



# GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

## INFORMATION BRIEF

### WHAT IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING?



Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a governance tool used for analysing and restructuring budget revenues and expenditures so that the diverse needs of women, men, girls and boys are fairly represented in budget items to ensure the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as to ensure a **human rights-based approach**. It is also a strategy to achieve equality between women and men, by focusing on how public resources are collected and spent across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

GRB does not involve the creation of separate budgets for women and men, or the distribution of beneficiaries based on their gender. Instead, it involves a gender-oriented budgetary process, in which budget allocations comply with the state's existing gender equality policy. GRB is an integral part of programme budgeting that involves effective and results-oriented public administration, which helps us to monitor how these commitments are implemented, enhance transparency, and combat corruption.

In essence, GRB means gender mainstreaming in the budget process. This entails regularly assessing and analysing the impact of budgets on all women and men, corroborated by analysing and adjusting relevant policies to reduce gender inequalities and disparities.

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### WHAT IS THE EU4 GENDER EQUALITY REFORM HELPDESK?

The [EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk](#), funded by the European Union, provides demand-driven assistance to governments<sup>1</sup> and EU Delegations in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries<sup>2</sup> on mainstreaming gender in policy-making and the implementation of reforms to ensure the delivery of effective results for women and men.

### TARGET AUDIENCE

This brief may be of use to anyone who produces legal acts, policies, programmes and projects (staff of government institutions, EU Delegations, civil society organisations and other international development partners) that aim to benefit people in Eastern Partnership countries and beyond. It may be also of use to researchers, representatives of academia and the mass media in these countries who study and/or report on legal frameworks, policy-making and project design.

<sup>1</sup> In Belarus, the Reform Helpdesk only provides assistance to the EU Delegation.  
<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and six Eastern European partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.



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This type of budgeting promotes the accountability of governments in terms of using public resources purposefully, in line with the needs of beneficiaries – women and men, girls and boys – and applies gender mainstreaming in all public policies in accordance with international treaties and national development strategies.

Simply put, the EU promotes gender-responsive budgeting as part of the GAP III:

- To promote the accountability, efficiency, transparency and fairness of fiscal planning and budgeting.
- To combat corruption and ensure better value of each investment.
- To increase gender-responsive participation in the budget process, for example by taking steps to involve women and men equally in the preparation of budgets as part of a human rights-based approach.
- To ensure the distribution of budgetary funds between women and men, girls and boys, taking into account their diverse needs and interests.
- To decrease gender gaps, and to advance gender equality and women's rights as well as economic development.

This analysis needs to be performed at all levels to mainstream gender in national, regional and local budgets. Gender budgeting tool can be used also for private sector investments or for project budgets.

Civil society's active participation at all stages of the budget process is important to promote gender-responsive budgeting. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can provide independent gender analyses of budgets, submit proposals at the budget planning stage, organize public hearings at the budget adoption stage, play a watchdog role in monitoring and evaluating budget performance, and disseminate information to the general public to promote people-centred, fair, efficient and transparent budgets.

At the same time, well-developed and participatory legal budget process mechanisms should be put in place, and civil society should be empowered with the knowledge and tools they need to impact fiscal decisions.

## WHY IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING IMPORTANT?

Upon adopting the European Union's [Gender Action Plan for 2021–2025 \(GAP III\)](#), which calls for a gender equal world, the European Commission promised to advance gender-responsive budgeting through programmes that support public finance management. The plan requires new public expenditure and financial accountability (PEFA) assessment reports to include a module on gender-responsiveness.

This is why gender-responsive budgeting is part of [SDG indicator 5.c.1. 2](#), which measures the *"proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment."* It links the policy and legal requirements for gender equality with resource allocations for their implementation.

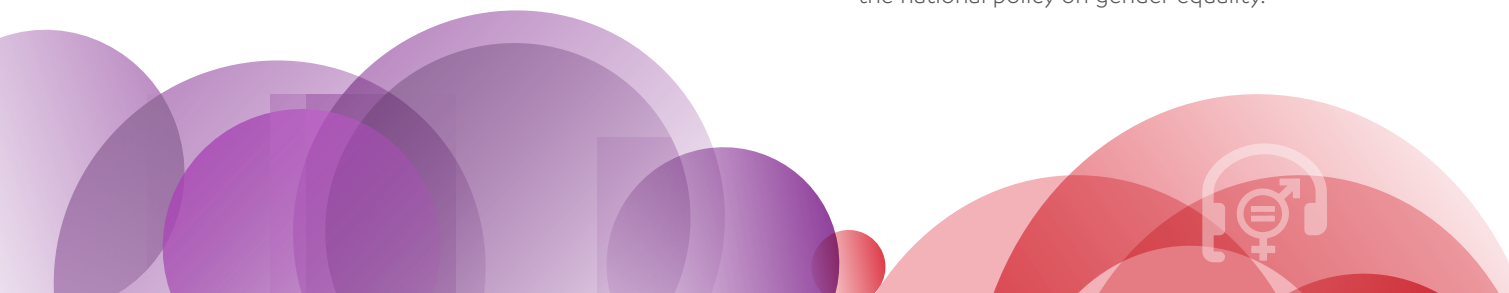
Gender-responsive budgeting is a powerful management tool that helps to advance gender equality and improve the quality of public services that target specific consumers. It also facilitates poverty reduction, increased resource efficiency and the welfare of target populations. As a result, it leads to more sustainable and inclusive growth.

## HOW DO WE IMPLEMENT GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING?

The **implementation** of GRB requires a range of activities in the fields of legislation and budgeting. A key component is to have or ensure that there is gender-disaggregated data available, or support partners to put this in place. An essential prerequisite is to develop a regulatory framework and a national gender-responsive budgeting methodology, as well as a system of indicators for gender-based budget analysis. Since budgetary decisions are always political, mobilising political will to integrate gender equality into public finance management is vitally important for GRB.

The **key enabling factors** for the successful implementation of gender-responsive budgeting include the availability of:

- A special gender equality policy and a national institutional mechanism to advance gender equality.
- Political will to integrate gender issues into budget processes.
- Gender-sensitive statistics that provide the evidence based needed to better orient budgetary decisions in a specific context, as well as to correct gender imbalances.
- Information and awareness raising on gender equality-related issues, particularly to improve understandings of the national policy on gender equality.



- Opportunities for men's and women's equal participation in budgeting.

Implementing GRB requires public financial management institutions, systems and processes that keep in view women's and men's gender-specific needs, as well as the different impacts that fiscal policies and practices have on men and women.

Ideally, GRB should be mainstreamed throughout the whole budget cycle – from budget planning through to execution, tracking, monitoring and the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of gender-responsive fiscal policies and their impacts on women and men.

During the **budget planning phase**, GRB includes:

- Assessments of the impacts of budget policy proposals on gender equality, including the delivery of services to men, women, and subgroups within these categories.
- Preparing a budget circular that instructs budgetary units to address gendered impacts in their budget submissions.
- Preparing budget documentation that includes information on service delivery performance, disaggregated by sex.
- Legislative scrutiny of budget proposals that considers the gendered impacts of expenditure, and of revenue policies and programmes.

During the **budget execution phase**, GRB includes:

- Expenditures on programmes that directly aimed to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men (direct allocations).
- Spending on gender-sensitive public services that take into account the needs of specific target groups of women and men (direct funding).
- Spending on sectoral programmes that integrate a gender approach (indirect financing).

**Tracking** these types of expenditures requires a meaningful and valid methodology to differentiate how women and men benefit from public allocations, and the impacts these allocations have on them.


During the **accounting and reporting phase**, the Government's report on the implementation of budget policies should include reporting on budget allocations for gender equality and gender-sensitive public services.

During the final stage of the budget cycle – **external scrutiny and audit** – public finances must be reviewed, and recommendations issued to inform future activities.<sup>3</sup>

In practice, depending on the political context, the degree of coverage, and the budgeting stage, GRB initiatives can focus on different issues and take different forms. Such initiatives:

- May imply the preparation of a separate document which is submitted along with the budget.
- May be permanently integrated into departmental processes and programme analysis.
- May be formal budget proposals or separate documents prepared by non-governmental stakeholders.

## GOOD PRACTICES

 **Austria** is one of three countries worldwide which has integrated gender-responsive budgeting in its constitution. GRB is treated as an essential instrument for mainstreaming gender within government policies and assigning clear responsibilities, making governments accountable for their gender policy commitments.

In their budget documents, federal ministries must explicitly target equality between women and men. This means the integration of gender objectives, measures and indicators in strategy reports, in the federal budget, and in supplementary sheets, in line with the Federal Budget Act.

 **Ukraine** has spearheaded a number of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives since 2003. Important progress was made with the GRB Project in Ukraine, supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented by NIRAS between 2014 and 2020. The Ministry of Finance of Ukraine (MoF), the project's main beneficiary, introduced a gender-responsive approach in all stages of the budget process at both the state and local levels. The ministry mainstreamed gender in regulations governing the budget process. The process runs the gamut from the preparation and consideration of the Budget Declaration of the draft budget and local budget forecast, to drafting budgets, considering the draft and adopting the Law on the State Budget of Ukraine and decisions on local budgets.

<sup>3</sup> PEFA Secretariat, *Supplementary Framework for Assessing Gender Responsive Public Financial Management*. Washington DC, January 2020, <https://www.pefa.org/gender>

It further involves executing budgets, preparing and considering the report on budget execution, and making decisions based thereon.



**Azerbaijan's** Ministry of Finance included result-based budgeting in the implementation of public financial management reforms. This budgeting reform creates an opportunity to introduce gender-responsive budgeting.



The Government of **Georgia's** Resolution No. 182 of 17 April 2018, on 'Approving Government Action Plan for Protection of Human Rights for 2018–2020', places an emphasis on gender equality principles in the budget process, capacity, gender analysis of draft laws, the state budget of Georgia for 2019 and 2020, preparing recommendations and integrating these into final documents. It does so in order to integrate the principles of gender equality into state policy.



In the **Republic of Moldova**, to sensitise decision-makers and prepare them for the introduction of GRB in the budgetary process, a series of trainings on GRB were organised for the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Research, and Regional Treasuries.



The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (**OECD DAC**) has analysed [best practices for gender-responsive budgeting](#). Its paper presents core features that are common to the successful implementation of gender-responsive budgeting in OECD Member States and within the scope of the OECD's work with countries on designing and implementing GRB.

## USEFUL LINKS

- [EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project page](#)
- [Gender Equality Library](#)
- [EU Neighbours East website](#)



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EQUALITY LIBRARY