

Mission Mag

> inside the European Union Police Mission
Bosnia & Herzegovina

In Focus



2009: Six Objectives for EUPM and BiH Police

Head of the EU Police Mission, Commissioner Stefan Feller, has spent his first six weeks in BiH analyzing all aspects of the police work and the judiciary in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He spoke to national and international counterparts in order to define the strategy and the objectives for the EUPM as well as for the BiH police for the coming year. In an interview for the Mission Magazine, Commissioner Feller explains the outcome of this process, the reactions from the EU member states and Brussels, as well as the way ahead.

Commissioner, you took office six weeks ago. Since then, you have had a very busy schedule travelling the country and meeting almost all of your senior counterparts.

First of all, I still have more travelling in the future because I really want to reach out to all my counterparts at cantonal, entity and state level and in Brcko District. For the time being, on several

occasions I have been able to speak to the directors of SIPA, Border Police and BiH Service for Foreigners' Affairs. I had the privilege of meeting with Minister Sadovic twice already. I also spoke to the acting State Prosecutor and had repeated meetings with the directors of police in the Federation and Republika Srpska, as well as the respective ministers of interior of both entities - Minister Alic and Minister Cadjo.

I have met some of the cantonal police commissioners when we launched the website krimolovci.ba and during two field trips. In the coming period, I will continue visiting the Brcko District, cantonal police commissioners and ministers of interior. So yes, it has been very busy, but also fruitful.

In what sense?

I have had very fruitful discussions. I must say that my impressions are positive in that I found a professional working

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Editorial

**By Regina Boucault,
Head of the International
Organization for Migration Mission
to Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Very few people migrate for fun. An understanding of this fact is one of the underlying precepts of the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme operated jointly by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Take 24-year-old E.C., for example. He has a university degree in law and speaks five languages. He applied to the University of Milan and was accepted for studies there, but the Italian embassy in Tirana would not grant him a visa. Faced with missing his deadline for attendance, he attempted to enter Italy illegally.

He paid smugglers 500 euros and was eventually detained by Bosnian police in Foca, thus ending his promising Italian academic career. The local police informed him about our AVR programme and he was assisted, both logistically and financially, with his return to Albania.

Ensuring irregular immigrants are returned home safely and with dignity is what the AVR programme is all about. As part of this programme, IOM provides irregular immigrants detained in BiH with shelter, food, accommodation, medical assistance, travel documents and transportation home, and, importantly, communication with their relatives at home.

In the past seven years, we have assisted 1,300 irregular migrants to return home. Thanks to our excellent cooperation with the Ministry of Security and other international organizations, such as the EU Police Mission, we assist BiH authorities in managing migration flows in a humane way.

The establishment of an Immigration Centre by BiH authorities is a major step forward in this direction. It shows that BiH is taking ownership of migration management and moving towards an immigration strategy that is respectful of human rights and in full compliance with the international standards. ■



environment within EUPM and that I have met professional counterparts who are very open to dialogue. I appreciate this dialogue. I need fruitful and useful strategic communication with my BiH counterparts as it enables us to jointly identify strategic objectives for 2009 and how we can best implement our mandate in 2009.

Do you already have a clear picture as to what the strategic objectives for 2009 will be?

The mandate of EUPM is based on three pillars: to assist in the fight against organised and other serious crime, to help implement police reform laws and increase police accountability. I have had intense discussions with my staff in EUPM on all of these topics and based on our internal discussions we identified strategic priorities. In parallel, I have discussed the same issues with my BiH counterparts in order to learn which areas they would identify as priorities. At the end of our discussions, we agreed on a set of objectives which are supported by the local authorities and which, therefore, also sets the guidance for the assistance priorities of EUPM: wherever my BiH counterparts identify priority areas in order to improve their situation, we will focus our assistance on it. Wherever we find that still more work needs to be done by our BiH counterparts, we will continue



■ Commissioner Feller during a field visit

to promote this process. It is meant to be an entirely transparent process.

What does that mean concretely?

Before I come to that, just a word on the year 2009 itself. It is the last year of our successful EU Police Mission. This means that everything we plan for 2009 has to be planned against this backdrop. Our activities need to focus on those aspects which have the highest impact and are the most useful for the country. But to come back to your question: Let's speak first about our objectives in the area of support to the fight against organised crime.

Firstly, we would like to see by the end of 2009 that the capacities of the law enforcement agencies on state and entity level are sufficiently developed to jointly fight organised and other serious crime. This will need to be coordinated amongst other through the Ministry of Security.

Secondly, police and judiciary on the state level should have developed mechanisms and the capability to conduct investigations in the fight against organised and other serious crime consistently and in close cooperation with police and judiciary on all other levels.

And thirdly, we want to help improve a situation which has been described as unsatisfactory by all our national counterparts. I am talking about communication, coordination, and cooperation between police and prosecutors on all levels, within BiH and in relation to international cooperation.

What about the other aspects of our mandate?

Regarding police reform, there would be two objectives which we want to focus on. The so-called police reform laws of April 2008 foresee the establishment of seven new agencies at the state level. These agencies should by the end of 2009 be established and have reached their initial functionality. Secondly, we want to see harmonised laws on police officials and laws on internal affairs adopted on all levels. And, last but not least, we also want to see that police at all levels are able to acknowledge and to effectively assume responsibility towards their community for their actions in line with domestic legislations, human rights standards and good governance principles. That sounds very sophisticated, but it is at

EUPM Strategic Objectives in 2009

On the Support to the Fight against Organised and other Serious Crime

- Law Enforcement Agencies on State and entity level have reached joint strategic and operational capacity, coordinated amongst others through the Ministry of Security;
- Police and judiciary on State level have developed and applied investigative capability in consistent cooperation with police and judiciary at other levels;
- Police on all levels jointly assess communication, coordination and cooperation amongst themselves and with prosecutors as systematic and effective to address all forms of crime throughout the country.

On Police Reform

- Institutions and mechanisms prescribed by the *Law on Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies and on Agencies for Support* and the *Law on Independent and Supervisory Bodies of Police Structure in BiH* have been established and reached initial functionality;
- Harmonised laws on police officials and internal affairs have been adopted at all levels.

On Police Accountability

- Police at all levels are able to acknowledge and effectively assume responsibility towards their community for their actions in line with domestic legislation, human rights standards and good governance principles. ■

the heart of every police organisation in a democratic society. It is to serve the communities and we do believe that there is a need for further efforts in order to increase the awareness of such a fundamental precondition on the side of the police organisations here.

You have discussed these objectives last week in Brussels. What were the reactions of member states and the Operation Commander?

The reactions were very positive. This exercise is not just about putting something on paper. It is aimed at unifying the responsible law enforcement agencies and EUPM in our joint objective to improve the situation in BiH. We can break down these objectives into concrete activities. It is a twofold approach: on one hand we will foster local ownership by assisting the police in identifying the concrete steps in order to reach these objectives. On the other hand and in parallel we will also develop ways and ideas as to how EUPM can assist in achieving them. Thirdly, and as I mentioned before, we continue to promote that BiH law enforcement agencies strive for even more joint activities than they already have started to do. As regards the latter, EUPM will identify its own set of activities in order to achieve this. This approach has been appreciated in Brussels.

We are in the middle of the festive season. Will you celebrate at home in Germany or in Sarajevo?

I will enjoy spending my time at home here in Sarajevo. And I would like to use this opportunity to extend my heartfelt season's greetings to all colleagues and friends within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and EUPM. ■



■ Stefan Feller

Year in Review: 2008



Police Reform Laws Adopted by the BiH House of Peoples

BiH Parliament's House of Peoples (HoP) adopted the two laws in the field of police reform - the Proposal of the Law on independent and supervision bodies of police structure and the Proposal of the Law on the directorate for coordination of police bodies and agencies for the support to police structure.

Operation Leotar: Success in Fight against the International Chain of Drug Trafficking

Police operation "Leotar", which was conducted by the RS Ministry of Interior, with the participation of the Federal Police Administration and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton MoI, resulted in 56 person arrested, more than 60 kg of marijuana and 635 grams of cocaine seized, illegal weapon and ammunition found and cut off of main Balkans' drug route.



Gasi Arrested!

Suspected leader of organised crime group from Sarajevo, **Muhamed Ali Gasi**, has been arrested together with four associates. What is now generally known as "Gasi Trial" is still ongoing, with full police, judiciary, and media attention.



EU signs SAA with BiH

Foreign ministers of the EU-27 and representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed on June 16 the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), which formally launches Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the EU. **Dimitrij Rupel**, GAERC President and Slovenian Foreign Minister, signed the agreement on behalf of the EU Presidency; Enlargement Commissioner **Olli Rehn** on behalf of the European Commission; and Prime Minister **Nikola Spiric** on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Radovan Karadzic Arrested in Belgrade

Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb wartime president and one of the world's most wanted men, was arrested on July 22 in Belgrade, Serbia, where he lived and worked under an assumed identity of one Dragan Dabic. Karadzic was indicted by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague in July 1995 for authorising the shooting of civilians during the 43-month siege of Sarajevo. He was indicted for genocide a second time four months later for orchestrating the massacre in Srebrenica. Karadzic is currently being tried by the Tribunal.



Interdependency: Key to Fight against Or

Finnish Police Commissioner Ari Sarjanen spent last two years working as the Deputy Head of EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before leaving EUPM and moving on to meet new challenges, he shared his impressions and experiences with the Mission Magazine readers.

You are leaving us on December 10. How would you assess your career in the mission and the mandate of EUPM?

I joined the mission in February 2006 as Team Leader for our Field Office in Tuzla. Since then, a lot of progress has been made regarding the work of the EU Police Mission, as well as that of the local police. In the beginning of 2006, as we needed to transform the EUPM 1 to a mission with an almost completely different approach, it took us some time to get organised, focused and to start functioning in a professional manner. Today, we know exactly what we are supposed to do, which is also visible through the results we have achieved.

Our mandate is based on three pillars - fight against organised crime, providing support to police restructuring process and police accountability. How would you assess the progress made by BiH Police in regard to these three aspects?

We have all witnessed that the local police has become more efficient, but they still have a long way to go. In my opinion, they have overcome many internal obstacles, but they also need to overcome hindrances maintained by outside factors, such as politics or finances. I think that the average assessment is positive, but surely there were situations where we could have reacted faster or better. We are currently reviewing the EUPM strategy for the upcoming year with our new Commissioner, we have shared preliminary results with our local counterparts and they were received extremely well. I think I can say that we are now getting more ambitious, which is of course needed and welcomed for our work in the future.

Police reform as well as fight against organised crime remains a challenge. Local media recently reported about the flight of criminals across entity borders due to lack of coordination of police forces from both entities. How could such situations be avoided?

Boundaries of law enforcement agencies represent a challenge in every country, and BiH is no exception. Coordination, cooperation and communication are the tools to overcome the challenges regarding boundaries between different police agencies, and the



■ Ari Sarjanen worked as EUPM Deputy Head of Mission from June 2006 to December 2008

situation in BiH has also improved a lot in that sense. The problem is that there is no legislative basis and legal responsibility for various law enforcement agencies at local or entity level which would make their cooperation "business as usual". Still, we have witnessed progress achieved based on mutual understanding, even at times which were very difficult in a political sense. It is no secret that facilitating better cooperation across borders has not been really supported by the politicians on either side. Despite all those facts, our local counterparts managed to improve it, but the issue remains a challenge. The initial part of our strategic review I mentioned before is exactly the coordination, cooperation and communication between various law enforcement agencies at state and entity level. Their response to ideas we presented was more positive than we actually expected, but the results still remain to be seen. In my opinion, the problem anymore is not so much about being able to effectively pursue a criminal who crossed whatever border or boundary, but to coordinate and implement certain actions to tackle organised crime gangs who are operating without knowing any boundaries and borders.

Our mission's mandate officially ends in December 2009. How could the EUPM further help improve the fight against organised crime?

We have a great number of top police professionals, as well as civilian experts, both international and national, in this mission. All of them are in possession of pieces of good assessments of the current situation and ideas regarding the future. I trust in something that our new Commissioner Stefan

Feller has launched - a review of our strategy in a very open and transparent way, involving all main figures who will be able to give their contribution. Of course, every strategy needs to be implemented and the implementation phase is crucial since we are here not just to follow our own strategies, but also to support those of the local police. They are the ones who have to stay here after the EUPM is gone and it is very important that they are willing to contribute as well. The main goal of our strategy is to make sure that the law enforcement agencies have enough capacities and capabilities to tackle and combat organised crime in such way that it is kept under reasonable control, since you can never get rid of it completely. This process, however, does not involve only police work, but also the entire criminal justice chain, and that is the field where we need to achieve more progress in the future. During my professional career, I have been working as a judge, prosecutor and police officer, which means I am familiar with all three sides. The question that must be raised here is how the criminal justice process needs to run so all the actors who have a role in this chain are able to give their contribution to the society. For example, prosecutors are not obliged to accept every piece of information provided by the police, while judges are not supposed to sentence to prison everybody who is brought to the courtroom upon the order from the prosecution. It is a very complicated joint play. I am of the opinion that our local counterparts know perfectly what should be done. They only need to find a proper consensus amongst themselves on "how to run the business" in terms that everybody will be able to contribute and that the tasks are divided equally. There is not a country in the world where one single law enforcement agency is capable of working alone, which means that interdependency is the key.

If you were to mention one operation in which EUPM's role has been crucial, which one would that be?

I would say that all operations conducted in a professional manner were the most valuable for me.

On a more personal note, what were your biggest achievements as our Deputy Head of Mission?

Performing duties as a senior staff member is in my opinion a unique opportunity to facilitate the work of your subordinates. I don't think that any manager is able to achieve anything on his or her own. I have been in charge of the operational part of

rganised Crime

EUPM's work most of my time here and I would say that my results can be seen as the support of the results achieved by the local police. And not only the results, but also about in how much is EUPM being able to contribute in order to improve their work.

What were your biggest challenges?

This is an international organisation and having a huge number of international and national colleagues means that it is not an easy task to find your place within the mission. We are all humans, we have different working cultures, languages, unwritten rules or codes of conduct, and I always felt obliged to sort out all misunderstandings and problems as soon as possible, which I see as my biggest challenge.

Let's imagine that you could go back to your first day with us. Is there anything you would do differently?

There are many things that I surely could have done better, but it is not in my character to regret anything.

The most valuable memory you are taking with you?

There are so many memories that I am taking with me, both professional and private. But if I have to pick one, I must say that I am



■ Sarjanen with a part of his team

deeply impressed by the Balkans. Before I joined the mission, I read everything I could find on the history of this region, and I was fascinated by the richness of colours, tastes and smells, by the people and their habits, and of course by the food, which was very impressive for somebody coming from the North. The time I spent here has affected my whole life.

What are your plans for the future? Would you like to participate in any other ESDP operations?

My main targets now are my domestic

career and personal time. Nevertheless, I am open for the future and have no strict plans.

Is there anything you would like to add, any farewell message to the mission members?

Knowing myself, my character, strengths, as well as areas where I could improve and the challenges linked to my position, I have been really impressed by how well my colleagues, national and international, have been able to cope with me. Only together we were able to achieve those results we achieved, and I have strong respect for each one of them. ■

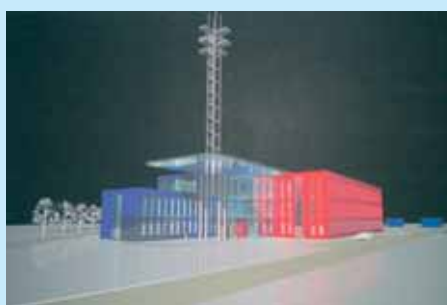
Police in BiH

New Building for Brcko District Police

A solemn foundation stone-laying ceremony, which took place in Brcko settlement of Mujkici on 13 November, marked the beginning of the construction of a new building for the Brcko District Police. The ceremony was attended by local authorities and senior police officials, as well as ICITAP, EU CARDS, EC and EUPM representatives.

The new, modern and functional building will be strategically located at the northwest part of Brcko, in the Ciglane Street of Mujkici settlement - only 200 metres from the Sava River and the border with Croatia, and 100 meters from the main Bijeljina-Brcko-Banja Luka road.

"Brcko District Police was the first multi-ethnic law enforcement agency in BiH, and we are proud of that," said Brcko District Police Chief Goran Lujic at the ceremony. "Since its establishment in 1999, Brcko District Police has significantly contributed to curbing all kinds of crime



in BiH. We have achieved great results and developed operational capacities. Now we need adequate working conditions in order to achieve European standards in the fight against crime."

In line with their commitment to establishing and maintaining cooperation with other law enforcement agencies, some 400 employees of the Brcko District Police will share the new building with the Border Police and Ministry of Security. The building will have 10,140 square metres and construction costs are estimated at 14 million KM. The Brcko District Government

is one of the sponsors, allocating around 3.5 million KM. Unfortunately, some funds needed for construction are still missing.

"We will not be able to finance this project entirely," said Lujic. "We hope that local authorities and international community will recognize the importance of the project and support it. Some of the international organizations have already shown interest in giving their support."

If the necessary funds become available, the construction should be finalised within three years. ■



■ Laying of the foundation stone for the new building of the Brcko District Police

EUPM Prompts Police-Prison System Cooperation

"We have to work towards a crime-to-prison approach"

The recent scandal surrounding Muhamed Ali Gasi's telephone conversation with Senad Sahinbasic from his cell in Sarajevo Central Prison once again shed light on (serious) shortcomings of the BiH prison system.

"What struck me even more is that the security management of the Sarajevo Central Prison was not even held responsible for this major breach of security rules in this prison," says Claus Andersin, EUPM's Detention Expert. "The problem is that neither the police nor the prison staff are very confident about their respective responsibilities."

Convinced that one of the main reasons behind these repetitive signs of weakness of the prison service is a lack of cooperation with the police, the EU Police Mission gathered prison directors, police managers and representatives of Ministries of Justice on 5 December to work towards a clear division of responsibilities and a formal cooperation framework.

State of affairs

"The fight against organised crime cannot be successful if the prison service does not respond to the highest possible standards," continues Andersin. "No matter how hard police and prosecutors worked to keep a criminal behind bars, this is useless if he can go on managing his criminal network from his cell. Police and prosecutors are a part of the same chain and if one of the links is weak, the whole justice system is at risk."

Andersin, a detention expert with 38 years of experience in his native Finland and in various ESDP Missions, including Kosovo and Aceh, joined the EU Police Mission in January 2008 shortly after the infamous escape of Radovan Stankovic from Foca prison. The circumstances of the war criminal's escape prompted EUPM to focus on the prison service. Over the course of the year, Andersin travelled throughout the country, visiting prisons and meeting with officials in order to get an overview of the prison system.

One of the main conclusions EUPM's Detention Expert drew from his numerous conversations with prison directors, police managers and representatives of

the Ministry of Justice at state, entity and cantonal levels is that there is a need for a legal unified background for all parties to cooperate, a clear description of responsibilities and instructions to render mutual assistance.

Necessary changes

Why do prisons not notify the police about prisoners' movements? Why are the police not immediately notified of the prisoners' failure to return from authorised leave? Why are the police not informed about riots, the discovery of drugs inside prisons, or other security incidents?

"Holistically speaking, prisons should inform the police about these kinds of incidents," explains Andersin. "Prison directors do carry out searches or investigations, but prosecutors rely on the results by the police. The decision whether or not to contact the police should not be up to prison director's personal relations with the police manager in his area, it should be a legal obligation. We need to work on a crime-to-prison approach."

Andersin presented his findings and recommendations at the Prison Directors' Workshop on December 5, 2008. He was joined by two other international prison experts, Hannu Kiehela from The Training Institute for Prison and Probation

Services in Helsinki who presented the basics and backgrounds of probation service in the country, and Sauli Hautakanigas, Director of the Northern District Prison in Finland, who gave a pragmatic lecture existing models of police and prison service cooperation.

Sharing responsibility

A draft Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the prison services and the police was also presented at the workshop, and supported by vast majority of political, judicial and police officials. The MoU, whose signing is foreseen in the near future, should prepare the ground for a closer and more trusting cooperation which will ensure sharing information of relevance to the responsibilities and tasks of each service. This does not mean that the police should do the job of the prison services or vice versa, it simply means sharing responsibilities for the security of the prisons and the efficiency of the institutions, so they would not be hampered by unnecessary problems and red tape.

"The cooperation gives the police a better understanding of the problems the prisons are facing. The understanding of practices, contingency plans and existing legislation gives a better partnership in the operations where mutual assistance is required and responsibility questions are solved earlier," concludes Andersin. ■



Beware How You Drive!

FBiH Ministry of Interior Launches Traffic Safety Campaign

Sixty smashed cars, which seem to have driven into signposts along the road, were placed throughout the Federation BiH as of 1 December 2008. It would all look very real if the billboard just above didn't read "This car accident was caused by speeding". These shocking and warning messages, which raise awareness about traffic safety, are a part of the two-month "Beware How You Drive!" public information campaign implemented jointly by the Federal and Cantonal Ministries of Interior.

The campaign has started at the right time because traffic accident statistics are alarming. According to data presented by the police, in the period from 2002 to 2008, there were 173,260 traffic accidents in BiH, resulting in 2,059 dead and 47,626 injured persons.

Rising trend

According to data collected by the BiH Automobile Association (BiHAMK), Federation BiH saw 28,231 traffic accidents in 2007, 235 of them fatal, while 184 people died in 22,028 traffic accidents in the first nine months of 2008. Number of traffic accidents in FBiH increased by six percent in one year, with majority of the fatalities being between 18 and 24 years old.

"Through these smashed cars and billboards along the road, as well as radio and TV spots, we want to show people what can happen if they do not stick to traffic safety regulations," says Muhidin Alic, FBiH Minister of Interior. "This will be comple-



■ Innovative campaign billboards attracted great attention throughout the Federation BiH

mented by additional communication and institutional activities, such as lecturing in schools, public competitions and debates about traffic safety, as well as intensified prevention and supervision."

"Beware How You Drive!" runs simultaneously at the federal and cantonal levels and each police agency expects to achieve long-term results. Police is using the campaign to show that every citizen bears responsibility in decreasing risks of traffic accidents and their deadly consequences. Within one general message, they are reminding the public that the number one cause of traffic accidents is more than 0,13 percent of alcohol in blood, closely followed by speeding, going through a red light, and irregular overtaking.

Five-year plan

"The aim of this campaign is to influence the behaviour of all participants in traffic, drivers and pedestrians," says Nedim Mutapcic, Tuzla Canton Police Commissioner. "If everyone respects traffic regulations, there won't be traffic accidents. So I want to underline that the person is the key factor."

Although EU Police Mission was not directly involved in the organization of this campaign, "Beware How You Drive!" was inspired by a similar campaign, implemented jointly by the BiH law enforcement agencies and the EUPM three years ago.

"This campaign is definitely a part of a unique mood within police public relations work which was established by EUPM and its press department," says Alic. "I would like to welcome all EUPM activities which promoted campaigns as a method of addressing various aspects of police prevention work."

"From EUPM's point of view, we are proud of the fact that this entity-level public information campaign was designed and is being implemented by the local police themselves," says Kilian Wahl, Chief EUPM Press and Public Information Department. "This initiative as such is commendable and shows how the principle of local ownership functions in reality."

"Beware How You Drive!" is the beginning of police activities aiming to reduce the number of traffic accident fatalities and injuries by five percent annually and ultimately by 30% after five years. ■

Newcomers

The Mission gives a warm welcome to the colleague who has recently arrived from Italy...



Carmen Giuffrida recently joined EUPM as the **Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) Adviser**. She began her career as a lawyer in 1992 in Catania, Italy, dealing with Family and Labour Law. In September 1996, she took up the position of City Manager in the Province of Pavia. She then passed the examination for Judges and Prosecutors (HJPC and Ministry of Justice) and was appointed Public Prosecutor. Giuffrida worked on cases involving every kind of crime, in particular crimes concerning sexual abuse,

arms and drug trafficking, extortions and organized crime. She has cooperated with the District Prosecutor of the Anti-mafia Office (DDA). During her career as a Prosecutor, she also taught classes on sexual abuse and made presentations at several conferences on paedophilia, European Law and minor offences. In January 2008, she left Italy to serve in the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, working as an International Public Prosecutor and mentoring Local Prosecutors. Recently, she was selected to present a Justice Twinning Project in Montenegro on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council. ■

Time to Hit the Slopes

With winter months encroaching, and Sarajevo and most other cities in BiH smothered in smog and fog, the perfect weekend lies on the sunny slopes of the surrounding mountains. While those who don't ski can stretch their legs in light hiking tours, enjoying the fresh air, the view and the dazzling whiteness (while wearing sunglasses and sunscreen, of course!), those who are privy to the little wooden planks can hit the slopes of more or less dizzying quality, or test their own patience in the more rewarding experience of teaching their child how to do a perfect snowplough turn.

You just need to choose the right destination for your preferred activity, and fortunately, those are plentiful in Bosnia!



Jahorina

Known as the "White beauty", Jahorina has always been the favourite skiing destination for Sarajevans. The largest skiing area in the country with its 20 kilometres of slopes serviced by eight ski-lifts can satisfy any skier and snowboarder, beginner to expert. The opportunities for those who shy away from skiing are abundant also - from hiking and snow-shoeing, to going for a ride on snowmobiles, or just enjoying the sunlight on the sun deck with a cup of hot chocolate in your hand. Ski schools offer weekend programmes for individuals, families, or children, and ski rentals are available at the hotels and by the slopes for an average of 25KM a day. Daily ski-lift pass costs 30KM, half-day ticket 23KM and night skiing 15KM. And after a day of skiing or hiking, you can relax with a swim, sauna, or a massage in one of the Jahorina hotels. A slight warning for hikers, though: due to its topography, it is easy

to get lost in Jahorina during the winter, so do not wander away from the set paths without a guide.



Bjelasnica

For people here, Bjelasnica was always a place to go to show off your skiing expertise. With the steepest, most difficult slope of all BiH mountains - racing from 2,000 metres at the top to 1,200 meters at the base in a few minutes - it is quite a challenge and a thrill for an expert skier or snowboarder. Of course, the second leg of the run is easier and fit for intermediate skiers who do not mind being a bit less cool. And it is not all about the steepest slope, as within its 14 kilometres of slopes and five lifts, Bjelasnica also offers much for beginner and recreational skiers, families, and children, and it does not fail to satisfy those who prefer to trek, snowshoe, or just sit in the sun, taking in the beauty and sounds of the mountain with their morning coffee. Ski rentals and ski schools for all levels are available throughout the season, night skiing is organised on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Daily ski-lift pass costs 30-35KM, half-day ticket 28KM, night skiing 18KM.



Igman

Igman leans on the north face of Bjelasnica, offering good but smaller slopes, and soft hills perfect for beginners and children. It is ideal for families and even

has horse-drawn carriage that rides through the snow. Ski rentals are available for as little as 12KM per day and the ski-lift passes are the same price as on Bjelasnica. Ravna Vala valley hosts a long cross-country route that was also used during the Olympics. Although the trails are not in the pre-war condition, they are more than suitable for terrific cross-country skiing, hiking and walking.



Vlasic

Sarajevo is not the only ski centre in BiH - Vlasic Mountain in Central Bosnia has come full swing in the past few years, becoming a great destination for all those who thrive on mountain tourism. With 14 kilometres of slopes of beginner and intermediate level and four ski lifts, Vlasic is a new playground for skiers and snowboarders, while its dense pine forests and soft, rolling hills on the high plateau make for a perfect walking and hiking terrain, preferably with a guide if you plan on exploring a little. Ski rental is available at the Babanovac Ski Centre, whereas hotel Pahljica offers rental of snow mobiles and snow scooters. Daily ski-lift pass costs 22KM, half-day ticket 16KM, night skiing 12KM. Baby lift is also available for 12KM for the daily pass, and 8KM for the half-day pass. If you decide to take a bit longer a drive and visit Vlasic for some fresh air, don't leave the mountain without buying some Vlasic cheese (Vlasicki sir), a traditionally prepared, organic, white, salty delicacy. The road that goes from Travnik to Vlasic is lined with shops selling it.

For all Bosnian mountains, early mornings are the recommended time to get to the slopes as it gets quite crowded quickly during the weekend. At all mentioned ski centres, you will find a full range of facilities including the medical centre with mountain rescue teams, information centres, restaurants and cafés, and skiing instruction in English. ■



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