead to a greater sense of belonging to the organisation. Staff also feel that where formal career options were limited, there should be a progressive pay scale that acknowledges the cumulative professional experience/seniority of staff. Adjusting salaries to the rate of inflation and acknowledging the cost of living crisis, staff found that this was insufficiently taken into account and they would welcome a discussion on this issue with the head office in Berlin.

The HBF programme is working with a good variety of partners—a mixture between historical, long-standing partners on the one hand, and newer partners on the other hand. There is a clear desire to identify potential new partners, in particular in locations outside Sarajevo, where the landscape is considered to be well explored and where there is a feeling of fatigue and lack of dynamism to affect change, and the foundation is ready to take risks in terms of working with partners that might be at an early stage of organisational development and thus, lack initial capacity.

Partners are overwhelmingly positive about their working relations with their HBF counterparts. They value the consultation mechanisms they are involved in on an annual basis through HBF's gathering and strategic discussions with all partners; and in particular the fact that the discussions are at peer-level, and where partners' own strategic priorities are respected and supported. Partners have also consistently highlighted the high level of support and quality of the intellectual exchange with their HBF counterparts.

## The programme

The BiH and the MK programme have two components, each – these have been adjusted at the mid-term juncture of the current programming period. The BiH programme and the Climate programme are funded by BMZ, while the MK programme is funded by the AA.

### BMZ - BiH programme

#### Component A – Democracy and Human Rights

2018-2020	2021-2023
<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> Democratic and rule of law processes are continued, in particular with view to the internal political situation in BiH and in terms of a continuation of the EU integration processes.</p> <p>A1 In BiH, alternative actors, in particular women, are encouraged to form informal networks for strategic discussions and to support each other, in order to initiate democratic changes.</p> <p>A 2: Discriminated against persons and groups are strengthened so that their experiences and/or demands can be part of the public discourse. They link up with political and legislative actors to articulate the gap between legislation and implementation in the area of anti-discrimination.</p> <p>A3: Alternative actors are identified and included in independent research and develop regional debates on historical narratives which are free from ethno-nationalism.</p>	<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> Democratic processes are continued, in particular with view to gender democracy. The deconstruction of nationalist paradigms is intensified.</p> <p>A1: Smaller NGOs, regional groups, individuals and activists are strengthened, and use the new strategic approaches (alliances, gender strategies) to establish countermodels to ethnonationalism and patriarchal structures.</p> <p>A2: Alternative actors and young experts are strengthened and involved in historical research and discourses and develop regional debate as a counter-current to anti-democratic and revisionist narratives.</p>

#### Component B: Green Transition and Environmental Policy

2018-2020	2021 – 2023
<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> The programme contributes to the development of an open, inclusive environment which creates space for citizen participation in order to enable a socio-ecologic transition in society and economy.</p> <p>B1: A coalition of civil actors, scientist and entrepreneurs discusses, develops and transmits/communicates practical and political situation, which include gender-sensitive aspects of the green transition of the economy and society in BiH.</p>	<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> The idea of green transition has been introduced in BiH in support of a just and environmentally conscious society.</p> <p>B1: A Coalition of civil society actors, scientist and entrepreneurs discussed, develops and communicates practical and political situation, which also include gender-sensitive aspects for green transition in BiH.</p>

### BMZ Regional Climate Programme

BMZ Programme Proposal 2016-2018	BMZ Programme Proposal 2019 - 2021	BMZ Programme Proposal 2022-2024
Climate policy as an impetus for modernisation in East and Southeast Europe	Climate policy as an impetus for modernisation	Climate policy as an impetus for modernisation

<p><u>Component A:</u> Transparency and climate protection in energy policy and the energy industry</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> A structure of institutions organised at both the local and national levels develops elements of an energy policy in line with the objectives of European climate policy and identifies areas of activity with respect to the efficient use of renewable energy sources, as well as corresponding economic models.</p>	<p><u>Component A:</u> Strengthening of regional climate-political analysis and regional networks of actors</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> The programme contributes to the acceleration of socially just climate-political and energy-efficient modernisation in the Eastern European and South-East European region.</p>	<p><u>Component A:</u> Strengthening of regional climate-political analysis and regional networks of actors</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> The programme contributes to the acceleration of socially just and climate-political and energy-efficient modernisation in the in the Eastern European and South-East European region.</p>
<p><u>Component C:</u> Greenhouse gas reduction and mitigation impacts of climate change through development of ecological agriculture</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> Selected representatives of civil society, the media and decision makers are well informed about development scenarios for climate-friendly ecological agriculture and exert influence on the formation of a corresponding national agricultural policy in a manner which affects public opinion.</p>	<p><u>Component C:</u> Democratic energy transition</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> The programme contributes to the mainstreaming of climate aspects in economy, politics and society and to the improvement of the framework conditions for ambitious climate protection policy in BiH.</p>	<p><u>Component C:</u> Democratic energy transition</p> <p><u>Programme objective:</u> The programme strengthens the participation of citizens and local communities in an ambitious climate protection and energy transition policy in BiH.</p>

## AA - MK programme

### Component A: Democracy and Human Rights

2018 – 2020	2021 - 2023
<p><u>Overarching Objective:</u> Critical citizens introduce alternative societal models in order to establish a social and economically juster communal development.</p> <p>A1 Alternative forces are encouraged to build networks for strategic discussion and mutual support in order to act against anti-liberal nationalist narratives and thus initiate democratic changes.</p> <p>A2: Discriminated against persons and groups are strengthened so that they can contribute their experience to the public discourse. They link with political and legislative actors and thematise necessary improvements in legislation concerning anti-discrimination.</p>	<p><u>Overarching Objective:</u> Democratic values, in particular gender democracy, are central aspects of the EU integration process, and pro-democratic political and civil actors are strengthened.</p> <p>A1 Feminist and alternative forces enlarge their scope of action, advocating for green-orientated political solutions and boosting strategic alliances to overcome discriminative and nationalistic narratives, strengthening WB regional perspective into the mainstream.</p>

## Component B: Environmental Policy

2018-2020	2021 – 2023
<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> The development of an open, inclusive environment is supported which creates space for citizen participation, which facilitates a socio-ecological transition.</p> <p>B1: Civil society actors and interested participants increase their scope of action and in this way, reach decision-makers on specific environmental problems and challenges.</p>	<p><i>Overarching Objective:</i> The social and ecological modernisation of the North Macedonian economy is being publicly debated and considered necessary, and is being advanced through concrete proposals for environmental and energy policy.</p> <p>B1 Environmental and ecofeminist civil society organisations and activists develop and implement initiatives/solutions for socio-ecological transformation in local communities in area of environment and energy transition.</p>

### Relevance

The HBF's programme—as **spelled out in value-based objectives and translated into a balanced mix of cooperations and own initiatives with an apt choice of partners—is highly relevant** for both countries' contexts. However, the ambition level of the objectives, in the context of HBF's role and available resources, and against the specific backgrounds of BiH and MK, is too high. Both country programmes are characterised by strategic approaches—education on green issues seeks to reach the public across all countries, as HBF and its partners increasingly work outside the capital cities; these activities are complemented by cooperations with established and new cooperation partners around key green thematic strands.

While formally, the programme is divided into a “Human Rights and Democracy” and “Green Transition and Environmental Policy” component, staff is clear that this division is a construct that does not fully reflect the programmes' theory of change, and where **“Human Rights and Democracy” is the umbrella for all green values**, including those relating to the environment and climate change. Approaches and working methods are similar in both thematic areas and are, in their logic, highly inter-connected and include political education in the widest possible sense; and which champion locally relevant change models that will stimulate citizen interest and participation in policy and decision-making. While the results matrix pursued by the programme does not necessarily capture this, the connectedness is convincing in the programme itself, with its numerous linkages, at activity level, between the components.

HBF's “incubator” approach is highly **relevant for its partners**. It allows organisations to develop and test ideas—often inspired by intellectual input by HBF staff—that create ripple effects, and which spin off into bigger projects or efforts; there have been numerous examples identified by the evaluation, even if these are not formally well captured in HBF's own reporting. HBF cooperation also enables partners to carry out activities for which there often is no donor funding, such as strategic meetings of organisations' constituencies, as well as networking events—these meetings are important, not least in terms of moral support that participants receive. For the topic of “dealing with the past”—a central programme theme—HBF is, along a small number of mainly German organisations, one of the few partners to having consistently funded high-quality thematic work. Several partners, in both countries, have credited their institutional development and growth to initial HBF support.

Organisations have numerously pointed out that even if there were no financial support (and which is, in fact, often very small), they would seek to be associated with the foundation: partners stated that it was important to them to be “seen” with the foundation and to be associated with the foundation's values. HBF's relevance to some partners will increase with



the departure of some of the historically important donors from the region. This specifically concerns LGBTQI+ organisations from MK, as well as activist organisations in the area of environmental protection in BiH.

### Effectiveness

In terms of **effectiveness**, the evaluation identifies several key results. These include (but are not limited to):

**Gender democracy** is strong across the programme in both countries and both components A and B; in particular on the latter, the inclusion of ecofeminism into the objectives in the second half of the programme period has been visionary, and has been picked up by organisations in BiH and MK. There is a strong organic **connection between components A and B of the programme**.

HBF has been a reliable, trusted ally and partner to **LGBTQI+ organisations** in BiH and MK. In BiH, HBF contributed to the strengthening and consolidation of the Sarajevo Open Center (SOC) as the leading community organisation in the country. In MK, HBF support has been important to organisations such as Coalition Margins; here, the cooperation contributed to important changes in the 2019 Law on Anti-Discrimination (through the inclusion of discrimination on sexual and gender identity grounds). As historically important donors are departing from the Western Balkans region, HBF support to organisations such as Coalition Margins will be pivotal for their survival.

Alongside other smaller donors, **HBF is one of the few organisations in BiH, MK, and regionally, that support work on dealing with the past**, and which explicitly, through programme objectives and public statements, point to etho-nationalism and historic revisionism as significant threats to stability, reforms and a European integration path. Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of the continuity of this support, and the high quality of the activities and the cooperations supported by HBF.

**Air pollution** has been one of the flagship themes that HBF worked on, and has been one of the big results of the programme. Approaching the topic strategically (i.e. by thinking not in annual programming time frames, but rather in a medium-term horizon), and in cooperation with its partner Eko Akcija, a non-formal environmental activist group with an IT/programming background, HBF was able to raise the public profile of the topic. The development of an app was accompanied by a proactive, highly visible public campaign, which included HBF management. The topic has been picked up by other actors, including from the international community, but the impetus can clearly be attributed to HBF.

HBF has, through own initiatives in combination with results from cooperations with long-standing partners, initiated and **significantly shaped and set the agenda for a discourse and public agenda on environment, just energy transition, and climate change in BiH**, and has become a go-to resource for other actors. It has also fed the experience from local pilots into the debate on renewable energy use and has successfully introduced the concept of ecofeminism into the debate, and which is now taken forward by a number of its partners, in very different ways, including the women's organisation Horizonti and the Center for Ecology and Energy (CEE), both based in Tuzla.

In the programming period, HBF has successfully **contributed to coalition-building** among partners. HBF's **presence**—both through cooperation partners' activities and through own initiatives (in particular in BiH)—**in locations outside of the capitals has been deliberate, consistent, and convincing** and was able to generate ideas for new initiatives in the region.

Several partners, in both countries, have **credited their institutional development and growth to initial HBF support**.



## Sustainability

The prospects for **sustainability** are determined by numerous extraneous factors, i.e. that are outside the direct influence of HBF with its limited mandate and funding.

The greatest obstacle to sustainability of results in BiH (but also MK) is the deep disillusionment of society as a whole with the concept of “politics”, and which is associated with moral corruption of those involved in it. HBF’s partners are politically engaged in what are essentially non-party political settings (with exceptions in both BiH and MK), but also would not actually consider the move from the civil society sector to active party politics, not least because this is considered a one-way road: while a transition from civil society into politics is possible, it is perceived as irreversible (i.e. there would be no credible way back into civil society should a political path fail).

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

There is potential for discussion on how to further strengthen the work on stemming nationalist and revisionist historical narratives. MK stakeholders report that they would benefit from being linked up with the community around HistoryFest;<sup>2</sup> this would also be in the spirit of HBF’s objectives to network regionally. Some of the long-standing partners, including around the international theatre festival MESS,<sup>3</sup> should be encouraged (and expected) to share experiences and to mentor younger activists where a wish for this has been expressed. At the regional level, it would be useful to ascertain explicitly shared values around this subject with the colleagues from the HBF Office Belgrade.

Through cooperation with the School for Critical Thinking, HBF cooperates with one of the most significant opponents of ethnic divisions in BiH, and support to the Culture Centre Abrasevic<sup>4</sup> has included another important actor in deeply divided Mostar. A cooperation also took place with the Nansen Dialogue Centre. None of these cooperations has been without its issues, but Mostar remains one of the key divisive, hardline environments in the country, and the next programming period should explore how partners there can be further strengthened—this might require some level of compromise. Stakeholders specifically valued earlier public debates organised and facilitated by HBF, and would welcome a return of such activities. This, too, should be considered.

Stakeholders have variously expressed frustration of what they see as an unfavourable ratio between the financial contribution provided and the results expected from cooperations. While a certain level of in-kind contribution is standard, there is scope to discuss this. Costs of living have risen, and funding simply does not go as far as it did previously. The conclusion here might be to consolidate the currently (too) high number of activities (around 150 in the programming period so far) in favour of providing bigger contributions to partners.

For some partners, the HBF contribution will be of existential importance—the office should take stock of these and discuss the extent to which it is able to provide a contribution to core costs. While staff holds that this is impossible as part of HBF funding, the evaluator has not seen any evidence that costs such as rents etc. are ineligible.<sup>5</sup>

Work on strengthening feminist actors has been important, and activities had a clear political outlook, i.e. to encourage women to enter active politics. This is a long-term objective, and those partners that work on it would benefit from assurances of a medium-term support by HBF to conduct this work (and potentially a greater financial contribution). In other aspects, feminist networking has had a more modest impact: stakeholders suggest that the circle of activists remains small and has insufficiently expanded over the years, in particular in

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<sup>2</sup> [History Fest](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Scena MESS - Internacionalni teatarski festival MESS - Internacionalni teatarski festival MESS Internacionalni teatarski festival MESS](#)

<sup>4</sup> Alert to a potential conflict of interest—the evaluator has been a personal friend of the founder of the center for 25 years.

<sup>5</sup> For example, rent has been paid for at least for one partner of the HBF Belgrade Office.

Sarajevo. HBF is responding to this by identifying and working with Horizonti, an organisation of the outside the capital, but a strategic discussion would be useful on why feminist topics, although highly relevant for the context of BiH, fail to gain wider momentum.

HBF is successfully stimulating regional networking—something that is highly sought after by its partners, for the intellectual stimulation and access to state-of-the-art thinking, but also the moral support being part of a community of like-minded individuals and organisations in often hostile environments. The Green Summer School is a recent example of this point, and where HBF is actively trying to share the momentum and inspiration coming from green political actors in Croatia (Možemo) and beyond. In particular for BiH, the extent to which some of the flagship thematic work in particular on urban commons can and should be adapted is a maybe somewhat of a question.

The work on air pollution has yielded one of the big impact level successes of HBF's work in BiH. However, the traction the topic creates is fickle, and seasonal. It would be useful to strategise what could be done to make it "stick". Potential entry points might be a clearer embeddedness of it into a human rights context, and seeking wider coalitions, including with partners in the international community. However, this cannot be the sole responsibility of HBF in BiH.

HBF's work is thematically relevant, and important, in BiH and in MK. What is needed for the next programming period is a discussion on the vision on how to take this work forward against the background of democratic backsliding and resurgence of ethno-nationalism (MK), and a lack of a credible reform perspective, coupled with the presence of an invasive, and increasingly un-democratic international community, as well as paralysing aid dependency (BiH) which disempowers domestic stakeholders—only a few HBF partners dare to challenge the current practices of the international community openly, and none of these has led to a collective response from civil society actors. Where partners individually and collectively perceive that becoming politically active is not an option, the theory of change and the objectives of the foundations work need to be probed, and a discussion needs to take place on what, then, can realistically be achieved in such a context.