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OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME  
“ENVIRONMENT 2007 – 2013”



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund  
Cohesion Fund

Cohesion Policy for Environment Directorate  
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## Minutes

### from the Ninth Meeting of the Operational Programme “Environment 2007 – 2013” Monitoring Committee

*08.12.2010, 09:00h, “Bulgaria” Hall, Park Hotel “Pirin”, city of Sandanski*

**Deputy Minister Ivelina Vassileva, chairperson of the Monitoring Committee** of Operational Programme “Environment 2007 – 2013 (OPE), welcomed the representatives of the European Commission (EC), the members of the Committee and the guests to the meeting.

**Mrs. Vassileva** described the past year as “intense, but productive“. She reported on the work carried out by the OPE Managing Authority (MA) and the OPE Intermediate Body (IB) with the aim of facilitating and accelerating the procedures for preparation and implementation of projects under the Programme, viz.: transition to direct-award contractig with specific beneficiaries, thus enabling the funds to be allocated to priority projects and to have ongoing dialogue during the preparation of the project proposals. The regular practice of conducting meetings with the beneficiaries and the ongoing measures for informing the stakeholders were also mentioned.

As a result of the efforts made, the first four sites in the Waters Sector financed under OPE were commissioned in 2010:

1. The sewerage systems in the North and South territories of the Uzundzhata settlement, Stage II – sewer treatment plant No. 1A, sewer treatment plant No. 2A with manifolds and pressure conveyance to the Kiten Waste Water Treatment Plant, town of Primorsko, the total value of the project being BGN 21 mln.
2. "Complex treatment of the waters of the town of Sopot through reconstruction and modernisation of the sewerage systems and installations, replacement of the worn-out water supply system, construction of a new drinking water reservoir and a main water pipeline connecting the reservoir with the water supply system of the town of Sopot, construction of water treatment facilities for drinking water and household waste water with input manifolds - Stage 1 - Construction of the Waste Water Treatment Plant", the value of the project being BGN 18 mln.
3. "Construction of a sewerage and manifold network to the existing urban waste water treatment plant and the water supply network of the town of Beloslav", the value of the project being BGN 21,6 mln.

4. "Reconstruction and modernisation of the water supply and sewerage networks in residential districts "Strumsko" and "Balarbashi" in the city of Blagoevgrad", the value of the project being BGN 10 mln.

**Deputy Minister Vassileva** added that 13 of a total of 26 infrastructure projects being currently implemented under the Programme have been almost completed or are close to completion and commissioning.

Following a delay, the first infrastructure project under Priority Axis 2 has already been signed – for the Botevgrad region, with a value of BGN 14,5 mln.

As of December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the total value of the contracts concluded under OPE was BGN 970 mln. Over 23% (BGN 226 mln.) of the above amount, or 6,42% of the entire funds under the Programme, have already been paid.

**Mrs. Vassileva** stated firmly that the faster rate of work during the past months will also be maintained in the future. In this respect, she expressed her thanks to the members of the Monitoring Committee, the representatives of European Commission, the stakeholders and “Jaspers” for their support.

**The Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee** expressed wishes for successful work and gave the floor to **Mr. Carsten Rasmussen**, representative of the European Commission.

**Mr. Rasmussen** drew attention to the poor condition in which OPE was found by the new management and the Commission's satisfaction with the work of the MA and IB of the OPE at the moment. Despite some results are already accomplished, there is still a long way to go to achieve the common objectives - the level of performed payment at the moment is low and the number of developed projects, completely prepared for financing, is highly limited, indicating risks to the absorption of the resources planned within the current programming period. He also drew attention to the limited capacity of the municipalities in terms of project preparation and management, which adds further working load to the MA. Certain weaknesses in the sector have led to a delay in the establishment of water associations. It is a fact that not all the municipalities have demonstrated the motivation expected by the Commission. This is where the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MEW), and the Commission is aware, of the fact that the results in the next year will remain modest.

**Mr. Rasmussen** expressed his impressions of the Technical Meeting held on the previous day, saying that the progress in the Water Sector infrastructure projects is heterogeneous, and he encouraged the Ministry to look for stronger instruments of influence.

Finally, **Mr. Rasmussen** expressed his high appreciation of the efforts made by the Ministry in the implementation of OPE, and noted the necessity to increase the capacity of the responsible organizations, based on the available financing and cooperation with international financial institutions.

**Mrs. Vassileva** thanked and agreed that the projects have complex characteristics and are being implemented under the conditions of reforms in the sectors. She drew attention to the support provided by the responsible organizations and the key role of the municipalities, the cooperation with which continues to be intensive.

The Chairperson proceeded to the first item on the agenda – approval of the minutes of the seventh and eighth meetings of the MC.

The floor was given to **Mr. Yovchev**, representative of the Economic Initiative Union (EIU), who made a comment that, as regards the production of minutes of the meetings, “healing processes are taking place”. He reaffirmed his readiness to assist in this aspect, and expressed his approval of both documents.

Due to the lack of other comments, the minutes were approved by the Committee.

**Mrs. Vassileva** gave the floor to **Stoyan Stoyanov, junior expert**, to make a presentation on the progress in implementing OPE.

He noted that 22 procedures for the submission of project proposals have been announced since the beginning of the Programme, 7 of them being competitive selection procedures, and 15 — direct-award contracting procedures. A total of 245 contracts and orders for the provision of grants are being implemented, and 28 contracts and orders have been cancelled. According to Decision No. 72 of the Head of the MA, the financing of 37 contracts has been withdrawn, and 19 of them have been cancelled.

The advance payments slightly exceed 58%, where 41% of the payments have been made under international payment arrangements, and 0,34% - as final payments.

*In the Water Sector*, 150 contracts and orders for the provision of grants are being implemented (123 technical assistance contracts, 26 infrastructure contracts and 1 order), the total amount slightly exceeding BGN 850 mln. As of the time being, two construction procedures for direct-award contracts have been initiated in the Water Sector — one for municipalities with higher level of project readiness, and one for municipalities with lower level of project readiness, for which technical assistance is to be provided. As of November 1<sup>st</sup>, nine project proposals (with total value of BGN 340 thousand) have been submitted.

Every Thursday, in the building of the Ministry of Environment and Waters, there are preliminary consultations with the beneficiaries under OPE.

*In the Waste Sector*, 33 grant contracts (with total value of BGN 34 mln.) are being implemented, including one infrastructure-related contract. Another four projects are in the process of assessment.

Currently, there are two procedures (with indicative budget of over BGN 221,5 mln.) for direct-award contracts for the the construction of 19 regional waste management systems. The remaining four municipalities will be invited in 2011, once they have reached the required level of readiness.

*In the Biodiversity Sector*, 27 contracts and orders for the provision of grants are being implemented, their total value being approx. BGN 56 mln. Currently, a procedure with indicative budget of approx. BGN 34 mln. is being implemented in this sector, and the respective “Information Days” campaign is being conducted throughout the country in December.

Three direct-award contracting procedures in this sector will be announced by the end of this year.

Four more procedures in this sector are to be announced in 2011.

*The presentation also included* the difficulties and the respective measures taken in the various sectors of the Programme.

The floor was given to **Mrs. Emel Mehmedova**, head of the Programming, Partnership, Information and Publicity Department, who presented the information and publicity measures taken under OPE, the priority in the past year being given to the Water Sector.

A representative social survey *has been carried out* with the aim of measuring the indicators of OPE awareness and recognizability and identifying the information needs.

The Programme was also presented at the Water – Sofia 2010 Exhibition.

As part of the "Virtual Water" campaign, *15 thousand cards have been distributed throughout the country.*

In April 2010, a seminar with the respective representatives of the media was held for information purposes.

*OPE representatives* were actively involved in the “Together we create” campaign organised by the Central Information Office of the Council of Ministers.

In September 2010, Darik Radio started a weekly programme which is broadcast each Friday from 11.30 AM to 12.00 AM and covers current issues relating to OPE.

MA also started a TV information campaign using a video clip to promote the Programme.

In 2011, the Bulgarian National Radio “Horizont” will also start a rubric, advertising OPE.

Mrs. Mehmedova thanked for the attention, and then the floor was taken by the **Chairperson of the Committee**. She thanked the members of the MA and the IB for their efforts and the good results achieved.

The floor was opened for comments and suggestions, and **Mrs. Katerina Rakovska**, representative of the nongovernmental environmental organisations selected via the Bluelink Foundation, spoke to the meeting.

According to the first proposal, the reports on the progress should also contain information on the effects of the projects themselves.

**Mrs. Rakovska** asked a question on the efficiency of the projects in the Waste Sector, and whether the technologies used can ensure maximum environmental benefits.

She wanted to know the motivation for *amending Ordinance No. 7* in terms of distance to the settlements, and asked for the provision of any analyses proving the necessity of revocation of the restrictions.

*The next question* was whether any procedures would be initiated for nonperformance of the obligations undertaken under the Treaty of Accession of Bulgaria to the EU in connection with the regional landfills and the urban water treatment plants (UWTP).

*The last question* was about the infringement procedure relating to the Sofia waste, its development, and whether the related correspondence could be made available.

*Answering the first question*, the Chairperson noted that, for the first time, the annual progress report will include information on the fulfillment of indicators, as certain projects have already been completed.

*As regards the waste recovery technologies*, **Mrs. Vassileva** emphasized the fact that the Program provides financing for the basic infrastructure – construction of landfills – in order to fulfill the minimum requirements, and then the municipalities should build on that basis. They are being stimulated to construct installations for preliminary waste separation and recycling.

As regards the Sofia waste project, comments on the percentage of recycling have been received, and measures have been taken.

**Mrs. Vassileva** noted that the limitations stipulated in Ordinance No. 7 are “out of date”, and the sanitary protection zones are subject to environmental impact assessment.

**The Chairperson** noted that the resolutions on infringement procedures are within the competence of the European Commission, and therefore she could not take a stand. She expressed her hope that the submission of a realistic schedule and plan to the Commission for overcoming the delay in the construction of a waste water treatment plant would be taken into account.

As regards the infringement procedure for the waste of the Sofia Municipality, Deputy Minister Vassileva said that it was in a pre-judicial stage, as far as she knew.

The floor was taken by **Mrs. Krassimira Avramova**, representative of the Executive Environment Agency, who thanked the MA for the consultations on the forthcoming procedure for direct-award contracts for the funds under OPE in connection with biodiversity terrain surveys. She asked whether the financial resources allocated to the Agency would remain the same in 2011.

The floor was given to the **Head of MA** to answer the question. The Head of the MA thanked for the good words and noted that, due to the nature of the direct-award contracting procedure, the amount of financial resources would remain the same.

**Mr. Rasmussen** thanked for the questions asked by the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and especially the question on the presentation of the impact of completed projects. He supported the arguments on Ordinance No. 7 presented by Deputy Minister Vassileva.

**The representative of EC Directorate General for Regional Policy** continued with a few words about the Sofia waste treatment project, describing it as the most complex project in the country. From EC's point of view, because of its scale and significance, this project should further contribute to the achievement of the national targets, set for treatment (recycling) of waste, and compensate the lower levels (of recycling) in the rest of the cities in the country. A consensus on financing of the first stage of the project has been reached. Most probably its value will be approx. EUR 50 mln. This is expected to be formalized at the beginning of next year. As regards to the second phase, it was decided to devote additional time to ensure economic and environmental reliability of the proposed investment. Concerning the landfill throughout the country, efficient composting can only be achieved on the basis of separate collection of organic waste. It is expected that the MA will take steps in this direction.

Despite the large amount of funds allocated under OPE, the resources are not enough to ensure compliance with the EU Directives. Nevertheless, they can ensure a minimum level which is currently deemed sufficient by DG Regional Policy.

On infringement proceedings against Bulgaria **Mr. Rasmussen** noted that this issue is primarily a responsibility of the Directorate General Environment of the European Commission. Regarding the requirements for waste water treatment within agglomerations with population equivalent of more than 10 000 a start of infringement procedure could be expected. Because of the low progress in implementation of projects in the water sector, the achievement of compliance with the European legislation, in the terms, specified in the Accession Treaty, is impossible. **Mr. Rasmussen** added that when the EC makes a decision for an infringement procedure, it takes into account if the country is making the appropriate efforts.

As regards the Sofia waste treatment project, he noted that, as soon as the agreement for financing of first phase of the project is formally concluded, there will be grounds for optimism, and his expectations are that the infringement procedure will be at least temporarily cancelled.

**Mr. Valery Nathan**, representative of DG Regional Policy, added that measures should be taken to enhance the capacity of the beneficiaries and to double the efforts to make up for the delayed projects. The review of the implementing infrastructural projects under Priority axis 1 indicates that half of them mark a significant delay compared with the previously agreed terms. Most of these projects have not started tender procedures more than a year after the approval of their financing from the MA. Even more significant concern arouses the delayed tender procedures for both, approved by the EC, large projects in the municipalities of Gabrovo and Vratsa, where nearly a year after the positive opinion of the Commission, the progress is minimal. Regarding Priority Axis 2, some progress in project preparation is observed, but there is still a serious risk for these investments, as practice indicates that the implementation phase hides many difficulties for the beneficiaries.

**Mrs. Vassileva** noted that measures had been taken in this direction, and, especially in connection with the major projects in Gabrovo and Vratsa, regular meetings with municipal officers had been held. An advance payment has already been made for the Gabrovo project, certain procedures have been initiated, and a contract has been concluded. An application for advance payment for the Vratsa Municipality project will also be submitted, and procedures for the selection of Managing Unit have already been initiated. A schedule has been drawn up for the other projects, according to which, starting in January 2011 and on a monthly basis, representatives of the beneficiaries will be invited to report on the progress in implementing the projects and to receive assistance.

**Mr. Rasmussen** emphasized the fact that the municipalities do not pay due attention to the projects for which they had submitted applications, and that it is unacceptable for large municipalities with capacity to not make progress a year or two after the approval of the projects. In this aspect, the Ministry should conduct open dialogue with the National Association of Municipalities (NAM) in Bulgaria. **Mr. Rasmussen** would advise not to consider positively new project proposals from municipalities that demonstrate poor performance in the implementation of already approved projects with European funding.

**The Head of the MA** took the floor to note that the new contracts under the current procedures will include mechanisms in case of inaction on the part of the beneficiaries.

**Deputy Minister Vassileva** added that there will be legislative amendments to the effect that the municipalities which fail to construct the required infrastructure will be subject to sanctions. The “waste disposal” fee has already been introduced on an annual escalation basis.

It is already possible to appoint 35 experts whose obligations will include the provision of assistance in the regions.

The floor was given to **Mrs. Malina Kroumova**, the Head of MA, to present the proposals for Operational Programme amendment. As an introduction, she briefly presented the OPE basic principles, and, in further detail, the goals and scope of Priority Axis 2. She noted that Council of Ministers' Decree No. 209 specifies the financial resources from the national budget to be allocated for the closure of municipal landfills, which makes certain amount of resources under the Programme available for other purposes. At the same time, the MC of Operational Programme “Regional Development (OPRD) adopted amendments to the Programme, according to which the resources initially allocated for waste collection and waste transportation equipment has been re-allocated elsewhere. In 2008, the new waste management framework directive was adopted, thus providing for the application of hierarchical principles aimed at reducing the quantity of landfill waste.

Currently, out of a total of 23 regional system projects, 19 have been almost completely developed, 5 have been submitted, 4 are in the process of assessment, and one has already been approved. In 2011, four more beneficiaries will be further considered and invited.

Calls for the submission of projects with total indicative value of BGN 559 mln. have been sent, the indicative value of the four projects to be invited in 2011 is BGN 86 mln., and the value of the projects being currently implemented is BGN 33,7 mln. The remaining financial reserve amounts to BGN 38 mln. and shall be distributed among the current projects due to shortage of resources.

Based on the above, it is suggested that the Programme should be amended to make eligible the resources intended for the purchase of waste collection and transportation equipment, in order to ensure the integrity of the projects and facilitate the separate collection of waste.

The floor was taken by **Mr. Yovev** who specifically noted that the Operational Programme cannot be amended, and the issue is actually related to “modification”, or more specifically “supplement”. He expressed his approval of the suggested amendment to the Programme.

According to **Mr. Yovev**, in view of the limited resources under the Programme, criteria for the allocation of additional resources should be developed. In his opinion, such criteria may be based on the progress in the construction of infrastructure. A proposal was made to set a limit, as well as to use the initial resource allocation proportions.

**Mrs. Kroumova** took the floor to give more detailed explanations. She explained that the resources are intended for the 23 regional waste management systems which are currently subject to the Mechanism for the Development of Waste Management Infrastructure, and the above resources are needed for the proper implementation of the activities under the above projects. There are no provisions for the announcement of any procedures for the financing of waste containers. Such resources shall only be allocated for mixed-waste containers if such activity is carried out by the municipality itself and is not subject to a concession contract. In

all other cases, the issue is related to containers for separate collection of – mostly biodegradable – waste. This is done with the aim of reducing the quantity of compost and enhancing its quality in order to create market value.

As regards the criteria, the criteria used in the selection of 23 project shall be applied, due to the fact that the additional financing is intended for the above projects only.

**Mr. Rasmussen** added that this is a way to correct the mistake of including the resources for waste collection and transportation equipment in the priorities of OPRD, instead of OPE, in which the overall assessment of the waste management projects takes place.

**Mrs. Vassileva** noted that the remark by Mr. Yovev will be taken into consideration, and, in terms of wording, “amendment” will be replaced by “supplement” to the Programme.

**Mr. Yovev** asked for the provision – at the next meeting – of information on the resources to be allocated under the supplement to OPE.

**Mrs. Rakovska** presented a proposal for rewording of the definition of activity: “The activities relating to waste collection and transportation may be financed under OPE Priority Axis 2, in case they are intended for the purchase of containers for separate collection of, as a minimum, the organic fraction of household waste, and possibly containers for separation of dry recyclable waste, as well as of vehicles for their separate transportation, for the purchase and/or production of containers for waste composting and/or anaerobic decomposition at home or in the garden, and, the last point: the purchase of containers for separate collection of household waste may only be financed as a part of separate waste collection systems, as this has been made clear already.”

**Mrs. Kroumova** noted that, in the course of preliminary coordination of the documents, proposals by representatives of the European Commission have been received in connection with this specific wording to be included in the Operational Programme. The proposed wording has the meaning suggested by Mrs. Rakovska, and it has already been reflected in the presented documents. The Head of the MA added that it is not necessary to have a detailed description in the Operational Programme itself. The proposed wording will be included in the requirements (in the directions and instructions) for the projects.

The floor was taken by **Mrs. Iliana Pavlova**, representative of the Bulgarian Industrial Association. She shared her opinion that maybe now is the right time to stimulate the municipalities to change the approach used in the calculation of the household waste fee and base it on the quantity of generated waste, in view of the fact that some of the systems are already operational.

**The Chairperson of the MC** described the comment as correct and appropriate. She explained that there are no legal obstacles to the municipalities to use such approach, and this is a matter of their own policy.

Due to the lack of objections, this point was approved.

The floor was then given to **Mrs. Silvia Goranova**, Head of the Programme Management Department at the Cohesion Policy for Environment Directorate, to present the Indicative Annual Working Programme (IAWP) for 2011.

*OPE Priority Axis 1* includes provisions for direct-award contracting procedures for the updating of river basin management plans and the development of flood risk management plans, the beneficiaries being the basin directorates. The planned budget amounts to BGN 20,5 mln.

*OPE Priority Axis 2* includes provisions for the extension of invitations for delayed regional waste management projects. This includes the reloading station in the municipality of Svoge, and the regional waste management systems in the municipalities of Provadia, Pazardzhik and Kocherinovo.

*OPE Priority Axis 3* includes provisions for the development and updating of plans for the management of maintained preserves. The allocated budget amounts to BGN 2 mln. Eligible beneficiaries are the respective Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Waters. It was found necessary to invite the Pirin National Park Directorate to update its management plan. Plans will be developed for the management of protected areas outside the territory of the national and nature parks.

There are also provisions for a competitive procedure in the sector, the eligible beneficiaries being all beneficiaries under the priority axis, with a budget amounting to BGN 25 mln.

Very soon, a procedure will be announced for the development of plans for the management of protected areas for birds which do not overlap with the habitat protection areas.

**Mr. Nathan** noted that regarding the mechanisms, approved by the Monitoring Committee, for funding under the Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3 and the measures for funding, included in them by the end of the programming period, more interesting should be not the different procedures in the Indicative Annual Working Programme for a particular year, but the progress in the preparation and approval of projects under these procedures. It would therefore be appropriate a forecast to be receive at the next session for progress in the preparation of projects under already started procedures and the number of projects to be approved within the framework of the next half year.

**Mrs. Kroumova** approved the suggestion made by Mr. Nathan.

**Mr. Rasmussen** shared his concerns, caused by the lack of sufficient number of prepared projects with good quality, which should guarantee a high absorption of funding. He reminded that, at the end of 2012, the Programme will be under pressure, as this will be the last chance to relocate resources from one operational programme to another, provided there are such programmes with higher rate of utilization. **Mr. Rasmussen** also added that at this moment relocation of resources from one program to another is not tolerated by the EC, but at the same time, the Commission is seriously concerned by the lack of enough well-prepared projects under OPE.

**Mrs. Kroumova** explained that they have been working on this issue, and added that there is a certain number of projects prepared under the Technical Assistance programme for smaller agglomerations to which the unutilised resources, if any, could be re-allocated.

**Mr. Rasmussen** agreed that this is a possible solution, although it is not strategic and would bring the Programme back to state it was in 2007. It is important for the large municipalities to mobilise their capacity and utilise the available resources.

**Mrs. Vassileva** added that there are ongoing consultations with the municipalities, and that, in the preparation and review of the projects, they rely on the so-called “technical unit” and on the assistance of “Jaspers” and the European Investment Bank. The need for enhancing the capacity of the municipalities has been realised.

**Mrs. Vassileva** called attention to the fact, that the re-allocation of resources to smaller agglomerations is a “contingency mechanism” concerning settlements which are not very small (with population equivalent of 2 000 to 10 000).

The floor was taken by **Mrs. Irena Petkova**, who, on behalf of the governor of the Sofia District, thanked the team of the Ministry of Environment and Waters for their active involvement, as a result of which two projects for regional landfills in the territory of the Sofia District have been initiated. She shared her opinion that the municipalities are facing ambiguity in terms of handling the detailed site development plans and the approval of preliminary designs, and she suggested that assistance should be provided to the municipalities in this regard. There are also problems occurring in applications for “flood protection” projects in connection with the municipal property title deeds to rivers in the existing Maps of Restored Property (MRP).

**Mrs. Vassileva** noted that the handling of detailed site development plans and the holding of expert council meetings are issues within the competence of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW). Requests for explanations have been sent to the above institution, and the answers have been published on the OPE website. The Basin Directorates have been instructed to give priority to the review of applications by the municipalities relating to OPE. The issues relating to property rights in the river beds are regulated in the State Ownership Act, along with the issues relating to the persons managing the movable property and the real property. The required statements for change of use are prepared by the Basin Directorates. The Municipalities take care of the river beds, but they are not their owners. Letters have been sent to the National Association of Municipalities, to the MRDPW and the regional governors with explanations on the flood prevention procedures under the Waters Act.

**Mrs. Kroumova** added that the circumstances relating to the projects are multifaceted, and efforts are being made in every aspect, the common ones being published on the Programme's website. Reliance is placed on the assistance from the responsible institutions.

**The Chairperson of the MC** proceeded to the next item on the agenda: Amendment of the internal regulations of the MC.

**Mr. Yovev** noted that he has no objections against the first amendment, but he suggested, the phrase “will replace it for the particular meeting” to refer also the last sentence or the two sentences to be united by placing a comma and the substitution of "person" with "it".

**Mr. Yovev** shared that he approved the text in point 3 to be completed by five days, but does not accept paragraph four of the proposed amendments, insisting on increasing the term with "the same step" as in the preceding paragraph.

The floor was opened for suggestions, and **Mrs. Dobrinka Krasteva**, representative of the Central Coordination Unit at the Council of Ministers, suggested that equal terms of 10 days should apply to both points.

**Mr. Yovev** insisted that extending the term for preparation of the minutes should be extended or not changed (not to be reduced) the period for submitting comments.

The members of the Committee jointly supported the suggestion made by **Mrs. Krasteva**.

Regarding the proposal for amending Art. 2, point 5, the insertion of comma and the replacement of “the person” with “he/she” was approved.

After the exhaustion of the current point on the agenda, **Mrs. Vassileva** proceeded to item “Miscellaneous”.

**Mr. Nathan** shared his opinion that the preparation of a comparative table, including the level of coverage of the received comments on the Monitoring Committee's documents by MA, is a good practice, which is desirable to apply and because of the lack of such table in the documentation for the present meeting, such could be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

**Mrs. Kroumova** agreed with him. She noted, however, that the comments made before the present meetings were few, and they have been reflected, for the most part, thus eliminating the need for a comparative table. This practice, however, will be preserved by the MA.

**Mrs. Rakovska** asked a question about the necessity to hold MC meetings outside Sofia.

**The Chairperson of the MC** noted that this allows the participants to fully commit themselves to the current event and provides opportunity for additional discussions on the issues.

**Mr. Rasmussen** and **Mrs. Kroumova** shared their experience based on other meetings held in remote venues which allowed the participants to get fully involved in the event, away from the other urgent tasks in large city.

**Mrs. Ivanova** from the OPE MA added that this is part of the current regional policy under the Programme, which allows the participants to stay closer to the beneficiaries.

**Mrs. Krasteva** took the floor to thank the Ministry of Environment and Waters for the intense and fruitful work during the past year. She also noted that the efforts should be aimed at increasing the beneficiaries' commitment to the projects, and concluded with wishes for successful implementation of the Programme.

**Mrs. Vassileva** thanked for the good words and the support provided by the Central Coordination Unit, the Certification Authority, the colleagues from the European Commission, “Jaspers” and the international financial institutions.

**The Chairperson of the MC** closed the meeting with thanks for the participation and support of the Committee members.

## **List of the persons who attended the meeting:**

### *Members and deputies of the Monitoring Committee:*

1. Mrs. Ivelina Vassileva – Chairperson of the OPE Monitoring Committee, Deputy Minister of Environment and Waters
2. Mrs. Malina Kroumova – Director of the Cohesion Policy for Environment Department, Ministry of Environment and Waters
3. Mrs. Yoana Hristova – Director of the EU Funds for Environment Directorate, Ministry of Environment and Waters
4. Mr. Philip Kroumov – Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism
5. Mrs. Krassimira Arnaudova – Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, Tourism Policy Directorate
6. Mrs. Galia Ivanova – Ministry of Finance, Operational Programme “Technical Assistance”, Council of Ministers
7. Mr. Alexander Atanassov – Ministry of Agriculture and Foods, Rural Development Programme
8. Mrs. Lyubka Lazrova – Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture
9. Mrs. Verzhinia Mileva – Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
10. Mrs. Iliana Lazarova – Ministry of Finance, Economic and Financial Policy Directorate
11. Mrs. Dobrinka Krasteva – Council of Ministers, Central Coordination Unit
12. Mrs. Ivet Baeva – Council of Ministers, Economic and Social Policy Directorate
13. Mrs. Boryana Georgieva-Prinova – Ministry of Environment and Waters, Water Management Directorate
14. Mrs. Stela Todorova – Ministry of Environment and Waters, Nature Protection Directorate
15. Mrs. Valentina Vassileva – Ministry of Environment and Waters, Earth Crust and Underground Resources
16. Mr. Alexander Rangelov – Ministry of Environment and Waters, Environmental Policy Directorate
17. Mrs. Krassimira Avramova – Executive Environment Agency, Environmental Monitoring Directorate
18. Mr. Tsvetan Tsankov – National Office “Police”, Ministry of Interior, Counteraction to General Criminality Directory
19. Mr. Petar Petrov – National Statistics Institute
20. Mr. Mincho Kazandzhiev – National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria
21. Mr. Plamen Stefanov – Regional Council for the Development of the North-West Planning Region
22. Mrs. Irena Petkova – Regional Council for the Development of the South-West Planning Region
23. Mrs. Keti Koynakova – “Podkrepa” Confederation of Labor
24. Mrs. Iliana Pavlova – Bulgarian Industrial Association
25. Mr. Valentin Yovev – Economic Initiative Union

26. Mrs. Yuliana Yankova – Confederation of the Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria
27. Mr. Nikolay Sidzhimov – Association of Environmentalists from the Municipalities in Bulgaria
28. Mr. Kiril Tashev – Executive Forest Agency
29. Mrs. Snezhana Smilovska – Council of Ministers, Central Coordination Unit, EU Funds Monitoring Directorate

*Observers in the Monitoring Committee:*

30. Mr. Radoslav Nedyalkov – Ministry of Finance, EU Funds Audit Directorate
31. Mrs. Katerina Rakovska – Bluelink Foundation
32. Mrs. Karina Karaivanova-Ganozova – Ministry of Finance, National Fund Directorate
33. Mrs. Vesela Petrova – Ministry of Finance, National Fund Directorate
34. Mr. Valery Nathan – European Commission, DG Regional Policy
35. Mr. Carsten Rasmussen – European Commission, DG Regional Policy
36. Mrs. Stavroula Pelekasi – European Commission, DG Regional Policy
37. Mr. Norbert Hahn – European Investment Bank, JASPERS
38. Mrs. Teresa Calvelle – JASPERS
39. Mr. Ralph Eimer – European Investment Bank, JASPERS