



Note on Gender Budgeting

PBO Note 1 of 2017

Introduction

This Note briefly defines what gender budgeting is and explains what steps the Government is taking to develop the process. It also sets out some aspects of how other stakeholders, including the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), have responded to the development of Gender Budgeting.

Context

Defining Gender Budgeting

This PBO Note focuses on one specific aspect of equality – gender, and therefore gender budgeting.

The European Council defines gender budgeting as:

“an assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality”

The Austrian Constitution, which has enshrined gender budgeting at a constitutional level states that:

“Federation, States and Communes are to strive for the effective equality of women and men in their budget management”

A broader concept of ‘Equality Budgeting’ exists which, rather than solely analysing budgetary impacts on gender, encompasses all nine grounds of discrimination under Ireland’s Equality legislation, as well as socio-economic status.

The importance of the broader concept of equality in relation to budgetary scrutiny in Ireland is reflected in the *Programme for Partnership Government* (PPG) which contains a commitment to (p.6):

“develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights”.

The PPG contains a commitment to (p.15), “ensure the institutional arrangements are in place to support equality and gender proofing within key government departments”. These commitments are complemented by the *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2012-2020* which makes reference (p.69) to increasing civil and public service capacity with respect to gender mainstreaming/budgeting. The Government’s approach is developed in an Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service (IGEES) Staff Paper (2017), *Equality Budgeting: Proposed Next Steps in Ireland*.

In terms of civil society’s response to Gender Budgeting, the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCi) publication *Towards Gender Responsive Budgeting in Ireland* (September 2017) makes a number of recommendations (Chapter 7) in relation to implementing gender budgeting in Ireland. The NWCi recommends, amongst other things, that Government should:

- convene a Standing Committee of appropriate gender budgeting expertise to provide strategic advice in the implementation of gender budgeting;
- assign responsibility for cross-government coordination of gender budgeting to a Minister of State;
- develop a formal statement of gender budgeting goals, in consultation with gender and equality experts, and incorporate these as core government priorities throughout the budgetary process;
- examine legislative options requiring data collecting institutions to analyse and publish gender disaggregated statistics;
- develop gender budgeting guidelines to ensure a consistent approach to policy appraisal and evaluation.



In addition, the NWCI recommends (p.50) that the PBO should mainstream gender budgeting goals as part of its remit. This would exceed the remit envisaged for the PBO. However, it is nonetheless clear that the PBO is expected to play an active role in supporting the roll out of gender budgeting in Ireland.

The Government's Equality Budgeting Pilot Project

Gender budgeting was referenced in the PBO's *Post-Budget 2018 Commentary for the Committee on Budgetary Oversight*. That publication (p.8) explains that a pilot project on gender budgeting is being introduced in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018* – to be published in December 2017.

The Revised Estimates for Public Services

The Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018 will set out expenditure at programme and sub-programme level (i.e. at a more granular detail than the Estimates published with the Budget) along with relevant output targets, objectives and indicators which aim to provide a means of measuring expenditure performance.

The gender budgeting pilot project will, for a number of existing programmes (administered by 6 Departments) define high-level gender objectives and indicators. The pilot indicators will be published in December 2017 in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018* and progress will be published in the *Public Service Performance Report 2017* (anticipated publication date April 2018). The PBO intends to examine the proposed gender-related objectives and indicators, and may report on them.

The PBO's approach to Gender Budgeting

At present, the income distribution consequences of changes to tax and welfare policies can be readily assessed. The Economic and Social Research Institute's (ESRI) SWITCH (Simulating Welfare and Income Tax CHanges) model plays a key role in this regard. SWITCH allows assessment of policy changes both in prospect ('What if' analysis), as policy options are developed and considered, and in retrospect, as the impact of policies actually chosen are measured. Currently, however, there is no parallel capacity in SWITCH or elsewhere to analyse the gender impact of budgetary choices in a systematic fashion.

In that context, the PBO is actively considering how best to address questions about the gender impact of past budgetary policies and the need for future gender impact assessment of tax and welfare policies.

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