

Bulgarian Operational Programme for Environment 2007-2013

Background: According to an analysis of the European Commission regarding the needs for investment in the environment in Bulgaria, the country needs the following investments in order to be able to fulfill its obligations under the respective EU directives: 3.5 billion euro for water treatment, 660 million euro for waste treatment, 3.0 billion euro for improving the quality of the air and 101 million euro for conservation of Bulgaria's biodiversity. The amount of projected investments is alarming, as it is obvious that Bulgaria does not have the capacity to raise the necessary funds. The European funds cover a mere 15% of the necessary investments, these funds being the major source of investments on which the country can rely.

The need for investments will grow further unless urgent measures are taken to cope with some of the main environment-related problems in a sustainable way, namely:

- measures to restrict the generation of waste;
- schemes for separate waste collection and recycling;
- implementation of the "polluter pays" principle as regards the treatment of hazardous waste, waste waters and air quality;
- prevention of the destruction of habitats and the loss of biological diversity;
- relevant plans and programmes to pass through SEA (transport, energy etc.)
- prevention measures implemented to preserve the biodiversity in the potential NATURA 2000 sites

If implemented immediately, these measures could reduce the need for infrastructure investments.

Main problems within the OP Environment:

Shrank budget for OP Environment – the budget was imposed from the Ministry of Finance and was not co-ordinated with relevant ministries. It also does not reflect properly the needs of OP Environment.

- Lack of qualified and experienced staff in the Ministry of Environment to implement the OP. The process of using EU funds is already becoming more and more politically driven.
- In regard of waste management too much funds are allocated to end-of-pipe solutions. In addition at least two controversial major projects of that type so far are not included in the list of major projects – National Hazardous Waste centre that has been rejected twice by EC and the waste treatment facility for Sofia's municipal waste. All together the waste management in Bulgaria would focus primarily on solutions that would create additional problems in the future instead of sustainable solutions.
- SEA does not make any assessments of the impact of the major projects in the OP.
- The participation of civil society in decision making process was designed in a way that didn't allow the best possible input from NGOs both in the work of the Working group and in SEA process.

Recommendations to the European Commission:

- EC to propose to the Ministry of Finances and Ministry of Environment and Waters to increase the overall budget of OP Environment in order to better support the fulfillment of its goals;
- Within the waste management priority EC to propose to MOEW to allocate more funds towards recycling, prevention and other similar waste management measures rather than end-of-pipe solutions
- EC to propose to MOEW to include NGOs in all stages of the management of European funds in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 1083/2006 and the NSRF. NGOs must be included not only in the monitoring committees but also in the committees responsible for the selection and coordination of the projects as well as project assessment units. The necessity of this could be also seen in the following quote from OP Environment: *“In order to ensure acceptable balance between the transport infrastructure and the preservation of the environment, especially as regards the locations included in NATURA 2000, the ministries engaged in OP Environment 2007-2013 and OP Transport must cooperate closely and constructively. This cooperation can be established and maintained within the framework of the Committee for the selection and coordination of projects for OP Environment 2007-2013 or through the joint efforts of the respective managing bodies. This cooperation is of utmost importance for evaluating the impact on the environment of large infrastructure projects.”*

For more information:

Ivaylo Hlebarov
CEE Bankwatch coordinator for Bulgaria

Environmental Association Za Zemiata
tel/fax: +359 2 943 11 23
e-mail: hlebarov@bankwatch.org