



Balkan 2023
**Defence
Monitor**

Transparency



BCSP
Belgrade Centre
for Security Policy

TRANSPARENCY



Croatia remains the most transparent in all areas, followed by Montenegro, while Albania can be described as the least transparent, due to the least disaggregated budget and the MOD website not working. North Macedonia has been improving in transparency as the website of MOD is well organized and contains most of relevant information. On the other hand, Serbia has recorded backsliding in transparency since legislative amendments from 2016 to 2018, which enabled the MOD to arbitrarily classify entire categories of data as secret and restrict access to information on human resources management (for instance, number of newly appointed staff, data on personnel attrition etc.) and a number of strategic documents and reports.

Generally speaking, access to information related to the defence sector in the Balkans varies to a considerable extent, depending on the country and thematic area. All countries have mechanisms for access to public information in place, but their effectiveness is rather questionable, and the responses from the some of the Ministries received by BCSP vary in quality compared to the ones received for the previous edition of Balkan Defence Monitor. Considering proactive publication of information on the websites of institutions, all Ministries occasionally share news on relevant donations, military drills or specific projects, but access to data related to human resources is not always easily accessible and not all information is up to date.

When it comes to financial information, budgets of the ministries of defence, as parts of annual national budgets, can be found on the governments' websites of all six countries. However, these budgets differ to a large extent, with Croatian being the most and Albanian the least transparent, judging by criteria such as the level of disaggregation and references to specific procurement projects. While information about donations cannot always be easily accessed, all ministries are somewhat responsive to requests for access to public information related to foreign donations and most of them publish news articles related to donations on their websites.

Strategic documents are generally accessible, with certain exceptions which are classified as secret as in the case of Serbia, or when they cannot be obtained via research, like with some documents from Albania and Montenegro. Only Bosnia and Herzegovina has its Military Doctrine published on the website. All countries except Serbia provide data on the total number of personnel disaggregated into ranks upon the FOI request or on their website in the case of Croatia, but Croatia and Montenegro are the most transparent in the area of human resources, as their annual defence reports provide data on military education or staff turnover, for example. Gender transparency is a weak spot for all countries, with only Croatia proactively publishing the percentage of women across military ranks on the Armed Forces website. All countries, however, delivered this data upon FOI request. Reporting on National Actions Plans for implementation of UNSCR 1325 is not systematic and it is hard to compare the data, even if the reports themselves could be described as quite detailed and transparent in most of the cases.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



Albania

Albanian defence budget consists of only seven general categories: Planning, Management and Administration, Combat Forces, Military Education, Combat Support, Health Support, Social Support and Civil Emergencies. Even though capital expenditure is disaggregated between internal and external financing, the lack of cost breakdown in the administrative sections makes the budget of the Ministry of Defence of Albania the least transparent in the region. Ministry of Finance publishes annual reports on the implementation of the budget of the Ministry of Defence, but these reports contain aggregate data on budgeted and executed expenses and do not contribute to more transparency on how the money was spent.

With the website of Ministry of Defence still being inaccessible, information about donations retrieved via FOI request stated the donor and the value of the donation, but the subject of donations was referred to as "material" and cannot be linked to specific equipment.

Just like in 2021, Albania is not transparent enough regarding access to information and its visibility. In response to the request for access to information, Albanian MOD did not provide a list of donations like it did in 2021, but its response included the overall value of donations from Turkey and the US. The lack of data was also present in the open-source research.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Budget of the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina is more detailed in the section of current than capital expenditure. The former does account for most of the country's defence budget, as the majority of it goes to salaries. The subsection of contracted services is not elaborated. The BiH defence budget does mention a specific project called "Perspektiva" which is aimed at transition assistance to the laid off staff. However, the budget item related to equipment purchase is stated as a lump sum, the items related to maintenance are not detailed either and donations are not stated in the Ministry of Defence budget section. On the other hand, annual reports on the execution of the budget of the Ministry of Defence (the last one available on the website being for 2021) are far more detailed and provide information about specific projects and procurement.¹

When it comes to donations, information can be obtained via FOI request. However, the response is significantly less detailed than the one obtained for the previous issue of Balkan Defence Monitor, which stated the donor country, value of the donation and other details, pointing out inconsistency in implementing the right to access to public information. The MOD's response to the FOI request from February 2023 speaks only about the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina received donations from NATO, the EU and bilateral partners without specifying the value of these donations and their exact content. Therefore, data on military donations to Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2022 was collected through open-source analysis. News about some of the donations are also published on the website of the Ministry of Defence.

¹ Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Izvešće o izvršenju proračuna Ministarstva obrane i Oružanih snaga BiH za 2021. godinu" [Report on the execution of the budget of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2021] (February 24, 2022) <http://www.mod.gov.ba/afoto2016/5722Izvjestajozvršenju.pdf>

Croatia

Out of all countries covered by the analysis, the budget of Croatia is the only one referencing specific procurement projects in the section dedicated to the Ministry of Defence. It includes the total sum of donations, and the expenditure is the most detailed, with subsections outlining the costs of UN, NATO and EU military missions respectively. Revenue from the EU Solidarity Fund is shown as an item in the subsections where it is applicable. Despite having the most transparent budget, in 2022 MOD raised concern on this issue with signing of a contract for purchase of the air defence system Mistral, which was not planned in the budget.²

While donations to the defence sector are included in the budget as a lump sum, MOD publishes news about donations on its website. These articles do not always include the value of donations, but the Annual Defence Report includes a textual explanation of the contents and value of the donations. However, the Annual Defence Report for 2021 was only adopted by the Government in October 2022 and the report for 2022 is still not published. Data on the largest military donations to Croatia was compiled through open-source research.

Montenegro

Budget of Montenegro can be described as somewhat more transparent than the most in the sample, with certain reservations. Article 6 of the Law on the budget of Montenegro for 2022 states that revenue of the Ministry of Defence will be used for “financing the realization of partner goals” and modernization in line with NATO standards, while Article 11 announces a planned procurement of two patrol ships with the loan provider to be determined. Budget of the Ministry of Defence contains several subsections and is disaggregated to a large extent. However, the expenditure on equipment is shown as a single budget item in several subsections, without references to specific procurement projects, unlike in the case of Croatia. While most of the subsections contain a detailed list of services, considerable amounts are classified under the item of “other services.” This is also the case with several items referring to “transfers to individuals” without elaboration. Specific projects related to construction and maintenance of defence infrastructure can be found in the budget section of Public Works Administration.

Montenegro could be described as the most transparent when it comes to donations, together with Croatia, as its annual defence reports³ thoroughly describe donations in the defence sector, including their donor, value, subject of the donation and state of realization. Government of Montenegro also offers information about donations in the defence sector through the news published on its website. Lastly, details about donations can be obtained via FOI request.

² Obris, “Mistral odabran i kupljen, problemi ostaju” [Mistral selected and purchased, problems remain] (December 16, 2022) <https://obris.org/hrvatska/mistral-odabran-i-kupljen-problemi-ostaju>

³ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Montenegro, “Izveštaj o radu i stanju u upravnim oblastima iz nadležnosti Ministarstva odbrane za 2021. godinu sa izvještajem o radu Direkcije za zaštitu tajnih podataka za 2021. godinu” [Report on the work and situation in administrative areas under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence for the year 2021 with the Report on the work of the Directorate for the Protection of Secret Data for the year 2021] (March 31, 2022) <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/f1248c30-4dc1-4c54-8ab8-bb88af0baece>

North Macedonia

Despite defence budget of North Macedonia being well disaggregated, information about equipment expenditure is not quite transparent, as the item “purchase of equipment and machinery” is listed twice, both as a lump sum, without references to specific purchases. Infrastructure expenditure cannot be linked to specific projects either. On the other hand, expenditure is clearly divided by source: self-financing, loans and donations. The subsection on decentralization, which accounts for current transfers to local government units, is rather unelaborated. While NATO integration subsection contains only the item on equipment and machinery purchase, a textual description of the aims of this activity is provided, however without specifications in terms of specific projects and equipment.

Only basic information about donations – such as value and donor - can be obtained via request for public information. While news about donations can be found on MOD’s website, none are available from 2022.

Serbia

Despite a certain degree of data disaggregation, Serbian defence budget contains various subcategories with generic titles “machines and equipment” without mention of specific procurement projects. The budget for 2022 includes an overview of planned capital expenditures in the defence sector until 2024 and one of the largest items is *equipping with weapons and military equipment according to the tripartite agreement*, signed between the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Defence and Public Enterprise “Jugoimport-SDPR”⁴ (arms trade company). However, the budget does not contain an explanation of what equipment is to be bought through the agreement. Another issue pointed out in the Government Defence Integrity index is the fact that the differences between budgeted and executed costs are usually not accounted for.⁵ MOD is responsive to FOI requests and it provided details about one realized donation during 2022.

4 Tango Six, “Vojni budžet Srbije za 2022. godinu: 1,123 milijarde evra” [Serbia’s military budget for 2022: 1.123 billion Euros] (November 11, 2021) <https://tangosix.rs/2021/11/11/vojni-budzet-srbije-za-2022-godinu-1123-milijarde-evra>

5 Transparency International. Government Defence Integrity Index 2020: Financial Overview for Serbia (Accessed February 10, 2023) <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/serbia/?risk=financial&single-question=7174>

STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS



All six countries have defence strategies and national security strategies published on the websites of the ministries of defence, although the website of Albanian MOD cannot be accessed. In the case of Montenegro, all relevant documents are published on the website of the Government and can be obtained through the search engine. Montenegro is the only country which does not have a separate MOD website, while MOD websites of all other countries contain sections listing all or most of the strategies, documents and reports, which contributes to their accessibility and transparency.

Only Bosnia and Herzegovina has its Military Doctrine publicly available and it is published on the website of the Ministry of Defence⁶. Defence Strategy of Montenegro and Action Plan foresaw the adoption of Military Doctrine for the 4th quartal of 2020, but no follow up on the initiative could have been tracked in research. When it comes to Serbia, Military Doctrine was adopted in 2010 and used to be publicly available as there are academic works referencing it, the last one being from May 2016⁷. That is not the case anymore, as the document has been declared "internal" according to the Data secrecy law, it was explained in the response by the Ministry of Defence. The same goes for several other documents, such as the action plans for implementation of the Defence Strategy and National Security Strategy, as well as the outdated long-term development plan for the period from 2011 to 2020, which was classified as "top secret."

While Serbia still did not adopt a new long-term development plan, as confirmed by the Ministry of Defence in the response to the FOI request, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia have all made their long-term development plans available to the public. The 2022 work program of the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina mentions the Long-term modernization plan of the Armed Forces of BiH 2017-2027, but this document cannot be found in the extensive list of documents published on the Ministry's website. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia also publish mid-term development plans covering 2-year periods, but the research did not reveal such plans in the case of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Serbia is the least transparent in this segment and the total number of personnel remains unavailable to the public. Most of the data and documents related to human resources management has secrecy classification of "confidential" or higher. The *Decision on determining the degree of secrecy of data in the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces*⁸ from 2016 allowing the Ministry to deny access to a broad range of information and documents and classify entire categories of documents under various degrees of secrecy caused serious backsliding in transparency, as pointed out by the civil society.⁹ On the other hand, information on staff turnover disaggregated by rank was delivered upon FOI request.

6 Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Vojna doktrina Oružanih snaga BiH" [Military Doctrine of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Accessed February 10, 2023) <http://www.mod.gov.ba/files/file/dokumenti/vojna-doktrina/vojnadoktrina.pdf>

7 Dragomir Đurić and Miroslav Ostojić, "Uticaj doctrine i konceptata na komandovanje Vojskom Srbije," *Vojno delo* 68, no. 5 (2016): 192-208. <https://doi.org/10.5937/vojdela1605192D>

8 Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, "Odluka o određivanju stepena tajnosti podataka u Ministarstvu odbrane i Vojski Srbije" [Decision on determining the degree of secrecy of data in the Ministry of Defence and Serbian Armed Forces] (March 8, 2016) https://www.mod.gov.rs/multimedia/file/staticki_sadrzaj/slu%c5%bebeni%20vojni%20list/2016/SVL%20broj%2005.pdf

9 Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, "Zarobljavanje sektora bezbednosti u Srbiji" [Capture of the Security Sector in Serbia] (June 2020) <https://bezbednost.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NED-srb-screen-fin.pdf>

All other countries share the number of personnel upon FOI request, while Croatia has the number of personnel disaggregated into military ranks available on the Army's website, albeit the data is from 2020. Croatia and Montenegro include information on staff turnover in annual defence reports, with the latter having this data disaggregated by ranks. Both countries also share information on number of applicants for voluntary military service, and so does North Macedonia, whose defence report for 2022 states that due to withdrawal of both submitted applications, the program wasn't implemented in the first part of last year as planned.

GENDER

Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia have national action plans for implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in place, while Albania never adopted the second generation of the NAP, like the rest of the countries did. The NAPs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia expired in 2022 and 2020 respectively. In December 2022, Serbian Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue opened a call for civil society organizations to participate in the working group for drafting the new national action plan.¹⁰ The last available report on the implementation of the previous NAP, which covered the period from 2017 to 2020, was published in the same month. Moreover, in March 2022, MOD of Serbia formed the Office for gender equality, tasked with implementation of activities related to UNSCR 1325.

Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia have NAP in place and regularly publish reports on their implementation. While the last available report on Croatia covers the period 2019-2020, or the first two years of their NAP, Montenegro and North Macedonia report on the implementation of NAP annually. Bosnia and Herzegovina published a report concerning the entire period of NAP implementation, from 2018 till 2022. While these reports do explain activities and programs the Ministries have done to improve the position of women in defence sector, they are not standardized and are hard to compare. Moreover, it is not always possible to link projects and programs with concrete improvements in this area. While Croatia has the percentage of women in the defence sector available on the website of the Ministry of Defence, other countries deliver this data upon FOI request or publish it in annual defence reports.

¹⁰ Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia, "Javni poziv organizacijama civilnog društva za podnošenje kandidature za članstvo u Radnoj grupi za izradu Nacionalnog akcionog plana za primenu Rezolucije Saveta bezbednosti Ujedinjenih nacija 1325 – Žene, mir, bezbednost u Republici Srbiji" [Public invitation to civil society organizations to submit candidacy for membership in the Working Group for the preparation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, peace, security in the Republic of Serbia] (October 2022) <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/konkursi-javni-pozivi-60.php>