

Way More Than Trees

Forestry and Environmental Action creating a more sustainable
future for forests and people in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Defining the Issue



¹ Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the FBiH. Information on Forest Management in 2018, 2019

² Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Gross Domestic Product of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017, 2018

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is one of the most forested countries in Europe with very rich diversity of forest types and significant presence of virgin forest. The forests cover 63% of BiH's territory and protect exceptional biodiversity of forest ecosystems. The forest resources are one of the most important natural resources for/in BiH from the following aspects:

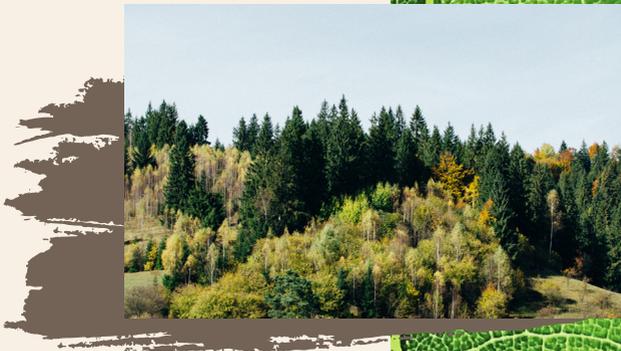
- **the state economy:** after 1995, the forestry sector has had an irreplaceable role in post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation, and the economic stability of the country and remains very important for the state economy. In 2018, a total of 4,686 people were employed in the forestry sector in the Federation BiH (FBiH)¹. In 2017, the forestry sector, together with agriculture and fishing, accounted for 5.61% of GDP in BiH (there are no segregated data for forestry sector only)²;
- **the general public:** forests play a key role in a range of ecosystem services, resources and benefits for the whole of society, such as: maintaining biodiversity, regulating water and land regimes, mitigating the effects of climate change and carbon sequestration (C), producing oxygen etc.
- **the local communities:** together with the wood-processing industry and agriculture, forestry plays a key role in the development and well-being of most rural areas; more than 50% of the BiH population lives in rural areas and relies in one way or another on forest and mountain ecosystems as an important source of subsistence, employment, energy, and recreation;

As in other countries with economies in transition, BiH is facing an unprecedented scale of changes that has shaped social, economic and political realities. Formal commitment to join the EU is still the prevailing agent of these changes.

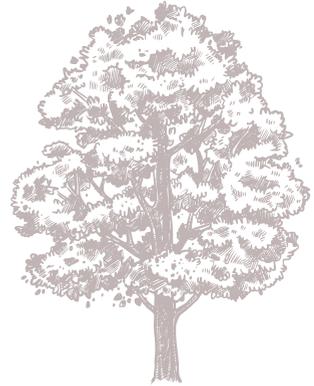
The country accepted the internationally recognised principles of sustainable development, such as the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM).

However, the implementation of SFM and the shift from government to governance in policy formulation, although introduced through professional debates in BiH, did not give concrete results to date.

The forestry sector (both public and private) can still be characterized as traditional, top-down, mostly male dominated, bureaucratic and inflexible, and non-transparent with present corruption, a high rate of illegal logging and other types of forest related crime. The complexity of the problem is also reflected in the fact that the Federal Law on Forests is still not adopted after 10 years of initiatives and public debate (Federation BiH is the location of our pilot area of Central Bosnia Canton).



Key issues of private forestry sector are:



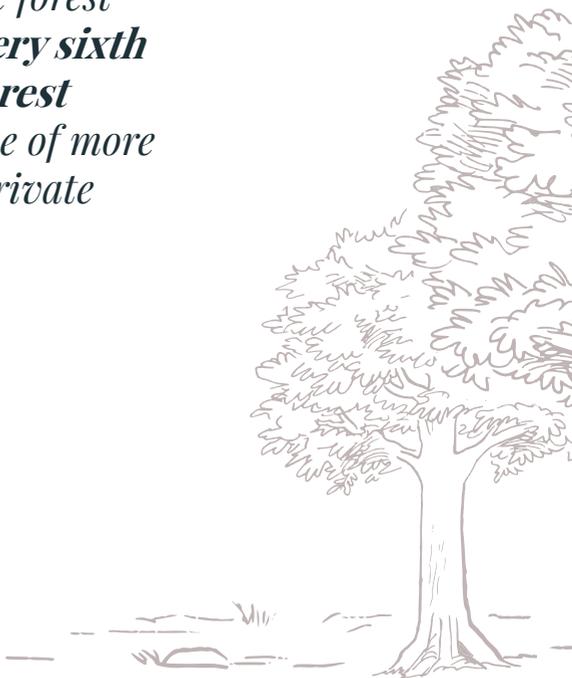
- absence of an umbrella forest law at FBIH level and the fact that both the draft of the new law and cantonal laws on forests do not treat public/ state and private forest property equally and fairly, at the expense of Private Forest Owners (PFOs),
- a lack of involvement and cooperation between stakeholders in forest-related planning processes across the sector, thus PFOs are not part of either public policy planning or management plans development,
- state of private forests is not as good as state of public forests (taking into consideration parameters as stock, increment etc.); Public forests are more profitable and under systematic forest management while private forests are not sustainably managed, overexploited or completely left behind by PFOs,
- PFOs do not have a structure they can rely on, nor a place where they can access the knowledge, networks, information and tools to manage private forests more efficiently and effectively,
- uniform use of private forests - only timber is recognized as an economically valuable forest product, whereas other functions of the forest (ecological, sociological) and the possibilities of generating economic profit using non-timber forest products, ecotourism, hunting, etc. have been neglected. Most forest owners who use their forests use it for firewood, while only 20% is market oriented,
- PFOs are not able to come into contact with the wood processing industry and have limited access to the market, which affects the price they achieve / their profits or livelihood.

Given the situation in the public forestry sector, it is difficult to expect that public administration has the motive and capacity to solve problems in the private forestry sector in the near future.

Therefore, it is a duty and obligation of the non-governmental sector to address these issues.

*Private forest representation in BiH is significant (**one fifth of the forest area is private**) and there is a vast number of private forest owners (PFOs) in BiH (**every sixth inhabitant is a private forest owner**); therefore, the issue of more effective management of private forests is not negligible!*

So there we are - Forestry and environmental action (fea), an organization that would like to introduce itself and its mission in the next few pages; and there you are, hopefully our future donor and partner in driving a positive change in the private forestry sector and creating a more sustainable future for forests and people (target group – rural communities, with a greater emphasis on the role of women).



Why support fea?

Forestry and Environmental Action

- ☝ We embraced principles of sustainable development and sustainable natural resource management
- ☝ We are strongly committed to contributing in achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our work
- ☝ We believe in the principles of democracy and are aware of the role and importance of civil society organisations (CSOs)
- ☝ We have a history of successful projects and experience of working with people, both the private and civil sectors and decision-makers especially in the area of forestry and land management
- ☝ We are able to recognize key problems and the obstacles to development in our country/region and to find possible solutions
- ☝ Our team consists of young, educated and ambitious people (predominantly women) who have the motive and the energy to change their environment and fight injustice and poverty.



The Challenge We Face



The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Through years of work in the forestry sector, we have identified some aggravating circumstances for the sustainable management of private forests that can be grouped as follows:

- although there is a strong public forestry administration, it is mainly focused on public forests,
- high price of public service - that are mandatory,
- interests of PFOs are generally in the hands of the public forestry administration, due to the lack of independent interest associations,
- high degree of bureaucracy present in the public forestry administration, due to distrust,
- poor statistics and information on private forests,
- non-updating of data in the cadastre and the problem with mismatch between old and new cadastral survey (unresolved property and legal issues),
- small average size of holdings + fragmentation (app. 1.752 land plot per owner of 0.411 ha),
- poor infrastructure in private forests (access roads to forests),
- profile of PFOs in BiH - unfavourable and unequal status of rural private forest owners (PFOs in BiH are mostly men who live in rural areas, are not highly educated and have low income jobs and they lack capacity and knowledge on forestry),
- PFOs do not have legal knowledge- due to complexity,
- lack of mechanization (tractors, chainsaws, etc.),
- poor access to the markets and market information,
- only little value adding to forest products,
- no incentives to be innovative,
- no certified private forests exist in BiH and in regards to certification PFOs lack capacity and knowledge,
- illegal activities in general.

Solutions

Private forests in the FBiH are a very important source of various goods and services.

The private owners can/should effectively manage their forests with the help of the state advisory service and administration (in cases where they have the capacity and will to do so) or with the help of interest associations of PFOs who have proven to be an excellent solution for SFM in private forests even in developed countries.

Support to PFOs should be reflected not only in the form of administration and application of very bleak and guesstimate management plans (as is the case now) but also at least in: lobbying, education, technical support and advisory services, providing funds and subsidies, etc.

PFOs need a strong association – i.e., an association that will be:

- **their guiding force** – an association capable of listening to its members, recognizing their needs and providing guidance to PFOs leading to higher rates of private forests utilization, solutions to property and legal issues, and training for project development and application on the funds.
- **their strong voice** – an association as independent democratic institution with influence toward the government will contribute to adoption of laws and lobbying for changes that are more beneficial to PFOs (e.g. reducing bureaucracy and administration).

In this way, the association would help PFOs to achieve broader rights and find the right responsible and legal strategies for sustainable and effective management of their private forests resulting in greater economic effects. This will lead to a significantly better position of PFOs, especially rural ones.

Guiding force and strong voice.





What We Achieved till Date

fea is a partner in the phased multi-year international Program entitled Empowering Communities through Democratic Management of Natural Resources along with five other partners from Denmark, Vietnam and Nepal. The Program is implemented in close cooperation with the lead partner–Danish Forestry Extension (DFE), which provides professional forestry know-how and insight into the EU best practices in the sector.

In the last two years, **fea** implemented the project activities in small rural pilot Municipality of Busovača in Central Bosnia Canton of FBiH. We led the process of mobilization and trust-building among local PFOs, conducted trainings in all aspects of association building, helped establish a local PFO association Private Forest Owners Association of Central Bosnia Canton (hereinafter referred to as the PFO Association), capacitated the Association and supported it to establish transparent financial and audit procedures, supported its case towards general public, facilitated the Association in establishing links to local entrepreneurs, research institutions and local authorities, etc.

Today, the first results of our work are already visible, as well as the positive impacts on the lives of the Association's members, the small rural PFOs. However, the Association is far from self-sustaining as well as reaching its full potential and greater effects, both for the benefit of its current members (app. 100 PFOs) as well as for numerous potential members from the other 11 municipalities in Central Bosnia Canton.

After a positive experience in the pilot Municipality of Busovača, we will continue the practice of associating PFOs in the entire Central Bosnia Canton through phase 2 of the Programme.



" The association has finally come to life, PFOs are motivated, activated and they have started thinking about the value of their forests. I am glad to see people in my local community gathered around a common goal.

Our obligation is to share this experience with other municipalities.

We consider our success not a happy ending, but a fresh start. "

Slaviša Čavara,

President of the Private Forest Owners Association of
Central Bosnia Canton

Our story from another perspective



Photo: **Ms Belkisa Merdan** at the founding assembly of the Association

Ms Belkisa Merdan is one of the two female members of the Management Board of the Association. She is proud to be part of this project because she believes that the Association can do a lot to change the position of women and their economic independence. Belkisa wants to be a leader of change in the small community of Busovača, fight to improve the life of private forest owners and at the same time to protect the nature.

Working as a Board member, she feels that her work is accepted and respected equally compared with her male colleagues and that everybody sees and appreciates her work and dedication to make the Association a true representative of the community.

She especially appreciates the opportunity to participate in trainings, work groups and study trips to enhance her knowledge and help her community grow.

During 2018-2019, **fea** helped the implementation of UNDP

Biomass Project- Development of Effective Policies and Legislation Framework for Sustainable Utilization of Wood Biomass in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

fea coordinated the development of the Guide on best practices and recommendations to increase utilization of wood biomass in BiH with the aim to contribute to the facilitation of optimal use of wood biomass and institutionalization of the sustainable forestry practice in BiH.

fea ensured the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders from the relevant sectors in order to cover all the relevant forestry operational practices and methods, management operations and best available technologies.

In addition, **fea** provided support to the policy development for sustainable wood biomass utilization in BiH through the selection and further elaboration of most realistic recommendations from the previously conducted Study on policy gaps within the energy and forestry sectors.

This project is extremely important because it creates the political and institutional preconditions for using biomass, from both public and private forests.

In 2014, **fea** implemented the

“Sustainable Private Forest Management and Role of Private Forest in Biodiversity Conservation: Practical Guidelines for Owners” Project.

The overall objective of the Project is raising awareness on the importance and role of private forests in preserving biodiversity and achieving economic benefits.

The specific objective is to strengthen the capacity of private forest owners in Sarajevo Canton and educate them on sustainable forest management.

During 2017-2018, **fea**, together with its partner organisation Danish Forestry Extension (DFE), implemented the

“Mobilizing smallholder forest owners and building a foundation for civil society strengthening and organizing through their engagement in local forest owners association(s) in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Project

financed by the Civil Society in Development (CISU) under the Eastern Neighbour Civil Society Fund.

Through establishment of a strong partnership between fea and DFE, the overall purpose of the Project was to screen the smallholder forestry sector and to gain better knowledge about shared problems or challenges. After a comprehensive study (focus groups and survey), we developed a Scoping Study which summarises the in-depth assessment of the existing situation (issues and challenges) of private forest owners.

We organised two large events: Workshop for decision makers and key interest groups (stakeholders) and Workshop for private smallholder forest owners, to present the key findings of the Scoping Study and to initiate a dialogue on strategies of the private forestry owners' association.

An Advocacy Plan was developed and implemented, as well as accompanying public awareness campaigns on the importance of private forests and their sustainable management.



What fea Aims to Change

Forestry and Environmental Action

fea belongs to a group of people/organizations that strongly believe in the possibility of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and is doing everything in its power to contribute to humanity along that historic path.

Through our work, we contribute to some of the SDGs, build partnerships, and motivate others to join this magnificent journey.

Our work addresses in particular:





Goal #1 No poverty

PFOs in BiH are mostly men who live in rural areas, are not highly educated and have low income jobs. More than one half of private forest owners are retired or unemployed. **fea** is aiming to further capacitate the PFO Association to be able to help PFOs to find new and responsible strategies of using their forests for increasing their livelihood and gaining income.



Goal #4 Quality education

The main activities of **fea** are related to non-formal education of different target groups. **fea** is building the capacities of PFO Association through education and training activities with PFOs on various topics (marketing, economy, access to markets, writing project proposals and applying for grants, advocacy, etc.). Furthermore, we educate other target groups (such as children) and continuously implement different innovative and interesting awareness raising campaigns for the general public.

Through the **fea** Leadership Academy - Developing Interpersonal and Entrepreneurial Skills among Young People through Education and Lifelong Learning, **fea** contributed to the development of the community by strengthening the capacity of its most important resource – the youth.



Goal #5 Gender equality

The majority of **fea**'s employees are women, and we have thus developed a sensitivity to gender equality. Recognizing that the forestry sector is traditionally male oriented, **fea** is developing a gender mainstreaming policy as a guide to include gender considerations when planning, implementing, and monitoring the Program activities. So far, we have ensured that women are present in the planning and implementation of our project activities.



Goal #11 Sustainable cities and communities

Since its establishment, **fea**'s goal has been to improve the state of natural (forest) resources in BiH and the region through its sustainable management. Our mission is to help build societies that responsibly manage their natural resources. Recognizing that long-term success in reaching sustainability is dramatically increased when local communities are fully invested in the design and implementation of policies and individual projects, we have developed a strong internal capacity to facilitate stakeholder consultations and empowerment of particular groups for decision-making.

fea is supporting rural development through projects such as mapping of rural development potentials of the Kakanj and Vares region for preparation of a Master Plan for tourism development.



Goal #13 Climate action

Since its establishment, **fea**'s goal has been to improve the environment in BiH and the region through implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, including the one on climate change. **fea** has coordinated or supported numerous afforestation actions across the country; most recently, in cooperation with EU Info Center, 7 afforestation actions to support the Climate Diplomacy Week in BiH.

Through its awareness raising campaigns and projects, **fea** attempts to draw public attention to the importance of climate change issues in BiH and the region.



Goal #15 Life on land (Desertification, land degradation and drought)

Being a CSO focal point for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for South East Europe and with vast experience in working on environmental protection projects in the region, **fea** was engaged to develop National Action Plans to combat land degradation for 3 countries: BiH, Montenegro and Macedonia. **fea** also supported the implementation of the 4-year UN Environment/GEF project "Enhanced Cross-sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning" in Serbia, whereby we prepared and published the Guidelines for Sustainable Land Management at the Local Level in the Republic of Serbia and an accompanying brochure for local self-governments and decision-makers at the local level, as well as a comprehensive website dedicated to land degradation and sustainable land management: <http://www.degradacijazemljista.rs/>.

Besides these projects, we helped the PFO Association to successfully develop and implement two projects related to cleaning of illegal landfills and afforestation.



Goal #16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

Through multiple projects, **fea** has been working on building the capacities of local stakeholders in making decisions on fulfilling environmental protection obligations in BiH, with particular reference to the capacities of civil society. Equally, **fea** has provided technical support to institutions in BiH and Serbia for preparation of projects for GEF and other financial institutions. **fea** has assisted in the establishment of the Private Forest Owners Association of Central Bosnia Canton, ensuring a democratic structure, transparency and participation. **fea** has developed and now is implementing a project on regional action for combating forest crime and corruption, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Started on 1 December 2018, the project will be implemented over three years in four Western Balkan countries: Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and BiH.

The specific objective of the action is to achieve good governance in the forestry sector and combat forest crime and corruption, by increased transparency and networking in the four target countries.



Goal #17 Partnerships for the goals

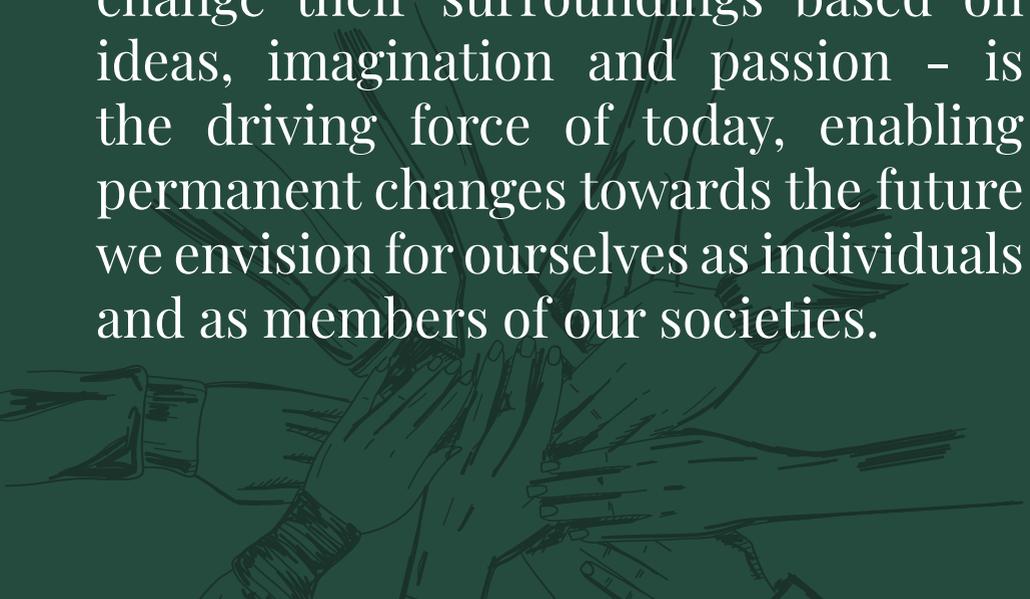
fea is a member of 3 international organisations: UNCCD CSO NETWORK, GEF - CSO NETWORK, and UN Global compact. It has established cooperation with 12 international and domestic donators and partners. These days, we are working on becoming a member in the FOREXT network (FORestEXTension network) supported by EFI (European Forest Institute).

The aim of this network is to assist organisations in building their capacities regarding training and education of private forest owners, supporting the development of their associations, inventorying and marking of private forests, preparation of forest management plans for private forests, enforcement of forest legislation in private forests, providing subsidies for more sustainable forest management, organizing sale of wood from private forests, capacity building for private forestry, etc.



Goal and Objectives

We at **fea** believe that people gathered around a common goal, approaching each other in good will and trusting in humanity's greatest strength - the ability of human beings to create and change their surroundings based on ideas, imagination and passion - is the driving force of today, enabling permanent changes towards the future we envision for ourselves as individuals and as members of our societies.



fea's goal is to:

- bring more resources to the private forestry sector,
- attract more members into the PFOs Association and secure greater rights for them through higher level lobbying,
- enable more responsible and diverse management of private forests and improved environment among rural communities,
- enable socio-economic development and improve the currently unfavourable and unequal status of rural private forest owners,
- prepare the PFO Association for all future activities, completely new and pioneering for the private forestry sector in BiH.

Our long-term objective is to replicate the process in at least 2 other cantons in FBiH, as soon as Private Forest Owners Association of Central Bosnia Canton can represent an example of good practice.



Therefore, our specific objective for the next 2 years of the ongoing programme is:

By November 2021, 400 PFOs, covering the entire Central Bosnia Canton, will be organised within PFO Association that is a recognized and consulted as a forest policy actor that sustainably manages and diversifies utilization of forests, providing market access and increasing the added value of the products from private forests for their owners.



Theory of

With your support, we will:

-  mobilize larger number of PFOs (especially women) so the PFO Association becomes more representative,
-  further capacitate the PFO Association in finance and administration, management, marketing skills and advocacy to make it stronger,
-  provide forestry know-how and introduce more innovative and new diversified practices, but in accordance with the principles of sustainability,

CHANGE

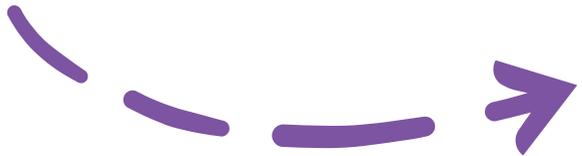
Then PFO Association will be able to:

-  advocate on behalf of PFOs on forest policy matters and secure greater rights for PFOs,
-  advise forest owners on better and more responsible forestry techniques to achieve SFM,
-  collect and analyse data on the market for forest related products to provide financial and marketing advice to PFOs or negotiate better prices for them,
-  assist PFOs in implementing new strategies to increase their livelihoods by diversifying usage of their forests and adding value to raw forest materials,
-  secure women participation in activities related to private forests management,
-  expand its portfolio and sources of financing to achieve self-sustainability and independency.

In this scenario, PFOs see the benefits of the existing PFO Association, trust the Association so they become active members, pay their membership fees and let the Association speak and negotiate on their behalf and assist them on matters of their interest. The functioning of a strong PFO Association, which addresses and solves problems in the private forestry sector, leads to improved effects both in terms of the environment (state of private forests) and rural livelihoods.

The Approach

To achieve its ambition, **fea** has identified 4 key domains of change which will help achieve the desired outcomes.



Capacity building

of PFOA in the fields of project and organisational management, forestry, extension services, consulting, advocacy etc.

Economy and market

increasing forest product diversification and enabling biomass production, providing market access and improving value chains of forest products

Sustainably managed forests and local community development

Participation and women empowerment

mobilisation of PFOs to engage in PFOA and ensuring active participation of women in PFOA's activities

Advocacy

making PFOA a recognized policy actor

Resource Requirements

2019 - 2023

Over the last 5 years (2013-2018), we managed to attract over BAM 1,000,000 (app. EUR 0.5 million) of financial support for 16 projects implemented in 4 countries in the region. Our intention is to have much greater impact on our societies and the environment in the region, so we developed our first Fundraising Strategy in 2018.

Today, **fea** is launching a five-year fundraising campaign to increase its program capacity, titled **"WAY MORE THAN TREES - Forestry and Environmental Action creating a more sustainable future for forests and people in Bosnia and Herzegovina"**. Our five-year fundraising campaign will grow our capacity and deepen our ability to deliver high-impact, lasting results.

Our campaign is aiming for BAM 1,475,000 (app. EUR 755,000) before 2023. To date, we have secured BAM 575,000 (app. EUR 294,000) from DANIDA.

Table 1: Resource mobilization requirements 2019–2023 (expressed in BAM)

Sources	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Project Programme	195,000	195,000	185,000	0	0
Resource Mobilization Needs	100,000	100,000	150,000	300,000	250,000
TOTAL	295,000	295,000	335,000	300,000	250,000

Table 2: Details of funding gap by program area 2019–2023 (expressed in BAM)

Programs	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Mobilizing of PFOs, solving their forest ownership issues and securing their rights	50,000	50,000	60,000	50,000	50,000
Improved extension services for PFOs	50,000	50,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Enabling biomass production and diversification of forests products	145,000	145,000	115,000	50,000	50,000
Providing market access and improving value chains of forest products	50,000	50,000	60,000	100,000	50,000
TOTAL	295,000	295,000	335,000	300,000	250,000



Who Are We?

The regional non-governmental organisation (NGO) **fea** was established in 2007 in Sarajevo, BiH, with the main purpose of advancing the state of environment and forests in BiH and the SEE region (today we also have an office in Belgrade, Serbia).

Since **fea**'s inception, the guiding principle of its work has been to support authorities and communities, as well as the private sector, in the responsible use of natural resources in accordance with the legitimate demands of society.

We help build societies that responsibly manage their natural resources.

*Our case towards our partners (donors, organizations, governments, local authorities, private companies, public-private entities etc.) is that **fea** promotes responsible forest management for socio-economic development and improved environment among rural communities.*

Our team has provided practical and professional support to a range of development initiatives in the field of environmental protection.

The most important areas of **fea**'s operations to date are:

- sustainable development and management of natural resources (forests, water, land),
- implementation of international multilateral environmental agreements (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD, United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity- UNCBD and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC),
- support to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- environmental protection and improved management of protected areas, and
- empowering women and young people.



fea has already proven its commitment in its scope of work, expertise and professionalism.

Flemming Sehested,

Director of DFE

More information about our work can be found on <https://www.feasee.org/>.

Be free to contact us for additional information.

Key fact sheets for BiH³



Photo: Flag and coat of arms of BiH

Geographic location

Bosnia and Herzegovina is located at the western part of Balkan peninsula.

Neighbouring countries

Republic Serbia (north-east), Republic Montenegro (south-east), Republic Croatia (north, west and south).



Photo: BiH administrative divisions

Administrative division

BH is divided into two entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), as well as a separate administrative unit: Brčko District.

FBiH is divided into 10 cantons. Cantons are further divided into municipalities. FBiH has 79 municipalities. RS has 62 municipalities.

Area

Bosnia and Herzegovina covers an area of 51,209.2 km² (of which 51,197 km² is land, and 12.2 km² is sea)

Climate

Mostly continental, Mediterranean in the south

Population

3,531,159 according to 2013 Census

Population structure

Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and others

Capital

Sarajevo

Official languages

Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian with two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic)

Official currency

Bosnia and Herzegovina Convertible Mark – BAM (1 BAM = 0,511292 Euro)

GDP (millions of BAM)

31,332 (2017)

Unemployment rate by ILO definition (LFS)

18.4 % (2018)

Average net wages in BiH in BAM

851 (2017)

³Data source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

