

Meglana Plugchieva: The Pattern for Putting EU Funds into Use Needs to Be Changed

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"Bulgarian de-centralized model for using of European funds is unique for the EU, no other member state has nine management bodies. This is exactly what causes the problems and the tension in providing the necessary coordination and communication in the management of the programs", Deputy Prime Minister Meglana Plugchieva said. She took part in a discussion about the use of EU funding.

The Deputy PM reminded the participants in the discussion that the Bulgarian model involves seven bodies for the operational programmes, one for the agricultural fund and one for the fisheries, Focus Information Agency. Mrs. Plugchieva thinks that the pattern for making use of the funds needs to be changed but that we need to avoid "making the mistake of going from one decentralized model to a totally centralized one."

"A year ago each of the programmes worked separately and with no coordination. In fact those programmes are interconnected and the idea is to seek the effect of their implementation in synergy", Plugchieva said. "Any change in the programme requires new accreditations from the European Commission, and those procedures are arduous. Transforming into total centralization would require 6 to 12 months", she explained. This might block the process of putting into use EU funding amounting to 16 billion euro as well as the national co-funding until 2013, Plugchieva explained.

The Deputy PM said that Bulgaria had little experience in carrying out audits and this is one of the reasons for the mistakes that the former audit directorate at the Ministry of Finance had made so far. "We have a lot of work to do in regard with administrative capacity", she said.