



CARDS 2002

Country

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Implementation period

2003-2004

Funding (€)

€2.2 million

Results

The return and reintegration of 188 families to reconstructed accommodation in Republika Srpska (RS) and the return of a further 150 families to apartments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.\

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Back to the future

Coming home

As the number of refugees and internally displaced persons returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war continues to increase, the pressure on national and international support agencies is also rising. If communities are to be rebuilt and economies revitalised, the appropriate infrastructures and support for rehabilitation must be both adequate and available.

Consequently, within the EU's CARDS 2001 and 2002 programmes, work has been ongoing to research and locate the areas and people in need, to communicate and co-operate with the local authorities involved, and then to identify potential beneficiaries. The current project is being coordinated in the municipalities of Eastern Republika Srpska (RS) and the Sarajevo Canton by the Austrian Hilfswerk Mission (the Mission) which has a wealth of experience in rehabilitation and reintegration. The project team is working closely with various government ministries, local municipalities, international donors and organisations, the Dutch and Austrian Governments.

The chosen few

With two field offices in the area, the Austrian Hilfswerk Mission is well placed to select the beneficiaries for the project. Members of the team go on field trips and place advertisements in the local press inviting potential applicants to visit their offices for selection. The need is great – many of the people who apply have been living in outhouses while they wait for financial aid to start repairing or rebuilding their homes. Through a careful selection of beneficiaries, good quality and cost-effective repairs and renovation, and careful follow-up work, this European Union funded CARDS project has achieved a noteworthy success rate.

One of the project's main challenges is to house the returning families in good quality buildings which are supported by an adequate infrastructure within a sustainable local community. In some areas, the supplies of



electricity and water have to be restored, which is not always easy in regions where the houses are dispersed in small villages across large impoverished areas with poor transport and communication systems.

Savings and sustainability

Once the buildings have been constructed the incoming community also needs education, training and employment opportunities. In rural areas, the returning families are given practical donations such as cattle, seeds, tools and machines to help them help themselves to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. In city areas, financial incentives are given to encourage small-business start-ups, and a counselling service is provided for those looking for, or creating, new jobs. In both urban and rural areas improving the returning community's socio-economic environment through sustainable measures and local capacity-building is vital to the project's success.

The project team helps to identify beneficiaries who might be interested in starting a small business and then provides him/her with technical or financial support. As the result of co-operation with the Beekeepers' Association in Ilijas, for example, the Mission supplied equipment and educated five beneficiaries in how to raise bees. This is a prime example of how the project can benefit individuals and the community as a whole.

It is promoting new businesses such as these that returning refugees and displaced persons need to help them rebuild their communities and lives.

