



This project is funded
by the European Union

The process of adjusting and improving accessibility to public services for disadvantaged groups in the Western Balkans is quite slow and not much progress has been made. This particularly applies to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), where public service delivery should respond more effectively to the actual needs and demands of the population. In general, Western Balkan administrations aim to increase the accessibility of services to people with disabilities and reach the standards for accessibility. However, this remains limited to the legislative and policy framework, and not equally implemented in practice.

[\(Un\)Equal access to public services](#)

Based on the international and domestic regulations, persons with disabilities are entitled to the same rights as any other individual. This also applies to access to information. More than [290.000 citizens](#) with a different type of disability live in BiH and their access to relevant information is overall very limited. Despite that, BiH still does not have a national/entity-level strategy for raising public awareness or promoting human rights of persons with disabilities. Also, employees in public institutions that should enable the respect and exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities have not received relevant training to assist them in getting to know the approach to disability from a human rights perspective. Currently, there is [no significant progress](#) in exercising the right of persons with disabilities to access information and no websites of key legislative and executive institutions in BiH is fully adapted and accessible to people with disabilities.

Although it accelerated the digitalization process in BiH, the COVID-19 pandemic displayed all the flaws of its system and once again, highlighted the need for a public administration reform. This reform aims towards improvement and digitalization of public services.

POLICY BRIEF

The [SIGMA](#) principle covering the right to access public information indicates the following: the right to access public information is enacted in legislation and consistently applied in practice. One of the two indicators for [WeBER's monitoring](#) of accessibility focuses on proactive informing of the public by administration bodies, particularly by monitoring the comprehensiveness, timeliness, and clarity of the information disseminated through official websites.

Accessibility of administrative services for persons with disabilities is perceived as insufficient by the civil society organisations (CSOs) which took part in the [WeBER National PAR Monitor BiH 19/20 survey](#): 40,6% disagree and 19,8% strongly disagree that service providers are adequately distributed in such a way that all citizens have easy access. Furthermore, 47,9% disagree and 19,8% strongly disagree that administration service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups. One important fact is that only 5% of survey respondents believe that the staff working on administrative service delivery as trained on how to treat vulnerable groups.

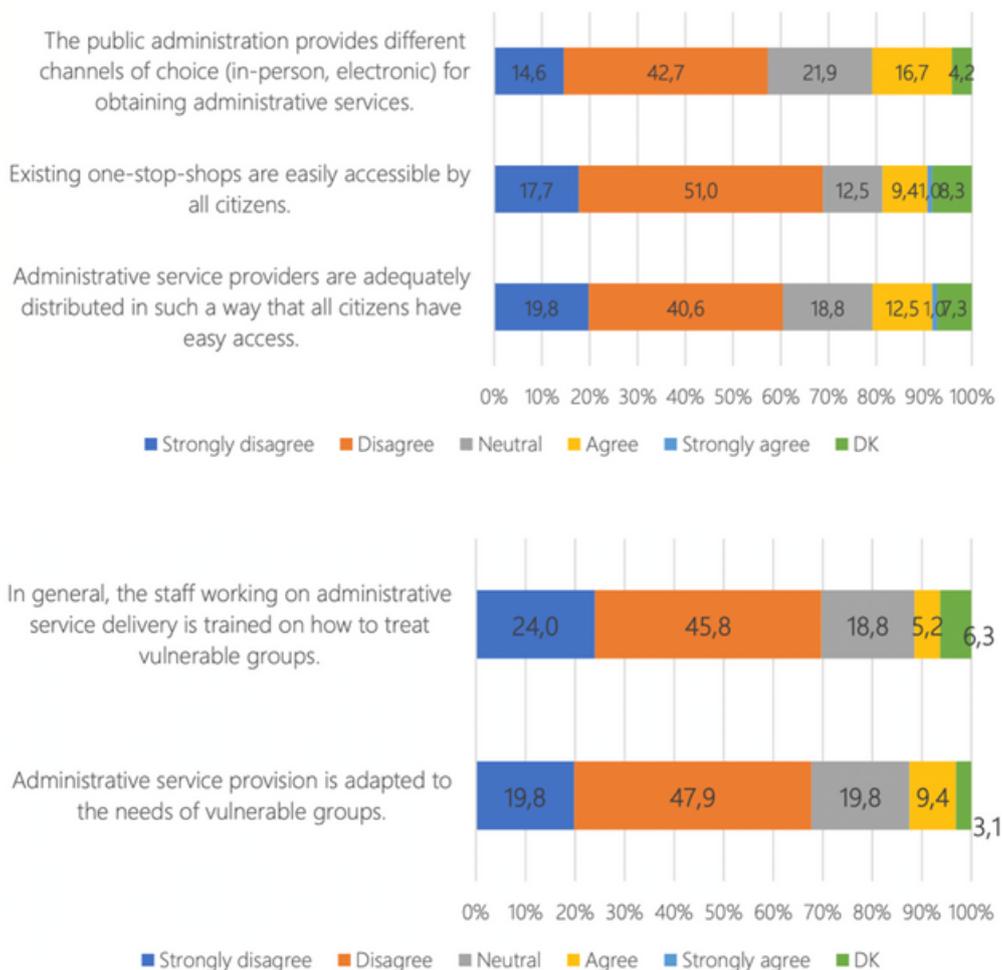


Chart 1 & 2: Public perception of providing services[1]

[1] Note: All results are rounded to the nearest integer. Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%. The base for these questions was n=1027 respondents

POLICY BRIEF

Furthermore, during COVID-19 pandemic, [research](#) shows that access to information was limited to some groups, and civil society organisations were the only source of information about the crisis to vulnerable groups. The latest WeBER National PAR Monitor Report notes that only 9% CSOs surveyed agree that service delivery is tailored to their needs. Noteworthy, BiH is not the exception as the situation is the same for other countries in the region, maintaining the score at 0.

How does Bosnia and Herzegovina do in regional terms?

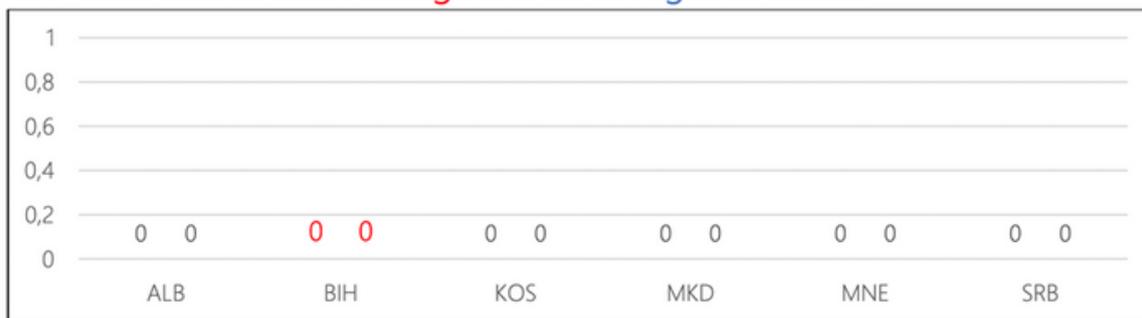


Chart 3: Regional comparison on public service provision[1]

Everyone included

Accessibility of on- and offline services must be further worked on by improving legal and policy framework and taking measures in co-operation with representative organizations of people with disabilities to implement, monitor, evaluate and communicate on necessary regulations. This should become regular practice and not just a task to be filled out as a part of the strategic document. In this way, the institutions could effectively contribute to inclusion of different subgroups of persons with disabilities and enable equal access to public services. Besides, BiH still does not have a system for data collection based on age, gender, type of disability or other data on persons with disabilities, this would be the starting point towards recognizing and addressing the needs of this population.

As e-channels are not easily accessible for persons with disabilities, this is another area that could impact the position of vulnerable groups in the society. To move forward and increase the uptake of digital signature, governments in the region should continue to make digital signatures and e-payment more present, as well as offer user-friendly solutions and easy access. Although digitalization of public services has been a key priority in many government agendas, BiH administration is yet ought to prioritize investments in underperforming dimensions to ensure sustainable future progression and align with EU standards in service delivery.

[1] Regional PAR Monitor Report with results for all Western Balkan administrations is available [here](#).

POLICY BRIEF

Moreover, staff working on administrative service delivery must be trained on how to treat vulnerable groups and ensure inclusivity by properly addressing their needs and ensuring an easy access of service to these groups.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. Its content excludes the responsibility of the Foreign Policy Initiative BH and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

For more information, please visit:

www.par-monitor.org