**MINUTES OF BCOP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING –**

**Videoconference, Friday, October 30, 2015**

**PRESENT AT THE MEETING:**

1. Mikhail Prokhorik (Belarus - BCOP Executive Committee member)
2. Alija Aljovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina, BCOP Executive Committee member)
3. Mladenka Karacic (Croatia - BCOP Executive Committee member)
4. Kanat Asangulov (Kyrgyz Republic - BCOP Executive Committee member)
5. Elena Zyunina (Russian Federation - BCOP Executive Committee member)
6. Elena Nikulina (PEMPAL Team Leader)
7. Deanna Aubrey (World Bank - Resource person)
8. Naida Carsimamovic (World Bank - Resource person)
9. Maya Gusarova (World Bank – Resource person)
10. Ksenia Galantsova (World Bank – PEMPAL Secretariat)

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

1. Welcome and verification of attendance for minutes (Konstantin Krityan)
2. Update on Working Group event preparations:
   1. Croatia study visit on budget transparency and participation (December 2015) (Mladenka Karacic, Anna Belenchuk, Naida Carsimamovic, Ksenia Galantsova)
   2. Slovenia study visit on wage bill management - new proposed dates from the host (Maya Gusarova)
3. Update on plenary meeting preparations:
   1. Draft concepts and agenda (Deanna Aubrey/All)
   2. Venue and logistics (Mikhail Prokhorik, Elena Nikulina)
4. Other business

**1. Welcome and verification of attendance for minutes** – Mr Krityan  
Apologies were given on behalf of Mr Konstantin Krityan, BCOP Chair from the Ministry of Finance of Armenia, who was unable to attend the Executive Committee meeting due to health reasons and also from the BCOP Deputy Chairs (Ms Gelardina Prodani and Ms Anna Belenchuk). Ms Anna Belenchuk requested that she be represented by Ms Elena Zyunina in the meeting from the Russian Federation. Ms Maya Gusarova welcomed participants to the Executive Committee meeting and presented the points of the Agenda, on behalf of the Chair.

**2. Update on Working Group event preparations.**

**a) Croatia study visit on budget transparency and participation (December 2015)**

Ms Gusarova reminded participants that the Study Visit will be held in Zagreb, Croatia and be hosted by the Ministry of Finance of Croatia from 1 to 4 December. Ms Naida Carsimamovic thanked Ms Mladenka Karacic and the Ministry of Finance of Croatia on behalf of the Resource Team for agreeing to host the visit and for preparing the first draft of the agenda.

Ms Mladenka Karacic outlined the Ministry’s proposals for the meeting in Croatia. The plan for the first day is to give a short overview of the economy and an overview of the treasury system; the history of budget reforms; what is publically disclosed in Croatia; and what is included in the guide on the citizens’ budget and how it is used. For the second day, it is proposed for participants to take a trip to Rijeka to discuss the citizens’ budget and participatory budgeting at the local government level, to be followed by a cultural tour of Opatija. On the third day it is planned to discuss the Open Government Partnership Action Plan in Croatia. A roundtable of study visit participants will also be conducted to identify learnings and share knowledge. Ms Elena Zyunina thanked Ms Karacic for outlining the comprehensive agenda and advised that she would consult with Ms Anna Belechuk, leader of the Budget Literacy and Transparency Working Group, and give any feedback next week.

**Action points**: **The proposed agenda for the study visit to Croatia will be circulated to Executive Committee members for their comment early next week.**

Ms Ksenia Galantsova provided an update on the logistical preparations involved in preparing for the study visit. Almost all invited countries were registered with 5 countries still pending (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Kosovo and Uzbekistan). For visa information, most participants requiring visas have received information via email. The list of participants will be sent to the Ministry of Finance of Croatia on Tuesday morning with a request to prepare letters of invitation, which should be sent to the Embassies and Consulates where participants are going to apply for their visas. Options for flight tickets will be provided by the next week. Interpretation services are going to be hired locally, in Zagreb.

**Action points**: **Hotel reservations and flight tickets will be organized for Croatia study visit next week. Letter of invitation from embassy to assist visa processes will be provided shortly by Ms Mladenka Karacic**.

Mr Mikhail Prokhoric advised that the topic of the study visit is of very high interest to Belarus and the management would like to send one additional participant from the Republic of Belarus, which will be funded from other resources (from technical assistance project).

* Ms Maya Gusarova advised that this group comprises 15 countries and according to PEMPAL policy the study visit cannot exceed 15 people for logistical purposes. As we have 15 countries participating in the working group, only one participant per country has been invited with currently 10 confirmed and 5 pending. On November 3, a final list of nominated participants will be available and if 15 countries are not registered then there will be open places for self-payers and the preference will be given to the countries which are a part of the Executive Committee.
* Ms Elena Nikulina confirmed that there is a limit for numbers on study visits, which is 15 participants, but this is the limit for those who are funded by PEMPAL budget. If the host agrees to take more participants and there is capacity within logistics (eg available room sizes, etc), self-payers could be accepted.

**Action points**: **Request to send second representative from Belarus to Croatia study visit (as self-payer) was noted and can be accommodated subject to final registration numbers received next week and logistical capacities.**

Ms Elena Zyunina proposed to have several discussion points during the Study Visit in order to prepare the first knowledge product on citizens’ budget by the February Minsk plenary meeting.

* + Participants could discuss what should be included in the citizen budget guidelines and whether it should include not only recommendations on how to make citizens’ budget but also include information on best practices from countries such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Armenia, and Bulgaria.
  + Ms Zyunina suggested that a table be prepared and sent to all study visit participants to capture their countries experience. The table could be comprised of three questions: description of issue or problem; how it has been solved; how to apply best practices.
  + Participants could also bring their suggestions on what activities could the Budget Literacy working group implement during 2016. This could include a joint list of activities including transparency, budget literacy and participatory budgeting initiatives.

**Action points**: **Ms Elena Zyunina will send proposals from Russian Federation in writing to the BCOP resource team. BCOP resource team will think about how to incorporate these proposals into the agenda and preparations of the Study Visit and communicate the proposal to Ms Anna Belenchuk and Ms Elena Zyunina next week.**

**b) Slovenia study visit on wage bill management - new proposed dates from the host**.

Ms Maya Gusarova gave an update on the Wage bill working group. As was discussed in Vienna it is the last year of the group’s operations and in the budget it is envisaged to have one study visit and two video-conferences over the next year. Today, on October 30, the invitation has been sent for the Videoconference which is planned for November 11 in which the Ministry of Finance of Croatia has kindly agreed to make a presentation on wage bill management at the local level. Ms Gusarova expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Finance of Croatia, and to Ms Mladenka Karacic, Ms Nevenka Brkic and Ms Danka Mihaljevic who have been very active participants of the working group from the very beginning.

Ms Gusarova noted that initially the study visit was planned for the end of October – beginning of November 2015 but the Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia could not host the visit in this timeline. Alternatively they suggested dates of March-April 2016. Mr Mikhail Prokhoric, Mr Kanat Asangulov and Ms Mladenka Karacic confirmed their availability for any time during April. Tentatively members of the BCOP Executive Committee agreed that the visit could be scheduled for the middle of April and as soon as dates are confirmed with the Slovenian Ministry of Public Administration, the Resource Team will inform all members of the working group.

In terms of the second video-conference, there is no topic set as yet and it will be discussed on November 11 whether members want another meeting.

**Action points**: **The study visit for wage bill management working group to Slovenia has been set for mid-April 2016, exact dates to be confirmed. The next VC of the group is being held on November 11 where wage bill management at the local level in Croatia will be presented.**

**3. Update on plenary meeting preparations**  
  
**a) Draft concepts and agendas**

Ms Deanna Aubrey advised that earlier in the week, the Resource Team had provided the Executive Committee with draft Minsk meeting concepts and agendas for comment. She advised that the plenary meeting format is similar to last year’s plenary meeting but some changes had been introduced based on feedback that had been received following the meeting:

* More time had been allocated in the agenda for introductions at the start of the meetings (eg for newcomers, speakers, table introductions).
* Group discussion presentations had been moved to the following day after the discussions, to allow more time to reflect on the issues, and to provide a useful summary to start the following day.
* A greater role had been given to the Executive Committee members in moderation and facilitation of the meeting (a role previously done by the Resource Team).

In terms of content of the meeting, Ms Aubrey noted that the PEMPAL country case studies had already been suggested and agreed by the BCOP Executive Committee in its last meeting. However, she advised that international country case studies of Norway and Sweden could be considered, and that speakers from OECD (Mr Ronnie Downes), and World Bank (Mr Jim Grundy) had also been confirmed. It was also suggested that the part of the OECD budget practices and procedures survey on fiscal rules could be circulated as a pre-meeting survey.

Ms Aubrey also gave a brief outline of the contents of the Budget Literacy working group meeting agenda, which is being held back-to-back with the plenary meeting. She advised that the working group decided that this meeting would be on citizens’ budget and participation. Country case studies to be presented at the meeting have been taken from the recent results of the Open Budget Index (Romania and Russia as PEMPAL leaders; and Kyrgyz Republic as leader in PEMPAL region in sub-index on public participation). Norway could also be approached as an international country case study as it scored very high in this sub-index.

The following comments were provided from the Executive Committee on the draft concept and agendas:

* Ms Elena Zyunina provided the following information:
  + Presenters from the Russian Federation would be confirmed closer to the dates of the February meeting.
  + For the budget literacy agenda, Ms Zyunina suggested that when speaking about the open budget index to focus the attention on the citizen participation processes as well as on the dynamics of budget openness of the participating countries. She also suggested to have a separate knowledge product that included issues and recommendations from member countries, including those covered in the recent survey by the International Budgetary Partnership. Elena advised that the Russian Federation can share the best practices of information of the citizens’ budgets (85 subjects of the Russian Federation which 82 have already prepared their budgets for citizens). Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation will also consolidate this information and as a result will have it as a knowledge product, in the end of the year, as the example of the best practices of the Russian Federation.
  + A correction needs to be made in the draft concept note of the budget literacy meeting as the Russian Federation has recently revised its methodological guidelines for citizens budget in September 2015 (whereas the concept refers to an older document).
* Mr Mikhail Prokhoric agreed with the proposal to change the format of the plenary meeting in order to present the small group discussions on the following day, rather than immediately afterwards on the same day as previously done. Mr Prokhoric noted that this is a better format and would allow more time for reflection and preparation of presentations.

The Executive Committee agreed that it could take on a larger role in moderating and facilitating the meeting with Mr Kanat Asangulov noting that it was not a challenging task given the experience of Executive Committee members. The Resource Team requested volunteers from the Committee noting that it would be best if all three languages of PEMPAL were represented thus a sharing of the task would be best. Mr Alija Aljovic volunteered to be the BCS speaking representative to moderate the meeting, and Mr Asangulov suggested two moderators per session and he was nominated for the Russian speaking representative.

* Mr Prokhoric confirmed that MoF Belarus will make the welcoming statements at the February meeting, and provide a presentation. The presentation of Belarus country case study will be made by the Head of Budget Department, Ms. Elena Pechen. Mr Prokhoric also noted that the topic of the presentation will be slightly changed.

**Action points: The Executive Committee agreed on the format and content proposals for the BCOP February meetings. Mr Aljovic and Mr Asangulov will moderate some of the plenary meeting, with other moderators to be decided in the lead up to the meeting. Suggestions by the Russian Federation were provided for budget literacy and transparency working group meeting - more details about their suggestions will be provided in writing to ensure they are properly reviewed and incorporated.**

**b) Venue and logistics**

On the second day of the plenary meeting, Mr Prokhoric proposed to have an additional cultural tour in the form of a city tour in Minsk. Ms Nikulina and Ms Gusarova suggested to move this cultural program to the third day of the event and Ms Nikulina noted the procedures whereby only one cultural event should be accommodated within an event agenda but she suggested that both proposed events could be combined if feasible.

The Ministry of Finance of Belarus is also suggesting to hold the event in the Community Training Center. Ms Nikulina advised that the major concern is that the Training Center is new and doesn’t have practical experience for such large events given it just recently opened, thus it is a risk to hold such an event there. She noted however, that the venue was a suitable size with the only concern being the conference room was not usable given it had fixed seating. However, the Center had proposed the use of an alternative room. Ms Nikulina also noted that the venue was outside the city, although accommodation was also provided, and that prices were very competitive. She had consulted the World Bank area that selects venues, and the selection process to approve the venue for use will be completed in November. Mr Asangulov agreed with Ms Nikulina that using such a new facility would carry significant risks for such a large event and an alternative standard hotel option can be potentially considered but thanked the MoF Belarus for the initiative. Mr Prokhorik suggested that in November when the next World Bank mission is in Belarus, they could revisit the Training Center and reconsider the opportunities and risks. Ms Nikulina advised that as soon as her mission is confirmed she will contact Mr Prokhorik to arrange this visit. Ms Gusarova thanked Ms Nikulina for her assistance and advice to the BCOP Executive Committee and Resource Team.

**Action points: Ms Nikulina will revisit the Community Training Center with Mr Prokhorik during her November mission to Belarus, and will advise on its appropriateness as a venue for the Minsk meetings.**

**Ms Aubrey outlined next steps for planning of Minsk meetings noting that the draft concepts/agendas would be updated with the additional information provided by the Committee members; that Norway and Sweden governments would be approached to determine their availability to be international country case studies; and that the OECD survey related to fiscal rules would be sent to the World Bank survey expert for conversion to the electronic survey instrument. The invitation process to the plenary would be initiated in November and the survey distributed to registered participants in December. Deadline for presentations would be circulated over the coming weeks.**

**4. Other business**

Ms Maya Gusarova reminded Executive Committee members about the invitation from OECD to delegate BCOP member(s) to attend this year’s OECD SBO meeting of the performance management network in Paris, which is planned for November 26-27, 2015. During this meeting, the new OECD survey will be launched and OECD has raised the possibility of cooperating with BCOP on the survey, given positive experience of cooperation on budget practices and procedures survey. The Resource Team proposed that the Executive Committee delegate Mr Nikolay Begchin to attend the meeting, given his role as lead in the new working group on program budgeting, which he will be presenting at the February plenary meeting. Ms Elena Zyunina, on behalf of Mr. Nikolay Begchin, proposed to bring either Ms Aubrey or Ms Gusarova to attend this meeting with him, particularly given the potential for future joint work with OECD on the survey.

Ms Gusarova noted that the meeting is going to be in English and no interpretation is provided and that any attendance from BCOP could be funded from the 50,000 USD allocated for FY2016 for the program budgeting working group. All Committee members supported Mr Begchin's participation with Mr Kanat Asangulov suggesting Ms Gusarova would be the best person in the resource team to accompany him, given she is also able to speak Russian.

Ms Elena Zyunina, on behalf of Mr Begchin, also updated on the status of the program budgeting working group. The concept for the group will be finalized by the end of November-December and presented at the Plenary February meeting by Mr Begchin. He will compile the list of countries that have agreed to be part of the working group and will invite participants to the proposed study visit to Russia in May 2017. Ms Gusarova concluded that the launch of the new working group at the plenary meeting in Minsk should also give the opportunity to subscribe to the working group to all countries, in case new countries have become interested since last meeting’s subscription.

Ms Elena Nikulina advised that a five minute presentation will be required from all COP Chairs or Deputy Chairs in the next Steering Committee meeting scheduled for November 3. A presentation of the BCOP Action Plan will need to be made, with a focus on results achieved or expected to be achieved (rather than on process or schedule). Ms Elena Zyunina informed the Executive Committee that the Deputy Chair, Ms Anna Belenchuk delegated her to attend the Steering Committee meeting. Given the Chair is unable to attend the meeting, Ms Zyunina also offered to present the progress of implementation of the BCOP Action Plan at the meeting on the Committee’s behalf.

**Action points: PEMPAL Secretariat will inform Mr Nikolay Begchin that he is delegated to attend OECD SBO and will organize the trip for him. The Resource Team will determine the availability of Ms Gusarova or Ms Aubrey to accompany Mr Begchin. Registration to the event will happen in the next week. Ms Zyunina will represent BCOP at the PEMPAL Steering Committee on November 3, and present the progress of implementation of the BCOP Action Plan**.

Ms Gusarova thanked everyone for their participation in the Executive Committee meeting noting minutes would be prepared shortly and circulated for review and approval.