

Terms of Reference

Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group

1. Background

The ongoing work regarding Equality Budgeting in Ireland follows the Programme for Partnership Government commitment to ‘develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights’. The Programme also includes a commitment to ‘ensure the institutional arrangements are in place to support equality and gender proofing within key government departments’. The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 contains a further commitment to ‘Take measures to build capacity within the Civil and Public Service with regard to gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting’.

A pilot initiative for Equality Budgeting was announced in Budget 2018, with a focus upon identifying relevant performance objectives indicators for a number of diverse policy areas, and this was carried through in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2018. The paper ‘Equality Budgeting: Proposed Next Steps in Ireland’ was also published alongside Budget 2018 and provides greater background and information on the approach taken. The broad intention is that the policy areas piloted in the 2018 REV will be built upon, expanding the initiative to other expenditure programmes and equality dimensions for the 2019 budgetary cycle and beyond.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is committed to working with other Departments and Agencies, and with experts and advocacy groups, in order to advance the Equality Budgeting initiative to best international standards.

2. Role of objectives of Equality Advisory Group

Against this background, an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group has now been established to assist in the further development and roll-out of Equality Budgeting in Ireland. The more specific role and objectives of the Group are as follows:-

- to provide constructive, critical feedback on the Equality Budgeting initiative to date
 - to provide expert guidance and informed insights on the future direction and areas of focus for Equality Budgeting, including in light of international experience, lessons from other policy areas and from academia
 - to promote a coherent, cross-government approach to Equality Budgeting, to maximise equality impacts and avoid duplication of effort across various policy areas
 - to identify existing strengths of the Irish policy-making system which can be leveraged in support of Equality Budgeting, along with potential shortcomings that need to be addressed in this regard.
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3. Issues

Equality Budgeting is not about creating a separate and distinct budget for specific equality measures. Rather, it is about the equality impact of budget policy and of the entire revenue and expenditure of a government. The intention is to anchor equality budgeting into the existing budgetary and policy-making framework.

4. Methodology

The Expert Group will meet 3 to 4 times per year. Officials from the Performance Budgeting Section in The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will act as secretariat to the Group. Topics which the Expert Group wish to be examined will be discussed with the secretariat and arrangements will be made for appropriate departments and agencies to attend meetings. To ensure sufficient analysis of each area, it is envisaged that two areas be examined per meeting.

5. Expertise

The members of the Expert Group will represent the key stakeholder groups and also those most appropriate to provide the expert analysis and guidance required. Membership of the Expert Group will initially be for a period of one year and will be then be reviewed.

6. Reporting

Analysis and advice will be on an *ad hoc* basis and reporting will be done following each meeting, with a focus on actions to be pursued. This will be supported by the secretariat. An annual report on the work of the group will also be presented to senior management of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.