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OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
ENVIRONMENT 2007-2013



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Minutes

Of the 13th meeting of the Monitoring Committee of Operational Programme Environment 2007 - 2013

28 November 2012, Conference hall, Holiday Inn Hotel, Sofia city

Ms Ivelina Vassileva, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water and chairperson of the Monitoring Committee, opened the thirteenth meeting of the Monitoring Committee of Operational Programme Environment 2007-2013. She welcomed the members, the meeting attendees, the beneficiaries, the representatives of the European Commission and the media.

Ms Ivelina Vassileva pointed out that 2012 had been marked by major events, good results had been achieved and the preparation of the programme for the next programming period had started. She thanked the team of experts of the OPE Managing Authority (MA) and the Intermediate Body (IB) for the work they had done and praised the contribution of the OPE MC members to the achievement of joint success during the first programming period.

Ms Vassileva presented the progress of the operational programme made so far. The negotiated funding marked a considerable growth in 2012. As of December 2012, over BGN 4.5 billion, or nearly 130% of the total amount of the funding under the programme, was negotiated; hence it has achieved the highest negotiation percentage among the other programmes. The implementation of 228 projects is underway, 120 projects have been completed. Payments in the amount of over BGN 580 million have been made under contracts signed, representing 16.5% of the programme's overall resources.

The contracting process in the Water sector has been particularly intensive – 145% of the funding earmarked for the sector has been contracted, representing slightly above BGN 3.6 billion. Over 423 million has been paid; the implementation of 129 projects is underway under axis 1 – 94 projects worth BGN 130 million have been successfully implemented. 20 sites have been launched into operation in 13 municipalities.

The contracting process in the Waste sector has also marked a growth – BGN 575 million has been contracted so far, equal to over 80% of the budget of priority axis 2, BGN 98 million has been paid. The implementation of 19 projects is underway; 23 projects worth BGN 10.4 million have

been completed. The first site in the sector was launched into operation – regional waste treatment system in the Blagoevgrad Region (on 2 November 2012, 8 months ahead of schedule).

The results from the campaigns held in 2012 and implemented with the OPE support were presented – these included “Green Bulgaria”, “Green Idea” and the OPE participation in the international animation film festival Golden Kuker.

Ms Vassileva gave the floor to **Mr Georges Spyrou**, a representative of the European Commission. Mr Spyrou highlighted the opportunities that an operational programme of such a budget and dimensions offers to the country and pointed out that we have to make the most of the provided funds to improve the environment. He thanked the team working on the programme and everyone involved in the OPE activities. He praised the new elements included in the programme, in particular the improvement of the air quality and the protection against forest fires and floods.

Mr Spyrou pointed out that the changes in the programme had been introduced within the shortest deadlines and the first consultations thereon with the Commission were successful; currently the procedure for the adoption of the new Commission Decision for this OP continues at the Commission's level and we hope that it will be finalised soon; he voiced his hopes for their duly funding. He addressed everyone to accelerate the calls for procedures under the Public Procurement Act and the signing of contracts with contractors as this is the key to project implementation and minimisation of the risk of loss of EU funding. Mr Spyrou also pointed out that the good management of the programme prevented the potential loss of funds in 2012. He reminded that EUR 400 million has to be absorbed next year, which is a sizeable amount and so he called on all stakeholders to channel their efforts into the absorption of the funding for the benefit of the country. Mr Spyrou added that it is highly important to show that the country is able to absorb funding so that it can have sound arguments and ask for more funding for the next period. He also reminded that the Commission representatives call for maximum acceleration of all procedures and successful implementation of the projects.

Mr Spyrou elaborated on the preparation of the new programming period which has to be prepared in the best way. He focused on integrated projects in many sectors and large projects as namely the large projects produce more noticeable results.

The MC chairperson thanked Mr Spyrou for the Commission's support, for the opportunity to discuss and proceed with the changes in the OPE as well as for the response to the risks related to the absorption of funds in the coming year.

As next topic, the agenda of the 13th meeting of the MC was put on vote and approved. The minutes of the 12th meeting were also voted on and approved by consensus.

Ms Vassileva moved on to the **next item on the agenda** and gave the floor to **Ms Malina Kroumova, the head of the OPE MA, to present the 2013 indicative annual working programme.**

After a short welcoming address to all attendees of the 13th meeting of the OPE MC and gratitude for the active position and involvement of the Monitoring Committee members, Ms Kroumova presented the 2013 indicative annual programme.

Two procedures are scheduled to be announced and held in 2013.