

Bosnia Forum 2022 – 30 Years After the Start of the War: A Watershed Moment for Bosnia & Herzegovina too?

Wednesday, 06 April 2022

1:00 pm–7:30 pm

[Conference](#) at the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstr. 8, 10117 Berlin

[Registration for digital participation](#)

7:30 pm–9:30 pm [Film & discussion](#), “Was haben wir gelacht”

Free admission for registered participants

6 April–30 April 2022 [Exhibition](#) “Wake-up Europe! Support and solidarity mobilisations for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens during the 1992-1995 war”*

Free admission

On 6 April 2022, thirty years will have passed since the start of the Bosnian War. The brutal war of aggression against multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina, accompanied by countless war crimes, including the Srebrenica genocide, left deep and lasting scars in the history of Europe. Thirty years later, the reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a far cry from the ideals of a civil society based on the rule of law that guarantees equal civic and participation rights to all of its members, regardless of ethnic, religious or other types of affiliations or attributions. The interests and ideologies dominating political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina today are the same interests and ideologies that led to war three decades ago, with ethnic-nationalist elites of the different groups wielding fear and the assignment of collective guilt to the “other” ethnic group as policy tools to maintain their hold on power.

It is not at all unusual, even today, for the region to be disregarded, when people fail to mention the wars in the Balkans when speaking of how Europe has lived in peace since World War II, for instance. Equally problematic is the habit of ignoring the risk posed by a further destabilised Bosnia and Herzegovina. For there are those – first and foremost, Milorad Dodik, the leader of the largest Bosnian-Serbian party – who have sought for years to bring about another division of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and done so with the backing of Serbia and Russia.

In the current situation, one must now also ask what the consequences of the war of aggression being waged in Ukraine will be for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Assessments on this differ: does the “watershed moment” proclaimed by the Federal Government hold out the potential to mark a turning point towards positive change in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Or do the predictions of those who warn that the war could spread into the Western Balkans, like the former High Representatives Christian Schwarz-Schilling and Valentin Inzko, reflect a more widespread view?

Against this backdrop, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Southeast Europe Association will host a Bosnia Forum on the anniversary of the start of the Bosnian War, aimed at drawing attention to the possible turning point in Bosnia. The forum is primarily intended as an occasion to hear from those parts of BiH society that are striving to overcome ethnic-nationalist interpretative patterns. Thus, we are inviting Bosnian guests from civil society and the political arena to Berlin to discuss where they see future opportunities, security risks and current priorities, based on their assessments of the current situation. The forum will give them the opportunity to express their views in conversation with representatives of the Federal Government, the Bundestag, the media and the research community in Germany, thus bringing their perspectives to the discourse on German and European policy on Bosnia.

Programme for 06 April 2022

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| 1:00 pm | Welcome reception |
| 1:30 pm | Opening of the exhibition “Wake-up Europe! Support and solidarity mobilisations for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens during the 1992-1995 war” by Nicolas Moll , curator and historian |
| 2:00 pm | Welcome addresses by Dr Ellen Ueberschär , Co-President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Manuel Sarrazin , President of the Southeast Europe Association and Special Envoy of the German Government for the Countries of the Western Balkans |
| 2:20 pm– 4:00 pm | Panel 1: Is the wake-up call being heard by those determining German (European) policy towards Bosnia? Fishbowl talk with experts participating Languages: English and German with simultaneous interpretation |
| | <p>With</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adis Ahmetovic Member of the Bundestag, SPD • Samir Beharić, youth activist, doctoral candidate at the University of Bamberg • Vassilis Maragos, Head of dep. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, EU Commission DG NEAR (digital) • Boris Mijatovic, member of the Bundestag, Alliance 90/The Greens • Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Federal Minister (Germany) (digital) • Daliborka Uljarević, executive Director, Centre for Civic Education, WBSG, Podgorica <p>Moderator: Adelheid Wölfl, Sarajevo correspondent for “Der Standard”</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can efforts by civil society to bring about change be supported from outside the country? What means and opportunities are there for such support at the EU and bilateral levels? • What lessons about cooperation has civil society drawn from past experiences, and what lessons have the EU and the Federal Government drawn? • What should be done differently in the future to enable more to be achieved? |
| 4:00 pm | Coffee break |
| 4:30 pm | Welcome address by Dr Anna Lührmann , Minister of State for Europe and Climate at the Federal Foreign Office (video message) |
| 4:40 pm– 6:30 pm | Panel 2: Bosnia and Herzegovina today – a turning point? Fishbowl talks with experts participating Languages: BCS and German with simultaneous interpretation |
| | <p>With</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samir Beharić: report from Panel 1, youth activist, doctoral candidate at the University of Bamberg • Sabina Čudić, member central board of the party Naša Stranka, Sarajevo • Milica Malešević, University of Banja Luka • Ambassador Susanne Schütz, Commissioner for Southeast Europe, Turkey, OSCE and Council of Europe, Federal Foreign Office • Prof. Sead Turčalo, dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo <p>Moderator: Judith Brand, head of office, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Sarajevo</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What conditions are necessary to the promotion of democratic development in the country? • Progressive actors: Who is seen as striving to overcome ethnic-nationalist positions? • Assessments of how the urgency of the situation has changed: How will BiH be affected by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, by the results of the elections in Serbia? • What expectations are there in Bosnian civil society vis-à-vis the German Government in relation to promoting the development of democracy and the rule of law in their country? What concrete forms of support are organisations in BiH hoping for? |
| 6:30 pm– 7:30 pm | Evening refreshments • Parallel streaming of the Parliamentary debate on the 30th anniversary of the start of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (livestream from 4:30-5:45 pm) |
| 7:15 pm | Opening of the exhibition “Wake-up Europe! Support and solidarity mobilisations for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens during the 1992-1995 war” by Nicolas Moll , curator and historian |
| 7:30 pm– 9:00 pm | “How we laughed” Film screening and discussion Heinrich Boell Foundation, Schumannstr. 8, 10117 Berlin & in livestream Language: German with English subtitles |
| | <p>A film production of the eponymous play, an artistic portrayal of people dealing with experiences of war and siege. Based on an idea by Maja Zećo and Ina Arnautalić.</p> <p>Welcome: Gudrun Fischer, Heinrich Boell Foundation Berlin</p> <p>Discussion with</p> <p>Maja Zećo, actress, author</p> <p>Ina Arnautalić, costume designer, author</p> <p>Adis Ahmetovic, member of the Bundestag, SPD, member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs</p> <p>Moderator: Marion Kraske, journalist</p> |