



Special Reports

FINANCIAL TIMES

Bosnia-Herzegovina 2009

The Financial Times proposes to publish this FT Report on November 4th, 2009.
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We plan to include the following features (please note that this list is provisional):

1. Introduction

Thirteen years after the Dayton peace accords, Bosnia-Herzegovina has met nearly all of the conditions for ending its international supervision. Yet the thorny question of who should control state property still keeps the former Yugoslav republic severely divided. As the post-war Office of the High Representative prepares to close, the European Union aims to keep a powerful special representative in Sarajevo to maintain leverage over quarrelsome local leaders. Meanwhile, the weakly centralised ex-Yugoslav republic prepares to take up a rotating seat on the United Nations Security Council. This article examines the challenges still ahead for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

2. Politics

With parliamentary elections coming up next year, narrow ethnic interests could again take precedence over serious reform efforts for the inefficient state. Constitutional reform talks, long seen as a necessary part of post-war normalisation, look unlikely to resume soon. Yet the three main ethnic groups – Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats – all see European integration as their best prospect for long-term security and economic prosperity. This article looks at Bosnia-Herzegovina's conflicting political tendencies.

3. Economy

After initial hopes of escaping the global recession, the country of around 4m people has felt the full impact in the second half of 2009, with industries declining and job losses soaring. The International Monetary Fund has urged the country's two "entities" to slash public spending as a condition for more than €1bn in standby credit. But local politicians, particularly in the Bosniak-Croat Federation, also face constant

demands for generous welfare spending, especially for war victims and veterans. This article discusses the crisis.

4. Banking

The banking system has mostly held up through the crisis, with the central bank receiving belated plaudits for its strict capital requirements. A private-sector credit bureau has further strengthened the country's financial capacities. Nevertheless, numerous borrowers, including private citizens, have defaulted on their loans this year, often leaving relatives and friends in the lurch as guarantors. This piece considers the widening credit problem.

5. Foreign investor profile

This piece highlights a foreign investor doing business in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

6. Domestic investor profile

This piece highlights an innovative and successful local company.

7. Justice

A severe shortage of prison space has forced the authorities to let hundreds of convicted criminals, including murderers, go free. Prisons in much of Bosnia-Herzegovina exist only for the poor, say critics of the overstretched justice system. While officials push for harsher sentences for weapons possession, the Sarajevo municipality aims to open a new prison with more beds. This article looks at the urgent justice problem.

8. City profile: Mostar

Known for its famous Ottoman bridge, the Herzegovinian city also receives streams of religious tourists on pilgrimage to nearby Medjugorje. However, ethnic divisions have kept the city council paralysed, with Bosniak and Croat parties unable to pass a budget or install a mayor following municipal elections late last year. This article considers Mostar's prospects to rebound in spite of itself.

9. Srebrenica investment zone

The impoverished former silver-mining area, scene of Europe's worst single massacre since the second world war, has started attracting new investors with special tax incentives. But the Bosniak-dominated enclave, included since 1995 in the country's Serb-controlled entity, remains a prime focus of ethnic and political tensions.

10. Sport

Bosnia-Herzegovina's three main ethnic groups display severely divided sporting loyalties. At the same time, the national football team has achieved growing success in international competition.

Editorial Information

PLEASE NOTE: Special Reports are written by FT staff journalists and a small number of selected freelance writers. They will be specialists in the field and already have regular contacts to update them. It is therefore difficult for an unsolicited submission to be so compelling that it forces its way on to a writer's agenda. However, it does happen occasionally. We ask that all submissions be sent to ftreports@ft.com, from where they are forwarded to the appropriate writer. Please also note that due to the volume of material received, it is not always possible to acknowledge or reply to every submission.

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