

Gender-related key points for the European parliamentary elections 2009

The European Parliament is charged with the responsibility to cope with the largest financial and economic crisis in eighty years. Judged from the perspective of gender equality both the analysis of the crisis and the rescue measures taken to contain it are insufficient. Particularly women and members of the lower income bracket bear the burden of the financial stimulus measures. We expect all future members of parliament to speak out for Gender Budgeting in order to counteract the inequality between men and women and to prevent a deterioration of the social situation.

The 2003 Resolution of the European Parliament defines **Gender Budgeting** as the application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. This entails a gender-based 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; (cf. European Parliament, Document P5_TA(2003)0323). This also includes macroeconomic decisions.

What does this mean in the current situation? Gender Budgeting as an opportunity!

The targeted **regulation of financial markets** must lead to a democratised and more transparent financial sector. At the same time the rationale that dominates the global financial system must be put to the test as gender expertise must be acquired to counteract disadvantages of women.

Staffing high-ranking committees and boards of directors with an apportioned number of men and women will not be sufficient. A new global financial architecture must express a new rationale that reflects the people's need for assistance and social security while primarily sustaining natural resources and the social factor in society- both of which constitute the very foundations of all economic activity.

Tax policy should again more strongly serve social equality. Over the last years the gap between the poor and the rich further widened in the European Union. Structurally women are more vulnerable to poverty than men. In order to prevent tax evasion, an equalization of tax policies is needed. Nation states' competition over investments and funds leads to a downward spiral of tax rates as they weaken opportunities of states to shape policy. Simultaneously giant accumulated wealth in the hands of only few leads to an uncontrolled concentration of power. This tilt in the distribution of wealth must be balanced out to benefit the lower and middle class. The European Union must implement corresponding policies that set the right course for these objectives.

Economic policy should serve sustainability and gender equality. Yet the fiscal stimulus programs carried out by EU member states primarily serve short-term job-savings in sectors, in which men account for the majority of employees. (automobile-, construction-, energy-, IT sector, e.g.) The long-term crisis of the personal service sector, which predominantly employs women, has been widely ignored. Much more state-activity is also needed in the so-called Care-Economy. Virtually all EU-member states need to catch up in the provision of early child care, care for the elderly, domestic support for the ill as well as in education matters. It is these areas that fiscal stimulus programs should target. Not only would this create jobs while concurrently compensating for labor that goes unpaid still. It would also open new education opportunities for the socially underprivileged as it would increase the chance of relatives to (re-)enter the work-force. In this context the European Union should establish a new set of priorities by adjusting its economic policy, by coordinating its member states and by implementing support programs.

In the past the European **labor policy** focused too much on the increase of earners. While the female activity rate increased across Europe, the volume of working hours did not. In Germany, for example, part-time employment and women's share in precarious employment has increased. It is therefore increasingly important to include targets for gender equality in the national plans of action and assess their implementation. While the concept of gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women can be found as binding norms in the European Social Fund, they require enhanced monitoring.

Implementation of Gender Budgeting until 2015

During the World Conference on Women in Beijing more than 10 years ago the governments committed to gender budgeting.

In the Treaty of Amsterdam the European Union member states recognized the basic principle of the equality between men and women as part of the Community Law. Article 3 paragraph 2 of the treaty requires that the Community works in all its activities to eliminate inequalities and to promote gender equality. In order to overcome inequalities, some EU governments began to get involved in gender budgeting.

In a common conference with the OECD, UNIFEM, the Commonwealth and the Northern Council of Ministers in October, 2001, that took place during the Belgian EU-council presidency, a decision was made to implement gender budgeting in all countries until the year 2015.

A feasibility study ordered from the Directorate-General for Budget in 2007, drew the conclusion that in relation to the EU budget, gender budgeting implementation is both attainable and reasonable.

In order to implement gender budgeting until the year 2015, concerted actions are necessary. In its legislative and control function the European Parliament should continue its role of a precursor with respect to gender justice within the European Union.

As concrete measures we recommend

- to provide an independent roadmap for the implementation of Gender Budgeting in the European Community and in the member states and to provide the necessary funds for it
- to promote the inclusion of civil-society groups and gender experts in the formulation of the roadmap, as well as in its implementation
- to champion the integration of gender equality objectives in all EU-financial, political and budgetary strategies
- to make sure that all EU measures and strategies are submitted to a gender impact assessment. This also includes the distribution of funds
- to reject every arrangement which affects the budget and is inconsistent with the principles of gender justice
- to call for annual reports about the effect of financial and economic policy of the European Union on gender justice
- to safeguard the establishment and maintenance of gender-disaggregated statistics which include all social areas and to call for the development of particularly expressive statistics of unpaid work
- to support the development and spreading of gender budget instruments financially
- to provide sufficient means for non-governmental Gender Budgeting initiatives in the whole European Union and to support the creation of a European Gender Budgeting Network
- to finance a European campaign for gender justice and public finance

- to make gender budgeting one of the priorities of the European Institute for Gender Equality and to promote in particular the exchange of experience and the advancement of strategies and instruments for the implementation of gender budgeting
- to provide research funds contributing to the evaluation of gender impacts of budgets and macroeconomic policy strategies

Questions:

- As a Member of Parliament, which of the above mentioned measures will you stand up for?
- What are the concrete steps that you plan to take to implement gender budgeting in the European Community in the above mentioned areas?

For the Network

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