



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Smart spending: Gender budgeting for gender equality outcomes

Gender Budgeting international workshop

Mary Collins, European Women's Lobby
Lisbon, 14 June 2018

Smart spending: Gender budgeting for gender equality outcomes

"A feminist government's policy agenda must be paired with allocation of resources and a true commitment to making a change."

Speech by Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality about gender budgeting at OECD meeting, 2016

Thank you very much for the invitation and congratulations on this very good initiative. I am sure you will all agree that making progress toward gender equality is everybody's business.

The evidence is clear: when girls and women are healthy, educated, included, and can make decisions about their own lives and bodies, and lead change in their communities, countries and the world, there is a ripple effect and everyone benefits.

The barriers to gender equality are deeply ingrained, and overcoming them will not be easy. We must make sure that all of our resources are used in a way that will make a difference to women and girls lives. That's why gender budgeting is about smart spending to ensure that the outcome is effective gender equality.

Budgets mirror political priorities. They are often presented as a technical and complex set of rules and procedures, but this is the implementation part, once the key political priorities have been decided. The budget is the **most important economic policy instrument** and a **powerful tool** to transform societies. How money is spent, and income generated, tells us about the type of values our society is projecting. Budgets provide a yardstick against which we can measure whether gender equality is on track or, on the contrary, depending on priorities and how the money is spent.

Equality between women and men is an objective, a mission and value of the EU, enshrined together with **gender mainstreaming** in the EU treaties, which means that all policies should be developed within a gender equality perspective and this includes budgets. Gender budgeting is a tool of gender mainstreaming.

There is an illusion of **gender-neutrality** particularly when it comes to money, whether it concerns investments and/or budgets. A presumption that the "**common interest**" effects everybody (women, men, young, old,..) in the same way. This is not true.

Gender budgeting matters because women and men's lives are different and if we do not believe that budgets and investments are gender neutral, how can we ensure that spending priorities are achieving gender equality outcomes?

Budgets affect women's, girls, boys and men's lives differently because their initial situation is different at different stages of their lives, for example:



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Smart spending: Gender budgeting for gender equality outcomes

- **Women and some groups of women in particular have specific needs, and face specific obstacles**, mostly resulting from the historical, traditional and stereotypical distribution of power and labour.
- **Macroeconomic policies** determine a range of issues that affect women and men differently, such as employment, national income and expenditure, inflation etc. However, these macro-economic policies are often in contradiction with social policies that impact more on women, for example: health (sexual and reproductive health and rights), education, apprenticeships, care services, maternity rights, perceptions of young women as potential pregnant workers, work-life-balance measures, etc.

Another example: decisions on budget allocations for **urban planning and public transport** (increase or decrease of the offer of public transportation, safe parking lots etc.) may directly and indirectly affect women's **safety** and ability of movement, and therefore enable or hinder women's participation in the labour market and in all other areas of life.

- The gender division of labour is still such that cuts in, or privatisation of, welfare and social services – which are often the result of **debt management** policies and **anti-inflation** measures – result in women taking up more unpaid work (home-educating their children, caring for sick family members, staying at home with their pre-school children, etc.), while those measures do not contribute in any way to the creation of sustainable decent employment.
- **A narrow macroeconomic approach both on the national and global economic level usually has detrimental effects on women's access to resources** (labour, financial resources, social services, and social protection), so the nature of macroeconomic policies determines whether gender gaps will widen or narrow, particularly as major international actors (WTO, IMF, etc.) and business events (such as Davos among others) are determining the world economy.
- **Trade policies focus on “free market access”** and, as a consequence lead to market liberalisation **cutting back domestic production which has especially detrimental effect** on home businesses, and small and medium size enterprises, including small farm holdings, many of which include women, such policies **deprive women of their income**.

While there is no uniform definition of gender budgeting, there are a number of **key principles**. These include: **gender-based assessments** of budgets, **incorporating** a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and **restructuring** revenues and expenditures in order to **promote** gender equality¹. It means being clear about the objectives and outcomes as public budgets are examined in order to assess whether **they do or they do not** contribute to more equality between women and men, and then to **introduce changes** that promote gender equality accordingly.

¹ See Council of Europe:

<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2946760&SecMode=1&DocId=2384888&Usage=2>



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Smart spending: Gender budgeting for gender equality outcomes

Gender budgeting **has both a gender mainstreaming effect and a multiplying effect regarding efficiency**. It is about **'smart spending'**. A thorough examination of budgets from a gender perspective reinforces gender mainstreaming in fields considered **gender-neutral** by drawing attention to previously unidentified gaps that result in gender inequalities. Likewise, scrutinising the efficiency of budgets through gender **impact assessments** foster a more thorough and deep analysis of the given budget from other aspects regarding its efficiency as well. Gender budgeting provides an **intersectional approach**.

In practice, gender budgeting requires collating **gender-disaggregated statistics** and other **disaggregated statistics**, such as age, disability, migration origin, etc. as well as **time-use surveys**, which allow for the inclusion of unpaid work, as well as internships and voluntary work, and necessitates indicators and quantitative objectives – to measure outcomes. Gender budgeting is part of the budgetary process from **planning, monitoring** to **auditing** and **evaluation**, including supreme audit institutions. Gender budgeting also increases **accountability** and **transparency** both because the **process is inclusive**, and because gender impact assessments involve **measurable indicators** that can and must be checked. Therefore, it is **in line with the requirement of good governance** called for by international commitments.

Budgets are also important at European level for framing our common future. Negotiations will be starting soon on the European Commission's proposal for the future EU budget, the so-called **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**.

The next financial framework must provide the EU with the means to respond to the social challenges that have been accelerated by the financial/economic crisis and the ensuing austerity measures. More than 100 million women and men in Europe live below the poverty line, and inequalities based on sex, race, age, sexual orientation and disability are still widespread in Europe and worldwide. This calls for strong EU measures aiming at advancing fundamental rights including women's rights, social inclusion and social justice in both internal and external policies. The demographic challenges of an ageing population and low birth rates will put extra pressure on the European social and economic model, and require EU level action to meet increasing care needs and to promote intergenerational solidarity.

Equality between women and men is a cornerstone of all societies. All the EU's financing programmes in this field must take the dual approach of providing funding targeted at women and implementing gender mainstreaming. This priority must have a visible place in the structure of the new MFF and be supported by strong multi-annual programmes – such as a successor to the current Equality, Citizenship and Fundamental Rights and the EaSI (EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation) programmes – that aim at providing quality employment and tackling social exclusion and gender and other inequalities that are its root causes. Financing instruments of the Cohesion Policy, in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), must increase funding for quality employment and social inclusion and social justice in all EU Member States and continue investing directly in the well-being of European women and men.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Smart spending: Gender budgeting for gender equality outcomes

We have seen a worrying trend over the decades where gender equality is being diluted into other broader objectives. It is crucial that commitments and legal obligations to equality between women and men are made **visible** in the resources that are collected, allocated and spent.

We hope to be able to count on the support of Portugal, at the negotiating table on the future MFF, as you embark on the development of your gender budgeting.