

# EUROPEAN GENDER BUDGETING NETWORK

## A Spanish Summer

### Bilbao

In early June a number of EGBN members were fortunate to be able to attend a highly energising conference focusing on recent developments in gender budget analysis in Spain. EGBN members also contributed perspectives and experience from different gender budget initiatives and projects including the Berlin 'Initiative' (Marion Boeker); participatory budgeting in Cologne (Elisabeth Stiefel); the practice of Nordic governments and their use of indicators and data (Catharina Schmitz); central government approaches to GBA in Austria (Elizabeth Klatzer); the experience of Italian local authorities through the perspectives of time use (Annalisa Rosselli); and the application of the capabilities approach to gender budget analysis (Tindara Addabbo).

Sara Hector of the European Commission gave a presentation on a recently commissioned study on gender budgeting. Details on the content, process, recommendations and next steps for the Commission following the completion of this feasibility study were limited. This presentation can be found along with all the conference documentation at [http://www.generoypresupuestos.net/en\\_ponentes.html](http://www.generoypresupuestos.net/en_ponentes.html)

María Pazos provided a powerful introduction which set out the current legislative and policy context in Spain as well as a very clear challenge that advocates for gender equality must be robust and strong in what is a continuing fight – despite rhetoric across governments.

The conference focused mainly on recent developments in approaches to gender budget analysis at different levels of government within a number of regions and Autonomous Communities in Spain. Our hosts were the Regional Government of

Vizcaya (Diputación Foral), and the City Council of Bilbao (Ayuntamiento), who have recently embarked on a new initiative aiming to integrate gender budget analysis across all operational and service areas at these levels of government.

Addressing the conference from the perspective of the current and dynamic gender budget initiative in Andalucía the Director General of Budgets and the Councillor for Gender Equality of the Junta de Andalucía (federal/supra regional level) gave energising and very detailed accounts of current developments and the practical activities involved in integrating gender analysis into policy and budget formulation. Their enthusiasm was mirrored in the contributions of Finance and Budget Directors from Córdoba, Vizcaya, Bilbao and Berlin.



Figure 1: Panel Session including Elisabeth Stiefel, Regina Frey. Photo: A O'Hagan

The intense programme, tremendous organisation and hospitality was led by Priya Álvarez, a member of EGBN to whom we owe great thanks for including EGBN in this initiative and for looking after us so well.



Figure 2: Priya Álvarez. Photo: A O'Hagan

At the end of the formal sessions there was a short informal networking meeting with EGBN Members and representatives from the Women's Equality Unit of Bilbao City Council.

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In offering a personal reflection from this event, I would offer a few points for consideration.

- The importance of political will and positive disposition was continuously emphasised in the 'case studies' from different government institutions and from different countries. It was also very much in evidence in a stimulating and challenging discussion on the role of taxation policy in terms of budget revenue and tackling sex discrimination and inequality in fiscal policy with Paloma de Villota, and following María Pazos' intervention.
- The potentially complex relationship between gender mainstreaming and gender budget analysis and the possibility of misinterpretation and misdirection in formulating an approach to policy making that seeks to embed gender equality. Regina Frey, also of EGBN, spoke persuasively to this theme and drew very effectively on the history of the development of both concepts to highlight the overlaps and the differences in rationale and possibilities for public policy development.

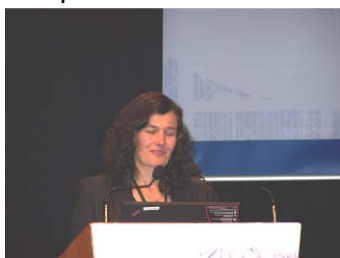


Figure 4: Regina Frey Photo: A O'Hagan

- The variety of approaches to gender budget analysis in evidence served to reinforce the position that there is no one fixed way to approach this process and that highlights the richness and need for a Network such as EGBN as an open space to share ideas and experiences.



Figure 3: Elizabeth Klatzer and Nicoleta Fiu-Mitrea. Photo:AO'Hagan

The organisers kindly made time in the programme for an EGBN meeting, which was very well attended and included a number of new 'members' or observers from Serbia, Macedonia and Israel as well as new members from Spain, including Carmen Castro and María Pazos. Following contributions to an ongoing discussion on the purpose and focus of the network it was decided we should focus our energies on specific and targeted lobbying activities – such as the next European Parliament elections and on policy areas such as parental leave; and on building our capacity as an information sharing network, including identifying and creating opportunities to come together.



Figure 5: EGBN Members Meeting. Photo: Nicoleta Fiu-Mitrea

There was also agreement to progress the possibility of becoming a formally registered entity, and to develop the EGBN website. In the absence of a formal structure, there will be a small co-ordinating group comprising Priya Álvarez, Annalisa Rosselli, Angela O'Hagan, Regina Frey, Elisabeth Klatzer and Ailsa McKay.

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### Madrid

In Madrid later in the month, the conference of the COST Network on "Gender and Wellbeing and the Role of Institutions" offered a series of insights into projects and progress on gender budgeting with contributions from Italy, Spain (Central Government and Basque Country), and Scotland. The presentations on gender budgeting are all available from the conference website at: <http://www.ub.es/tiq/GWBNet/>

Unfortunately there was no time in a very intense and stimulating programme for discussion on gender budget activity and different approaches. While the papers and presentations offered perspectives on the role of institutions, there was some concern among conference participants that gender budgeting might run the risk of acting as a 'blunt instrument' to address gender analysis in policymaking. This was a useful reminder of the importance of process issues in gender budget analysis and the promotion of an understanding of GBA as more than an exercise in counting women and men, and adding up budget lines. It seems that there is still a lot of work to do in building understanding of and support for gender budget analysis in its own right and as an effective set of tools brought together in a process of gender analysis in public policy.

In between the two Spanish events, a number of EGBN members attended the International Association for Feminist Economists (IAFFE) conference in Turin. The EGBN 'fringe' meeting again attracted a very large attendance and interest from conference participants and so served as a further useful networking event.

Since these conferences, and the original drafting of this newsletter members have been on holiday and otherwise occupied. Work is ongoing on the action points, including actions by Carmen Castro to explore

constitutional status for EGBN; María Pazos circulated a paper on European paternity leave; and members have been identifying possible funding streams.

**Angela O'Hagan  
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