

## MILESTONES

**November 2012** – The Assessment of capacity of BiH Institutions undertaken jointly by countries of the Nordic-Baltic initiative, the Ministry of Defence, Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republic of Srpska and IOM

**February 2013** – The First conference of the Project activities held in the Kingdom of Denmark

**June 2013** – The Second conference of the Project activities took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**September 2013** – The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Danish Veteran Center and the Ministry of Defence of BiH

**November 2013** – The first Study visit to Denmark conducted

**December 2013** – The Web-presentation of the Project designed ([www.preventiva.ba](http://www.preventiva.ba))

**January – March 2014** – The Analysis of capacities and mapping of existing structures and available services in the public, private and NGO sector in the area of mental health support providers finalized

**February 2014** – Visit of Danish psychologist in order to monitor psychological preparation of soldiers deployed for the Peacekeeping mission to Afghanistan and improvement of existing methodology and work of MoD/AF BiH professionals in the field of psychological preparation of soldiers

**March 2014** – Address Book of services available in the public, private and NGO sector in the area of mental health support providers published

**March 2014** – The second Study visit to Denmark conducted

**March 2014** – The First Steering Committee Meeting was held

**May 2014** – The Decision on establishment and capacity building in the field of mental health and provision of psychosocial assistance in the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of BiH approved

**May 2014** – The Second Steering Committee Meeting was held

**July 2014** – The Decision to amend the Books of Personnel

Formation of Commands and Units in the Armed Forces approved

**August 2014** – Development of materials for self-help and support for different target groups

**September 2014** – The workshop on “The transition from military to civilian life” organized by experts from the Danish Veteran Center was held

**October 2014** – The Policy of mental health care and provision of psychosocial assistance in the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of BiH approved

**November 2014** – Organised Workshop on preparation and drafting of the Protocol on Cooperation between the MoD BiH, the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Srpska in the field of mental health and provision of psychosocial assistance to the MoD and AF BiH Personnel

**November 2014** – The first Study visit to Norway conducted

**November 2014** – The Third Steering Committee Meeting was held

**December 2014** – The first draft of the Memorandum of Understanding between respective ministries-participants of the Project has been prepared

**January 2015** – The position of Adviser for mental health and provision of psychosocial assistance filled in the Command for Personnel Management

**February 2015** – The vacancy for five working positions for professionals in the field of mental health and provision of psychosocial assistance published

**February 2015** – The Rulebook on protection of mental health and provision of psychosocial assistance in Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of BiH approved

**February 2015** – The Fourth Steering Committee Meeting was held

**March 2015** – The Study on impact of peacekeeping missions on mental health of military personnel has been initiated

**April 2015** – The Fifth Steering Committee Meeting was held

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## INFO SHEET PREVENTIVA

### PROJECT

The project “Building the Capacities of BiH Institutions to Address Mental Health Issues Amongst Defence Personnel in BiH” will serve to enhance the capacities of the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republika Srpska (MoHs) and Department for Health and Other Services of Brcko Distrikt in providing a systematic response to mental health issues in current and discharged personnel of the Armed Forces of BiH as well as in relation to their participation to peacekeeping missions.

Best practices, experiences and expertise of different countries could serve as a starting point, but BiH needs to develop its own model that is coordinated with the tangible current and future needs of the country.

This action has been initiated by relevant BiH authorities, facilitated by IOM and supported by Nordic Baltic Initiative (NBI).

In consideration of the researches which suggest that BiH has a high prevalence of mental health issues in a post-conflict context, addressing these problems at all levels of society, in both a civilian and military context, is a prerequisite for the future well-being of the population and the stabilisation of the whole country.

In this context, it has been acknowledged that the commitment of BiH institutions to this project exists at all levels.

The principal goal of the project is to create a permanent structure to manage mental health issues and the prevention of negative psychosocial consequences in all members of the MoD/AF BiH (new recruits, active duty staff, discharged and retired members and their families, and particularly members of AF BiH participating in peacekeeping missions).

In addition, the new permanent structure will serve to ensure the provision of necessary professional assistance and the networking with civilian healthcare institutions to facilitate the rehabilitation of those persons requiring support.

Furthermore this initiative should be seen in a broader regional and Euro-Atlantic integration perspective because supporting the defence sector reforms in BiH and establishment of adequate mental health support to MoD staff (particularly in relation to peacekeeping mission) will also contribute to security and stability. In addition, a competent and skilled BiH MoD would be able to support and assist other countries in the region in developing their own systems and enhancing the process of regional cooperation, which is essential element for attaining regional stabilisation.



## HISTORY

Within the framework of ongoing defence sector reform in BiH, the MoD of BiH is developing new mechanisms to facilitate enhanced responses to the needs of a modern, professional, and NATO compliant Armed Forces. This includes the application of international standards and models to design and implement a systematic response to the potential negative impacts of past and present war-related experiences on the mental health of discharged and active duty staff of the MoD and those involved in peacekeeping missions, as well as their family members.

Defence reform process, also includes the adoption of a Law that limits the upper age for service to 35 years, which has resulted in the discharging of thousands of personnel. The process has caused difficulties for those personnel discharged, with many not only losing their source

of income but also a sense of place in society. Experiences from involvement in the conflict serve to further complicate these issues.

Since the conclusion of the conflict, there have been no programmes specifically designed to support Military Personnel and members of the Armed Forces in the context of mental health, and there are no comprehensive and reliable data on numbers of persons with mental health problems related to the conflict in BiH.

However, some of the existing analysis and results of research conducted on professional Armed forces personnel who actively participated in the conflict in BiH indicate that the acute – war stress reaction, six years subsequent to the conclusion of the conflict transformed into PTSD in 22% of population. Although some issues were raised concerning the methodology used in these researches, it is obvious that the numbers involved are extremely high and that a need therefore exists for an immediate intervention.

The short- and long-term consequences of traumatic stress do exist also amongst civilian population, but they are more relevant within a military context.

In general, mental health issues and the general healthcare of members of the Armed Forces of BiH are realized through the civil health institutions in BiH.

The procedure and manner of usage of the health protection is problematic, in relation to members of the Armed Forces BiH that are insured with the institutions of healthcare in one entity or the District, and have a need to use healthcare within the territory of another entity, since health insurance only covers the place of origin, and those serving in the Armed Forces are often working away from their place of origin.

Furthermore, problems become apparent as a result of assessments of medical ability of the members of Armed Forces being conducted in a civilian context, without necessarily taking into account the specific situation and needs of Armed Forces personnel.

Therefore, there is a demonstrable need for systematic regulations and approach, and the MoD has identified mental health issues amongst personnel as a priority issue and requested donor support.

Therefore IOM, with the support of some of the NBI countries, is presently fully engaged in strengthening the MoD human resources structures in relation to the discharging of defence personnel and an initiative focused on mental health issues amongst Armed Forces personnel will therefore constitute part of an integrated approach to ongoing Security Sector Reform efforts in BiH.

The principal goal is to create a permanent structure to manage mental health, psychosocial well-being, and the prevention of negative psychosocial consequences in all members of the MoD/AF BiH (new recruits, active duty staff, discharged and retired members and their families, and particularly members of AF BiH participating in peacekeeping missions).



## PARTICIPANTS

Project “Building the Capacities of BiH Institutions to Address Mental Health Issues Amongst Defence Personnel in BiH” will be implemented by:

- International Organization for Migration as an executing agency,
- Nordic Baltic Initiative countries (NBI) led by Denmark in cooperation with Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Ministry of Health of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Ministry of Health and Social welfare of Republika Srpska and
- Department for Health and Other Services of Brcko Distrikt



## TRAININGS

Training of relevant staff of the Ministry of Defence, as well as local civilian experts in the field of psychology, is an important part of the process of establishing procedures and protocols of the Ministry of Defence to address mental health issues.

The training sessions are provided by relevant civil institutions from BiH and experts from the Nordic – Baltic initiative countries and are in accordance with specialized and internationally recognized training programs in the field of mental health issues.

The training sessions will include examples of good practice and experiences from the Nordic – Baltic initiative countries which will be presented by their experts in the field of mental health.

The objective of this training is to build capacity of relevant staff of the Ministry of Defence to cooperate with civil partner institutions to successfully address mental health issues among members of the Armed Forces.