



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diplomacy: a necessity, not a choice, on the road to the EU

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## I Executive Summary

In order for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to achieve its top foreign policy goal of joining the EU, the responsible institutions urgently need to work towards implementing a public diplomacy policy. This policy is essential in order to build up the image of BiH as a credible EU candidate and desirable EU Member State. The implementation of such a policy is necessary not only to fill the gap in the EU Integration Strategy<sup>1</sup> adopted by the BiH government, but also to ensure that when BiH re-starts delivering on the integration requirements, the responsible institutions are able to communicate the “Europeanisation progress of BiH” to European audiences effectively and persuasively.<sup>2</sup>

This Policy proposes pro-active affirmation of integration reform progress by targeting EU institutions as well as EU member state governments and their citizens, thereby building the EU constituency for BiH membership. This will help to provide favourable conditions for a swifter European Commission (EC) recommendation for accession, as well as prompt accession ratifications in the national parliaments of the EU member states.

The fact that BiH is still in its early stages of accession - the pre-accession phase of *potential candidacy* for membership - should be seen as an advantage, giving BiH decision makers time to organise and coordinate the country’s institutions so that they are capable of supporting the goal of accession.<sup>3</sup>



## II Introduction

The Policy, proposed on the basis of the Policy Study conducted during the 2009 with the support of the Open Society Fellowship, is designed for BiH institutions and should serve as a guide to understanding public diplomacy (PD): what it is, what it does, what its role can be in achieving the BiH strategic priority of EU accession and what role the responsible institutions can play in it. It proposes the most suitable and effective institutional set up and mechanism for implementing PD policy, while making government structures more sensitive to modern policy-making models and strategic thinking.

The author’s academic research<sup>4</sup> in the field of diplomacy indicated that PD is generally an under-researched area, often either not understood or misunderstood within government structures. Furthermore, PD is widely unrecognised and indeed almost non-existent in BiH. This policy study adds new knowledge and insights that could serve as a basis not only for

<sup>1</sup> Strategija integrisanja Bosne i Hercegovine u Evropsku uniju (*Strategy of Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European Union*), Council of Ministers of BiH, Directorate of European Integration of BiH, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> This Policy Brief is based on a Policy Study developed during the course of 2009 and the author’s PhD findings in the field of Public Diplomacy.

<sup>3</sup> PD at this stage of accession is of crucial importance because any image change and reputation-building exercise would involve a mid- and long-term programme; therefore, any delay in initiating such a policy could be detrimental to efforts to provide the support necessary for BiH accession.

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<sup>5</sup> These statements have appeared in numerous international media reports, as well as in academic works, think-tank analyses and official documents, and were summarised in a State Department Report; see *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007: Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

<sup>6</sup> Adult literacy rate: male 94.1%, female 78.0%. See [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm) as quoted by the US Department of State, *Background notes: Bosnia and Herzegovina*. UNICEF BiH statistics: Total adult literacy rate 2000–2007, 97%; Primary school net enrolment/attendance 2000–2007, 91%.

**The definition of public diplomacy:** There is no internationally accepted definition of public diplomacy. However, all definitions include the following aspects: that it is a strategic activity, that it aims to support the foreign policy goals of countries and international organisations by leaving the traditional zone of diplomatic work, and engaging in two-way communication not only with foreign governments, but also with other foreign audiences directly and/or via non-governmental partners.

<sup>7</sup> A Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2009 showed that at least half or more of the EU respondents considered that *enlargement has made the EU more difficult to manage* (66%), and *led to an increased feeling of insecurity* (50%) in the EU as a whole. It assessed citizens' views about factors that could be important when policy-makers consider further enlargements. See Flash EB Series #257, *Views on European Union Enlargement*, Analytical Report, Fieldwork, February 2009, conducted by The Gallup Organization, requested by the DG Enlargement. Retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_257\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_257_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* In addition, a majority of respondents in EU member states were concerned about issues such as organized crime, terrorism and the promotion and protection of fundamental rights, which were a matter of concern for approximately three-quarters of EU citizens (78%) with no strong variation among different countries. See Flash EB Series #252, *Awareness of key-policies in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice*, Analytical report, Fieldwork, September 2008, conducted by The Gallup Organization, requested by the DG Freedom, Security and Justice, published in January 2009. Retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_252\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_252_en.pdf)

raising awareness within government institutions but also for gathering public support for such a policy, which could be essential for BiH's success in achieving its strategic priority.

This presentation of the PD concept introduces this new approach to strategy implementation, persuasively demonstrating that *foreign policy-making and implementation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must include strategic communication and public diplomacy tools* if results are to be expected. It also aims to build and strengthen a new policy culture in which strategic communications and PD are an integral part of the policy-making process and not a fringe, *ad hoc* activity.

The image of the Western Balkan countries created during "the Balkan bloody 90's" is far from desirable for future EU member states. The reputation that BiH gained during the troubled post-Dayton peace-building, stabilisation and transition process, cemented perceptions of BiH as a "highly unstable country, with rampant corruption and with a lack of rule of law, respect for human rights and democratic values". The international media frequently report on BiH as a country burdened with "ethnic polarisation and disputes among its ethnic political leaders", "dominated by political interference in law enforcement", "vulnerable to exploitation as a potential staging ground for terrorist operations in Europe", a "dysfunctional state" with "Republika Srpska officials aiming to undermine state-level institutions" which contributes to "a slowdown, and in some cases, setbacks in efforts to improve operational capabilities to combat terrorism and terrorism finance."<sup>5</sup> BiH is also seen as a country where human rights are violated on a daily basis, and where full literacy has not been achieved.<sup>6</sup>

Despite huge efforts and successes in making the necessary reforms and progress in some significant areas since the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) started (especially between 2002 and 2005), the reputation of BiH abroad is largely based on extremely negative reporting. In addition, political battles motivated by internal political aims create a perception of instability, which is undesirable for a country within the EU.

An additional argument for strategic action is that numerous public opinion polls within the EU indicate negative sentiments towards enlargement.<sup>7</sup> The values of freedom and democracy are the most essential values in the EU and the key issues that respondents are concerned about when considering future EU enlargement.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, the first precondition for changing the perception of BiH abroad is to *take a more cooperative and progressive road in the SAP*. Nevertheless, if and when there is a change of internal attitude and practices, and BiH again begins to make significant EU-related progress, this progress will not be communicated to the important audiences within the EU member states on its own.

This work also aims to point to the lack of awareness within the institutional structures of BiH that *perceptions* about countries abroad have become crucially important for the fulfilment of their foreign policy (FP) objectives. Shaping those perceptions has become an increasing part of regular government activities abroad. Modern PD is not something that international actors can or should do on BiH's behalf. While many of them can be asked to help, it should be the task of BiH institutions themselves to adopt a PD policy, and to implement it by securing the most efficient and effective institutional set up. For that reason, BiH institutions must acquire and use this newly developed *body of knowledge* to support the achievement of its top FP goal in parallel with fulfilling the conditions that the EU integration process entails.



Given the current reputation of BiH abroad, the lack of a strategic EU integration support policy may result in the country retaining the status of an EU potential or official candidate for decades, without ever reaching its goal of membership.

### Goal of the research and overall findings

The research focused on the policies, strategies and implementation practices of the EU “first rank countries”.<sup>9</sup> This analysis led to the development of “lessons learned”, which have been further adapted to the current BiH context. It encourages the government structures to focus on changing the country’s negative reputation, which is that of a “highly unstable, post-conflict country, still poisoned by ethnic divisions, with an unreliable and corrupt political elite, and a population incapable of assuming the full responsibilities of citizenship, especially EU citizenship”.

The process tracing analysis focused on cases from which lessons can be learned and helped discover the major features of successful PD.<sup>10</sup> The EU “first rank countries” were selected for the case study because their policies and actions have had the most effect on developments within the EU since its beginning. The differences between them in defining and implementing PD allowed for a feature by feature comparison and identification of best models and practices which, if adapted to the BiH context, would give the country a chance to develop this pillar of

modern diplomacy.<sup>11</sup> The case of Croatia was also examined as a “closer” one to BiH. However, it was discovered that there was a lack of strategic action by the government in this area.

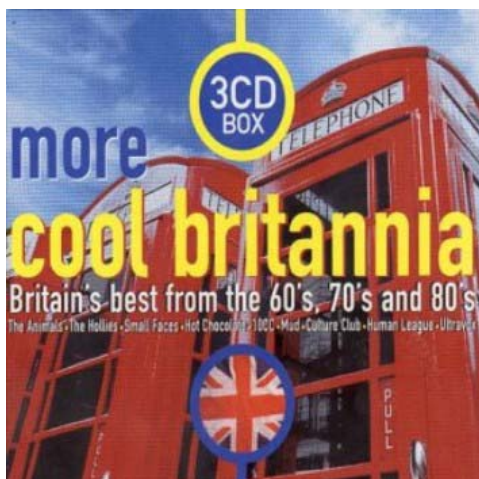
### The research firmly established that:

- Traditional *government-to-government relations in foreign affairs are no longer enough* for achieving FP goals, and that PD has become one of the pillars of modern diplomacy;
- PD policies are designed to address *the clear need* of each country to intervene in the areas of its image, reputation, branding and international positioning, in order to help pursue its FP goals;
- Countries have been implementing some sort of modern PD, policy of influence or positioning abroad since the end of WWI. What is new in the last 10-20 years is *the growing importance of global and national public opinion in international politics*, a result of technological advancement and the age of information. It is the beginning of an era in which governments can no longer hide what they do domestically, and diplomats can no longer “lie in the interest of their country” - as Bosnian born writer and Nobel Prize Winner Ivo Andric bluntly defined diplomatic work.
- In all three studied cases *the activities in the last 10-20 years began with image creation and re-branding, with the more focused economic aim of increasing exports of goods and services* or attracting investment, followed by a multifaceted policy to address more complex FP goals.
- The promotion of the country moved from a form of marketing similar to that of the commercial sector, to strategic communication and PD, reaffirming that *“honest and genuine engagement”* abroad, using *two-way communication with foreign audi-*

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘first rank countries’ is used here as in European Studies literature and implies the three countries whose actions and policies have been determining the development of the EU since its beginning – the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

<sup>10</sup> A series of interviews and archive research sessions were conducted at the foreign ministries in London, Paris and Berlin as well as in the EU institutions in Brussels, mainly in the period April-October 2009.

<sup>11</sup> The data were collected from official government documents, opinion poll surveys and think-tank resources. A significant portion of the data was collected through personal interviews with officials with relevant experience in PD, as well as with experienced practitioners working for the most prominent public diplomacy partners such as the British Council, Goethe Institute and French Cultural Centres.



*ences is necessary* to ensure the fulfilment of FP priorities. All of the studied countries continued to promote business, trade and investment (economic diplomacy), but this became just one segment of the activities supported by Ministries within a multi-faceted PD approach - all with the aim of achieving a wide range of short-, mid- and long-term FP goals.

- There is a general acknowledgement that bureaucracies are not skilled at communicating with the public. Not only are they slow, but, even more critically, their promotional activities can easily slip into propaganda. The findings clearly indicate that for the new policy to be successfully implemented, *bureaucracies must improve their communication capacities and capabilities*. They should engage specialists, change recruitment practices, provide constant training, define the frame and direction of PD and fund it. However, they should not fully implement PD activities. Foreign ministries should instruct their staff to contribute to the overall PD Strategy implementation, but *ensure credibility* by engaging credible *independent* partners for the biggest chunk of PD implementation.
- It was not easy for diplomats to leave their “comfort zone” behind the closed doors of meetings, diplomatic dinners and receptions, where diplomats traditionally establish bi- and multi-lateral relations. However the research indicated that successful diplomats learned how to act outside this comfort zone. This required *a change in the traditional methods of diplomatic work* as well as new strategies, tools and additional knowledge and skills.
- *PD has to reflect a real change* of internal policies; otherwise, the effort is wasted. What was also proved is that the image projected abroad begins to reinforce the same image within the domestic society to a certain degree.
- *Raising institutional awareness of the importance of PD* as a pillar of modern diplomacy within government structures is essential for success. As well as *changing recruitment policy and opening Ministry doors to specialists*, staff awareness and ongoing training proved to be essential for success.
- *Institutional flexibility and adaptability* to the swiftly changing circumstances of the contemporary world also proved to be of critical importance.
- Strengthening communication departments, engaging in two-way communication, acquiring technological literacy, being open to expertise outside of the ministry and establishing partnerships with non-state actors internally as well as externally was crucial for successful PD.
- PD strategies are always built on the basis of the *PD policy endorsed at the government level*, whose ministries have to cooperate on PD. The Strategy must be tied to specific short-, mid- and long-term FP goals. The Action Plan must clearly define the methods and tools to be developed in implementing each Strategy goal.
- The evaluation of PD is a very complex task due to its numerous activities and actors; however, *some form of evaluation must be established* and the Strategy and Action Plan must be reviewed at least once a year.
- *Coordination, cooperation and clearly defined responsibilities* for each governmental and non-governmental actor are essential.<sup>12</sup>
- Common understanding of the purpose of PD is also indispensable. *Coordination and cooperation must start with the government body responsible for a specific policy or goal*.
- The role of *selecting the government’s PD partners*, and good coordination with them, is immensely important. The government

<sup>12</sup> Different government ministries may have responsibility for different aspects of public diplomacy. In the case of BiH these would include: Ministry of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidency, the DEI, Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA), Chamber of Commerce. Their coordination is essential for effective strategic communication and PD.



should provide financial support (if possible) and ensure synergies between the public and private sector activities in the field, but *never interfere in the operational independence* of the PD partners.

- *Frequent priority shifts are not advisable* when it comes to PD, as PD is designed to deliver results in mid- to long-term time frames, while quick changes can only be promoted by using short-term campaign models.
- *The creative and effective use of new communication tools* such as the Internet proved to be tremendously important for success.
- The personality of a leader matters. *The position, institutional dedication and prominence of PD depends on how much the individuals leading the foreign policy of a country understand the new concept and its impact.*<sup>13</sup>
- *The wider society within a country must understand* and buy-in what the Government is selling abroad through PD, and must also consistently live up to the image projected abroad.

### III Approaches and Results

The integration template of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) remains important; however, non-EU countries now have to battle the new circumstances of “enlargement fatigue” in the Member States as well as the burden of negative perceptions, and therefore must undertake additional activities to promote their accession.

#### Recommended policy option

Several policy options were examined. The most appropriate model for the specific historical, institutional and financial circumstances of

BiH proved to be *a government endorsed PD policy, institutionally coordinated by the Directorate for European Integration (DEI), developed and led by a non-state actor, implemented in close cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and other state and non-state actors.*

It is recommended that the government endorse the “policy of promotion”, as indicated in the EU Integration Strategy of BiH.

As the major coordinator of the EU integration activities of the BiH government, the DEI is best placed to coordinate the governmental side of the policy implementation. Such cooperation should be secured by a newly established PD Board, chaired by the DEI high-ranking official responsible for PD. The Board would be responsible for general guidance in terms of the themes, strategic direction and messages of PD.

This policy would require the establishment of an Advisory Group/Council specialised in foreign affairs, EU integration issues, strategic communication and PD. It would be operationally independent, which would provide substance to the PD action, serve as a non-state partner to the Government and act in accordance with the directive of the PD Board. The task of the Advisory Group would be not only to develop PD strategy but also, over time, to increase the DEI and MFA capacity to establish PD as functioning pillar of BiH diplomacy.

Challenges to the implementation of such a policy are to be expected.<sup>14</sup> However, these challenges could be met if there is strong political will to approach the EU reform agenda with seriousness and responsibility.

This option would ensure expertise, institutional flexibility and adaptability, greater fund raising capability than government structures, impartiality, a higher level of effectiveness and, crucially important, *credibility of action*. Although it would operate in close coordination with the DEI, MFA and other BiH institutions, as an operationally independent actor, the Advisory Group,

<sup>13</sup> Prime Minister Blair had more awareness of and capability for PD than Prime Minister Major, President Sarkozy more than President Chirac, and with the German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (who served as Foreign Minister from 2005 to 2009), German PD became more comprehensive and more prominent within the FFO structure, factors which were responsible for the beginnings of a multifaceted PD approach in Germany.

<sup>14</sup> These may come in the form of lack of institutional cooperation, lack of harmonisation of practices and messages, lack of adequate expertise and lack of general awareness within institutions of the importance of such a policy.

and therefore its activities, would be seen as more credible.

This option also proved to be the only politically, institutionally and financially feasible option. However, future MFA ownership of this policy is a critical goal; the objective of raising the institutional capacity of the Ministry to lead such a policy must be one of the two major long-term tasks of the Advisory Group.

This option does not pose the risk of lower political acceptability than the other two. The DEI has a respectable reputation in the country as a professional body dedicated to EU integration.

#### IV Conclusion

The suggested policy does not require major institutional changes nor additional budgetary allocations. What is required is additional awareness raising, greater focus on and use of existing resources as well as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for diplomatic work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



**DON'T BE  
AFRAID OF CHANGE.**

In the short run what is needed is an increase in the DEI's capacity for coordinating the implementation of the policy within government

structures and in its ability to use the MFA diplomatic network for dissemination, with inputs from non-state actors. The MFA, in coordination with other government departments and the diplomatic network, has an important role to fulfil, mainly through a strengthened communications department and through cooperation with the Office for Diplomatic Training and the Department for International Scientific, Educational, Technical, Cultural and Sports Cooperation. It should aim to feed and support its DEI and PD partners, but not to manage their activities.

#### V Concrete Recommendations

**It is recommended that the DEI, in cooperation with the MFA and the Presidency:**

1. Appoint the members of the **PD Board** and chair the meetings (composed of representatives of the state and non-state actors with PD responsibilities) at least 2 times per year;
2. Initiate the establishment of the **Advisory Group**;
3. Propose the basic elements of the **PD Policy** to be endorsed by the Government;
4. Endorse the **PD Strategy** developed by the expert Advisory Group;
5. Endorse the **PD Action Plan**, which would focus on institutional responsibilities in relation to PD Strategy implementation based on the Advisory Group recommendations;
6. Create a **PD Team within the DEI**, which would serve as an institutional operational hub in cooperation with the Advisory Group to develop recommendations for improvements in implementing PD policy within the government structures (such as reviews of available staff, working methods, system of internal communications, specific actions related to the Action Plan);
7. Instruct the PD Board to *evaluate the Country Plan of Activities (CPA) each*



- year and correct/adjust the model of influence or tools;
8. Ensure that *strategic communication becomes a part of internal and foreign policymaking and implementation*;
  9. Continuously *coordinate and cooperate on PD within the Government* as well as within the foreign ministry and diplomatic network, using input from the network to ensure coherence of policy and messages;
  10. Make sure that embassies and missions abroad understand and adapt the FP priorities and the essence of the PD Strategy and Action Plan;
  11. Ensure staff specialisation, life-long learning, reform of the recruitment policy, professional mobility and improved human resource management and IT communication systems;
  12. Advise on correcting internal government policies and practices which harm or diminish PD policy.<sup>15</sup>
5. Engage other non-state actors with significant PD potential to form a coordinating hub for PD implementation;
  6. Design and implement PD training curricula for the relevant ministries and diplomatic network.

***The establishment of a principal PD independent actor (Advisory Group) is recommended to:***

1. Serve as the leading PD expert centre, capable of strategy development, project application and management, following the PD Board PD policy guidance, while remaining operationally independent;
2. Form a network of domestic and foreign experts and lecturers on PD, and be capable of seconding scientific/expert advisors to the relevant ministries for PD policy;
3. Cooperate and coordinate with state and non-state actors on PD implementation;
4. Take PD policy awareness raising activities throughout the country (via media, conferences, round tables, public lectures);

<sup>15</sup> As France did, for instance, regarding its immigration policy, providing for better university exchange as well as initiating higher education reform to attract the best foreign students.



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