

Gender budgeting is good budgeting.

Safeguarding equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities by recognising diversity and addressing the needs and priorities of women and men can result in various socioeconomic benefits. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) estimates that more gender equality across the European Union can lead to between 6.3 million and 10.5 million additional jobs in 2050 as well as positive GDP impacts that grow over time. Besides such economic benefits, gender equality also contributes to enhance the quality of life of individuals, families and societies.

One of the most important tools for achieving gender equality is gender budgeting which ensures that the gender perspective is mainstreamed in budgetary processes. The Council of Europe defines gender budgeting as a *“gender based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restricting revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality”*. Thus gender budgeting analyses how a budget impacts differently on men and women according to the allocation of money and resources.

Such gender analysis reviews gender gaps and the actual distribution of resources between women and men. This evaluation can contribute to improve information on the potentially different situations and needs of men and women, and ensure that overlooked issues such as economic and social matters, are taken into consideration. For instance, relevant gender aspects can include the economic effects of uneven distribution of unpaid work on women and the uneven distribution of resources within families.

The Beijing Platform for Action, which sets out a plan of action towards the advancement of women, calls for the integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men in order to make available human and financial resources for the empowerment of women. Moreover, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have repeatedly called on Member States to develop and implement gender budgeting.

In spite of these numerous calls for action, until 2012, only eight EU Member States had a legal obligation to implement gender budgeting or gender impact assessments of ministerial budgets. Moreover, a recent report by EIGE shows that the EU budget has less than 1% of the EU’s Structural and Investment Funds put aside for the promotion of gender equality.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) joins EIGE in acknowledging that the gender budgeting tool is a way for governments to promote equality through fiscal policy. Political will and political leadership with a technical capacity for gender mainstreaming is crucial for gender budgeting to be implemented successfully. Moreover high-level commitment from public administrative institutions, improved technical capacity of public officers, civil society involvement and sex-disaggregated data are also important

elements that would enable the implementation of commitments to gender equality to be applied across the EU. In effect, to commemorate this year's International Women's Day, the Minister for European Affairs and Equality, launched a public consultation on a strategy Towards a Gender Equality Mainstreaming for the advancement and empowerment of women in society.

Gender budgeting leads to gender-sensitive planning and budgeting for gender equality and economic growth by allocating public resources in a way that addresses the specific needs of women and men. Therefore, putting gender equality at the heart of the budget and policy-making would make the economic system more inclusive, enabling women and men to meet their full potential whilst addressing vulnerable groups for the well-being of all members of society.