

Gender budgeting in Belgium

Findings from a pilot project

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Structure of presentation

- I. Origin
- II. General Description (objectives, activities performed)
- III. Lessons learned, future opportunities and challenges
 - ✓ influence of political location
 - ✓ internal management function
 - ✓ instrument of external accountability
 - ✓ instrument to break the ice between different worlds

I. Origin

- 2001 conference on gender budgeting (Brussels, UNIFEM-OECD-Nordic Council of Ministers-Belgian gov.); BelgianDC support to UNIFEM GRB
- From DC: cooperation sought with Belgian federal ministry of Employment and Equal Opportunities
- Adopted by Federal Council of Ministers (March 2001), formally embedded in the gender mainstreaming project
 - under responsibility of Directory of Equal Opportunities (=Institute of Equality between Men and Women)
 - similar structure: flying academic experts (3) + in-house equal opportunities' staff

II. General Description

- Objective:
to explore feasibility of applying gender budgeting within Belgian federal government services
- Activities:
 - A. Training
 - B. Action Research
 - C. Information Dissemination

A. Training

- Audience: budgeting & gender officials of all federal administrations & cabinets
- Aim: awareness-raising (*why* question) + transferring of knowledge (*how* question)
- Content:
 - *why?* : facts & figures + rationality (equality, effectiveness, efficiency, good governance)
 - *how?* : approaches and instruments developed so far + exercise in couples based on the budget of the federal Ministry of Employment and Equal Opportunities

B. Action Research

- **information round based upon the 3 categories approach (Sharp & Budlender)**
 1. Gender-specific expenditures (all federal ministries)
 2. Equal opportunities' expenditures in government employment (all federal ministries)
 3. General/mainstream expenditures (selected portfolios based on information round))
- **Findings**
 1. Expenditures specifically assigned to gender equality policy (follow up of Beijing Platform of Action)
 - no budgets mentioned with listed objectives
 - almost none budgets earmarked ('veil of mainstreaming')
 - budgetary resources (earmarked): < 0.01% of federal budget

2. Equal opportunities' expenditures

- Royal Decree of march 1990: promotion of gender equality in government employment
- action plans & 'equal opportunities' officers in federal ministries (regrouped in networks, supported by Equal Opportunities' Directory of the Ministry of Employment & Equal Opportunities)
- no specific budgets for the action plans (depends on bargaining power of equal opportunities' personnel) → policy evaporation
- Overrepresentation of women in contractual employment (↔ statutory), lower-paid levels, systematic differences in type of training attended, vertical & horizontal mobility, participation in schemes to facilitate family/work balance

3. Mainstream expenditures & income

- no systematic integration of gender perspective in mainstream budgeting
- exceptional cases of gender analysis of specific budgetary measures taken
- no availability of sex-disaggregated data

But:

- two experiments found (gender mainstreaming project)
- two exercises started at other ministries

- **two existing experiments** (Min of Finance & Min of Agriculture & Self-Employed)

-Ministry of Finance:

*assessment of the gender-disaggregated effects of the personal and business income tax policy and the 2000 tax reform

*fairly restrictive approach (no inclusion of indirect effects on bargaining power, allocation of human capital investments, allocation of productive resources, long-term welfare, ...)

-Selected Findings:

- Women benefit most from measures that favour low income categories (measures that reduce fiscal pressure on low wages)
- Men benefit most from the reduction of the average income tax rate and from the decrease in the progressive income tax
- Tax exemptions resulting from payment of private life insurance contributions particularly benefit men

- **Two new initiatives:** DGDC (Development Cooperation) & Participation Fund (small loans to unemployed start-ups of SME)

-Aim:

- *assessment of the relevance and usefulness of gender responsive budgeting
- *assessment of the feasibility
- *application of some instruments of gender budget analysis (on the basis of the data available)

-Selected findings: Development Cooperation

- *absence of database with sex-disaggregated data about final beneficiaries reduces applicability of some conventional instruments
- *a form of qualitative gender-aware policy appraisal already in use (gender proofing of strategy and country papers)
- *application of results-based type of management (logframes) facilitates adoption of GRB (functional framework, Elson)
- *quantitative simplistic form of gender budget analysis (DAC Gender Marker) would be relevant as a early warning M&E system
- *disaggregation of above analysis according to relevant categories (sectors, instruments of aid delivery) could provide highly relevant policy information

C. Information dissemination

- Findings summarised in reports + synthesis report (D + F)
- Restitution meeting with gender & budget experts
- Concise leaflet targeted at government officials (D + F)

III. Lessons learned, opportunities, challenges

- **Influence of political location**

- federal government level → focus & coverage (no person-related matters)

- under responsibility of Directory of Equal Opportunities:

- *limited power & resources

- *but necessary because of experimental nature

- *in future: Budget & Finance: a more lead role

- *↑ bureaucrats' right of initiative & capacity for organisational engineering (need for change in governance culture)

-within government location & location within specific line ministries → micro, meso levels of budgeting

- **Internal management function of GRB**

-systematic integration of gender budget analysis into the different phases of intervention cycle: better-informed and gender-sensitive planning; more effective implementation; M&E

-most succesful at DGCD: more experienced with performance-based budgeting and management (↔ input budgeting)

-future: Belgium aims at introducing more PBB-like budgeting (OECD) (opportunities!)

- **GRB: instrument of external accountability**
 - 'isolated' within-government model
 - but growing interest in civil society, parliamentarians (proposal of law)
- **GRB: break the ice between different worlds**
 - *project involved two different audiences (gender & budget)
 - fine-tuning and awareness-raising: very time-consuming
 - + framing of gender issues in economic discourse convinced budget officers of its importance
 - + even if no effective changes in budgetary content and processes, second-round effects of individual and organisational learning