

## Palacky University Students Visited EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other key players of Czech development cooperation

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### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*(capital: Sarajevo) is situated on the Balkan Peninsula in South eastern Europe. Part of the former Yugoslav Republic, it declared its independence in 1991 with the collapse of Communism. A very complex conflict, spurred by ethnic antagonism, became violent in the 1990s and culminated in the devastating massacre of Srebrenica. The Dayton peace accord ended the war, which lasted from 1992-1995, though tensions still persist.*

At the beginning of June Palacky University Students visited Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), program country of Czech official development assistance. During their 10 days academic field-trip they met many representatives from international, national and local organisations, as well as private companies – considered as key players of development cooperation in this post-war country. It was supported by the Czech Development agency (Czech Aid) and organized for students with the goal to gain first hands practical experience in relation to what they are studying – International Development studies.



1. Visiting students in Mostar City

On June 5 this group of Czech and international students visited the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina. They learned about the role of EU amid the country's process of gaining accession to European Union. Mr Jan Snajdauf (Head of Political and Economic Section) gave a presentation that was followed by an interactive discussion with students on the path of BiH towards the EU in the areas of trade and investment, rule of law and fundamental human rights, as well as education, employment and social issues. Out of the discussion students got an overview on the political structure, system of government, education and fiscal policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



## 2. Discussion round at the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina

The visit to the EU showed me (as an international student coming from South Africa and studying in a European Union member state: Czech Republic) how important and complex are the required standards of accession to the EU and what BiH need to follow since the submission of EU-membership application. Rule of law and a stable democracy, as well as reformed public administration is needed. EU and other organisations in country are also cooperating with BiH high representatives to strengthen competitiveness and support small and medium enterprises, improve agriculture, social services, infrastructure and work together towards a cleaner environment.

However BiH still struggle with the set standards following post-conflict reconstruction with lots of division in society. Despite political and ethnic divisions, all political parties see the potential prosperity of entering the European Union. The EU is Bosnia and Herzegovina's biggest trade partner and largest provider of financial assistance with 3,5 billion Euros invested since 1996, 253,8 million Euros in EU pre-accession funds 2014-2017, and 40 million euros in disaster relief after the 2014 floods. It's evident that the country receives much support from the European Union and one can only hope that the country can unite and work on the reform agenda that will help them to gain accession. Currently Bosnia and Herzegovina is designated as a candidate country. It would be great for me and my classmates from Palacky University to visit this country again in 5-10 years and see the progress.