**PEMPAL Budget Community of Practice (BCOP) participation in OECD CESEE SBO meeting and GIFT workshop and meeting of BCOP Executive Committee – May 23-25, 2018, Zagreb, Croatia**

1. On May 23-25, 2018, members of PEMPAL Budget Community of Practice (BCOP) gathered in Zagreb, Croatia, to attend the workshop on Digital Tools, IT, and Citizen Engagement organized by Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) and the 14th annual meeting of the network of OECD Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European Senior Budget Officers (CESEE SBO). BCOP representatives came from Ministries of Finance of seven BCOP Executive Committee member Governments from the ECA region: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kyrgyz Republic, and Russian Federation.  The BCOP resource team member Naida Čaršimamović supported the technical organization with virtual support by Maya Gusarova (BCOP lead coordinator, World Bank) and logical and administrative support by Ksenia Galantsova of the PEMPAL Secretariat.
2. Prior to these two events, the BCOP Executive Committee met on the morning of May 23 – represented by 8 member governments (of which 7 attend the Zagreb events). Major issues discussed by the Executive Committee included planning for the BCOP activities for the remainder of FY2018, adopting budget scenarios and planned BCOP activities for FY2019, and discussing PEMPAL 2017-2022 Action Plan issues to be further discussed in the cross-COP Executive meeting in July 2018. Moreover, the Executive Committee continued its analysis of the country budgeting reform priorities  collected from all BCOP member countries in March 2018 and discussed in detail the topics and format of the BCOP 2019 annual plenary meeting, reaching a decision to apply the same approach applied to the 2017 and 2018 plenary meetings to the 2019 plenary meeting - one day of the plenary meeting will be devoted to each of the Working Groups, while a new topic on capital budgeting will be introduced in the first day of the plenary meeting, based on collected members’ priorities. The minutes of this meeting can be found at <https://www.pempal.org/about/governance/ex-com-bcop>.
3. GIFT’s workshop on Digital Tools, IT, and Citizen Engagement took place in the afternoon of May 23. The objectives of the workshop were to demonstrate the importance of using information and communication technologies to improve fiscal transparency and promote citizen engagement and to present examples of the benefits of the use of social media channels and disclosure of budget information in open data. The agenda of the meeting and meeting materials can be found at <https://www.pempal.org/events/bcop-participation-oecd-senior-budget-officials-performance-and-results-network-meeting-and> and <http://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/seniorbudgetofficialsfromcentraleasternandsouth-easterneuropeancountries.htm>. It was divided in three main sessions: i) fiscal transparency portals (discussing ways to publish revenue and budget information that can be used and reused by different groups of users, including those not specialized in fiscal issues; with detailed presentation from Mexico and additional examples shared by Georgia, Slovenia, and Ukraine); ii) open data (highlighting the differences between big data and small data and learning about fiscal data disclosure in open formats; with detailed presentation from Mexico and additional example from Croatia); iii) building and targeting the audience (focusing on mapping the needs of the final users of the portals, in order to prioritize information to be published, as well as the appropriated formats and visualizations; with experiences presented from Mexico, Bulgaria, Russia Federation, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, and the Kyrgyz Republic). The workshop included group discussion on the tools and the audiences, seeking to flesh out ideas and innovative proposals for engaging with the users of budget information and a presentation on the use of social media as a two-way communication channel between government and citizens. BCOP participants actively contributed to the workshop in presenting the experiences from Croatia, Bulgaria, Russia Federation, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, and the Kyrgyz Republic.
4. The OECD CESEE SBO meeting followed on May 24-25. It was co-hosted by the OECD and the Ministry of Finance of Croatia and was opened by the Adviser to the Minister of Finance and Treasurer and Deputy Minister of Finance of Croatia. The agenda of the meeting, as well as the materials can be found at <https://www.pempal.org/events/bcop-participation-oecd-senior-budget-officials-performance-and-results-network-meeting-and>. The first day included sessions on budgeting in Croatia (with hosts’ presentation of Croatian system of public finance management); budgeting in Kazakhstan (with OECD’s presentation of their budget review for this country, a presentation of the representatives of Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, as well as speeches from peer reviewers from Estonia and Slovak Republic); spending reviews (with presentation rom OECD on the preliminary results of the spending review section of the OECD 2018 Performance Budgeting Survey, followed by presentation on examples of spending reviews in Spain and the Netherlands); medium-term budgetary framework (with presentations of country cases of Italy and Bulgaria and review of medium-term budgeting in the Western Balkans countries by OECD Sigma); and green budgeting (presented by OECD). The second day of the meeting was devoted to budget transparency and public participation. In the first session, trends, tips, and ideas for improving budget information was discussed, with presentations from OECD, International Budget Partnership, OECD Sigma, and Ministry of Finance of Georgia. Second session was about taking stock of participatory initiatives and looking ahead, with presentations from OECD, International Budget Partnership, Institute of Public Finance from Croatia, and Ministry of Finance of Mexico. Next, two parallel sessions were held to discuss concrete measures to improve disclosure of budget information and public participation. The sessions were moderated by IBP and GIFT representatives and the results of the discussions will be used to inform a regional ministerial meeting planned alongside Open Government Partnership Global Summit in Tblisi in July 2018. PEMPAL participants actively contributed to both sessions and PEMPAL representatives from the Russian Federation and Kyrgyz Republic were rapporteurs for the sessions. The meeting was closed with a session on planning on future work, in which each participating country presented their reform priorities and suggested ideas for the network’s future focus.
5. OECD CESEE SBO annual meetings give the opportunity for PEMPAL BCOP members to share information and benchmark reforms with a wider representation of Ministries of Finance in the CESEE region who are members of this regional OECD network. PEMPAL members are increasingly having larger roles in these meetings. This year major inputs to the SBO agenda have been made by Bulgaria, Russian Federation, Kyrgyz Republic and Croatia.
6. The results of the post event evaluation survey revealed that the events met expectation of all respondents. The respondents gave on average 4.9 points out of 5 to the question if their participation in events met objectives. According to comments provided by respondents, the participants appreciated the knowledge of speakers and opportunities for technical discussions, as well as practical and applicable examples provided. Moreover, participants noted that they plan to apply acquired knowledge in their work back in their Ministries, for example through including applicable lessons learned within changed to their budget regulation when it comes to fiscal transparency. It was also evident that PEMPAL participants provided contribution to these non-PEMPAL organized events as around half believe that their contributed actively and the other half that their contribution was average, while no participant marked that their contribution was passive. Report on post-even survey resultsis available at<https://www.pempal.org/events/bcop-participation-oecd-senior-budget-officials-performance-and-results-network-meeting-and>.