

Joint Initiative for Transparency and Accountability

Minutes from the Meeting with the representatives of the Civil Society Organizations

The meeting was organized by Joint Initiative for Transparency and Accountability project (JI) and held at the premises of the World Bank Office in Serbia on November 22, 2022. Participants of the meeting included: Ms Milena Antic, Secretary of the Coalition 27; Ms Sanja Ilic, Project Coordinator, the Belgrade Open School, and Ms Ljubica Vukcevic and Ms Tamara Botic, representatives of the RERI. The representatives of the World Bank and the Joint Initiative Secretariat (JI) were Ms Verena Fritz, Ms Olivera Kovacevic, Mr Srdjan Majstorovic (JI), and Mr Jovan Nicic (JI).

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Inform representatives of civil society organizations about the World Bank's Program for Results (P4R) instrument - PFM for the green transition;
- To learn from civil society organizations about their experience of working with competent ministries and public institutions in the field of environmental protection, and
- To collect suggestions on how to organize stakeholder/citizen engagement in this field.

On behalf of the World Bank Office, Ms Verena Fritz welcomed all participants. She briefly summarized the JI activities since their beginning in 2020. Also, she mentioned that the JI is considering introducing topics related to the "green agenda".

Ms Fritz informed participants about the Program for Results (P4R) instrument – Public Financial Management for the green transition. The program will be implemented in the period 2023-2026. It will include, among others, the following competent institutions – the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, the Public Policy Secretariat, and the Public Procurement Office. Among others, the program will target strengthening transparency and developing the stakeholders' and citizens' engagement in this field.

Representatives of the civil society organizations presented their activities and experiences in working with competent ministries and public institutions in the environmental protection field. They stressed that some of the most important problems are: a) insufficient participation of civil society organizations and citizens in drafting relevant regulations and public policies that are in the competence of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, b) the lack of transparency in the work of competent institutions, especially in terms of regular publishing relevant information in this field, and c) refusing of the Inspection for environmental protection to act based on requests submitted by the civil society organizations, and the lack of mechanisms to react in these cases.

Representatives of civil society organizations also stressed that the Ministry of Environment Protection often does not respond to their requests for information or invitations for participation in meetings and events. They do not have information on outreach activities on the green agenda for Serbia, as well as on the work of the National Council for Climate Changes.

All participants agree that it will be of utmost importance to work systematically on strengthening transparency and developing the stakeholders' and citizens' engagement in this field within the framework of the Program for Results (P4R) instrument. Representatives of the civil society organizations stressed that the focus should be on outreach and monitoring activities and added that the local self-government units should be involved.

Conclusions/next steps:

In conclusion, Mr. Majstorovic informed the participants about the activities following this meeting:

- The WB Team (JI Secretariat) will share with representatives of the civil society organizations minutes from the meeting and the information on the Program for Results (P4R) instrument – Public Financial Management for the green transition.
- The WB Team invites all participants to submit additional proposals and suggestions on how to organize stakeholder/citizen engagement in this field within the framework of the Program **by December 9, 2022.**