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Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the ESIF and in National Budgets Slovakia, 4-5 February 2020

Comments Paper - Malta



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Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in Malta

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Abstract

Gender Equality between women and men remains elusive on many fronts and in 2019, Malta's score in the EU Equality Index was below the EU average. Progress has been noted in the area of paid work, but little headway has been made in the power domain, which is still heavily dominated by men. On the other hand, women still disproportionately carry the biggest care burdens, with related consequences on their career and their earnings. Gender mainstreaming is still in its very early stages and there is no evidence that Gender Auditing or Gender Budgeting has been implemented so far. In the last six years no ESIF funds were secured for gender-equality-related projects. However, other funds were sourced through other EU calls. A gender mainstreaming strategy is due to be launched in 2020, although little details exist of how this will be implemented. Malta has much to gain if it makes better use of ESIF and other EU funds in order to secure the expertise and the resources to effectively implement Gender Mainstreaming and to carry out Gender audits and Gender Budgeting. NGOs should be more involved in these processes and could be better supported, in order to make use of EU funds to strengthen gender equality in Malta.

1. Relevant country context

Gender Equality in Malta remains elusive on many fronts. With a score of 62.5 (out of 100) Malta's rankings in the European Union Gender Equality index are 4.9 points lower than the EU average, thus placing the country in the 15th position among 28 EU Member States. Whilst noting improvements in some sectors, Malta's ranking in 2019 were the same as those in 2005.¹

In a vibrant labour importing economy, the most notable improvements were related to the domain of work (+ 12.5 points) and money (+ 12.2 points). Yet, a gender employment gap of 20 percentage points (the largest in the EU) persists between the employment rates of women (63 %) and men (83 %).² The gap increases to 39

¹ Gender Equality Index 2019: Malta. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-malta>

² Labour Force Survey (Q.3, 2019). National Statistics Office – Malta. Retrieved from: https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Documents/2019/News2019_209.pdf

percentage points, when comparing the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) rates of women and men with children thus indicating more work/family conflicts for mothers.³

Whilst around 60% of the country's graduates are females⁴, traditional gender roles impact on the type of work women and men do. For example, overall, more women (25%) than men (7%) work part time, and the labour market is still to a large extent, segregated around traditional gender roles with 30% of women working in education, health and social work, when compared to 10 % of men. Most of the care work in the family is still carried out by mothers and only 0.6 % of parental leave was taken up by fathers working in the Public Sector in 2017. ⁵ No data is available on the uptake of parental leave by fathers in the private sector, however this too is assumed to be very low.

The power domain remains the most problematic area, with a score of just 32.2 points in the EIGE equality index. In the last 70 years the increase in women in parliament has been negligible (0.07 annually) and the share of women in the national parliament currently stands at 13%. When one of the female ministers was appointed as EU Commissioner and was replaced by a man in 2019, the share of women ministers decreased from two to one.⁶ On the other hand, women's representation on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies improved, but it remains problematic at just 9% according to the EIGE (2019).

On the positive side, children (0-3) of working parents in Malta are entitled to free childcare and children aged 3-4, get free kindergarten during school hours (typically from around 8.30 to 2.30) during term time. The Gender Pay Gap (GPG) in 2019 (12%), is still below the EU average. However, this has been steadily increasing⁷ and is more problematic in particular sectors. For example, the GPG goes up to 28% for women employed in the financial services sector and it increases with the level of education.⁸

At present Malta does not have a national strategy or action plan on gender equality. However, in March 2019, the Government launched a public consultation process

³ *Gender Equality Index 2019: Malta*. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-malta>

⁴ University of Malta. *Number of students who completed awards*. Retrieved from: <https://www.um.edu.mt/about/facts/numbers/graduates>

⁵ NCPE Annual Report (2018). Retrieved from: https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/NCPE_Annual_Report_2018.pdf

⁶ Schembri Orland, Kevin. "Malta has third-lowest percentage of female representatives in Parliament". *The Malta Independent*, November 10, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-11-10/local-news/Malta-has-third-lowest-percentage-of-female-representatives-in-Parliament-6736215953>

⁷ Magri, Giulia. "Gender pay gap in Malta lower than EU average, but is increasing". *The Malta Independent*, November 18, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-11-18/local-news/Gender-pay-gap-in-Malta-lower-than-EU-average-but-is-increasing-6736216369>

⁸ Carabott, Sarah. "Working mothers earn 16 per cent less than fathers: 'Shocking' wage gap disparities revealed by new data". *The Times of Malta*, April 20, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://cms.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/working-mothers-earn-16-per-cent-less-than-fathers.676954>

called “Towards a Gender Equality Mainstreaming Framework”.⁹ This was a step in the right direction however, the consultation document itself was vague and amateurish and devoid of any data, studies or meta-indicators. The document simply listed eight pillars which the government plans to focus on, and not much else. This consultation document mentions gender mainstreaming in passing in several instances, but then stops short of how it will be implemented. The concept of gender audits and gender budgeting does not feature at all in the consultation document. The launch of the Gender Equality Mainstreaming Framework resulting from this consultation process is planned for 2020.

2. Policy Debate

Gender Budgeting

There are no legal obligations that impose gender impact assessments or gender budgeting when drawing up ministerial or the national budget in Malta. Apart from a study carried out in 2009 by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) on Gender Responsive Budgeting¹⁰ no concrete initiatives have been implemented on the ground in relation to gender audits or gender budgeting.

Gender Mainstreaming

Malta is clustered with other countries where gender mainstreaming is still considered to be in its early stages. The concept of Gender Mainstreaming was first mentioned in Malta in the year 2000 (Circular 24/2000) and reiterated again in 2012 (Circular 15/2012) by means of circulars issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The infrastructure to implement gender mainstreaming, including updated statistical data and expertise, is largely lacking. Between 2012 and 2018, NCPE delivered 47 training sessions to over 700 public sector employees on Gender Mainstreaming. However, through the reports sent by the different government departments in 2018, NCPE noted that many of the templates were “filled in with generic statements that did not outline any tangible work related to gender mainstreaming”, thus suggesting that “the implementation of this strategy is not systematically applied to most Government work”.¹¹ Furthermore, an EIGE document on Gender Mainstreaming indicates, that since 2012 the use of gender mainstreaming tools has actually declined.¹²

⁹ *Towards a Gender Equality Mainstreaming Framework: Consultation Document (2019)*. Retrieved from: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEAE/PublishingImages/Pages/Consultations/TowardsaGenderEqualityMainstreamingFramework/Consultation%20Document%20-%20Towards%20a%20Gender%20Equality%20Mainstreaming%20Framework.pdf

¹⁰ *Gender Responsive Budgeting. A study on GRB initiatives in Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, UK and France (2009)*. National Commission for the Promotion of Equality. Retrieved from: https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/Living_Equality/grb.pdf

¹¹ NCPE (2019). Annual Report 2018. Retrieved from: https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Our_Publications_and_Resources/Annual_Reports/NCPE_Annual_Report_2018.pdf. Page 63.

¹² *Gender Mainstreaming–Country Specific Information- Malta*. European Institute for Gender Equality. Retrieved from: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/malta>

In January 2019, government set up a Gender Mainstreaming Unit within the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (falling under the responsibility of the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality). The unit is currently made up of two persons¹³ and until now, it did not make use of any ESIF funds to promote gender equality.¹⁴

Legal Updates related to Gender Equality

After many years in limbo, the long awaited bill (97/2019) which seeks to establish a Human Rights and Equality Commission in line with the Paris Principles is finally being discussed in Parliament. Concurrently, a new comprehensive bill (96/2019) which prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender, is also being discussed in parliament.

Furthermore, in July 2019, the government launched a consultation process on “Gender Balance in Parliament Reform”.¹⁵ The proposals, which are still under review, suggest the setting up of a Commission tasked with ensuring more gender equality within the Maltese Parliament by having at least 40% representation of each sex. There are several suggestions on how this can be achieved. These include incentives to political parties in order to recruit more women candidates, periodic gender equality audits for political parties, and a gender balanced Electoral Commission. Furthermore, the reform seeks to implement legal and Constitutional reforms that will permit the allocation of additional seats in parliament (12 in total) to the underrepresented sex (women at present). It is still unknown when and if these proposals will be able to pass through parliament.

3. Transferability aspects

Using ESIF Funds – Comparisons of Malta with Slovakia and the Czech Republic

In **Slovakia**, 53 gender- equality- related projects were secured using ESIF funds. The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) in **Malta** carried out seven gender equality related projects using European Social Funds (ESF) between 2004 and 2013¹⁶. A further 10 projects were funded through other EU sources during that period. In the last six years, no new gender -equality related projects seem to have been funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) or the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). However, since 2014, five gender related projects were secured, one through a DG Just call, and four others through

¹³ Personal Communication, (2nd January, 2020). Annalise Desira – Manager, Human Rights and Integration Directorate.

¹⁴ Personal Communication (17th December, 2019) Annalise Desira – Manager, Human Rights and Integration Directorate.

¹⁵ Gender Balance in Parliament Reform - Consultation Document. (March 26, 2019). Retrieved from: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/OPM/Pages/Consultations/GenderBalanceinParliament.aspx

¹⁶ Personal Communication (17th December, 2019) Renee Laiviera, Director, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)¹⁷. Hence, one should be aware of the various calls for actions to increase gender equality, which extend beyond ESIF funds.

In the Czech Republic, the government seems to have made a conscious move to support NGOs and it is interesting to note that some of the calls were specifically directed towards the internal professionalisation of NGOs. In Malta, women's NGOs rarely participate in ESIF or other EU funded projects. Most Women's NGOs operate on a voluntary basis with no state funding and very few, if any, are run on a professional basis. Many lack the technical and logistical capacity to participate in EU funded projects as they do not have any paid employees or premises from where to operate. This makes it rather difficult for them to apply for EU projects, in spite of the support provided by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) to all NGOs¹⁸.

Gender Budgeting - Comparisons with Malta and Austria

The discussion on gender budgeting in Malta has hardly started and it does not seem to feature in the political discourse of the government or the social partners. No clear efforts have been made in Malta to implement gender budgeting or gender audits at the national or at the ministerial level. This may possibly be due to the fact that there is no legal obligation to do so and expertise on gender auditing and gender budgeting, together with updated gender disaggregated data, is rather limited. On the other hand, Austria has a strong legal mandate to implement gender budgeting and there is broad political consensus for its implementation.

Drawing on the Austrian experience, it becomes clear that the implementation of gender audits and gender budgeting is no simple feat. This requires a proper, well-funded and well-resourced set up, to drive and coordinate this process and good institutional arrangements and clear procedures need to be in place to implement Gender responsive budgeting. It seems that when implementing Gender Budgeting in Austria, they were careful not to overwhelm the ministries with demands and tackling one gender equality objective yearly seems reasonable. The final learning point from Austria is that all indicators and figures related to natural persons need to be broken down by gender in the various budget documents. This is essential for gender audits and gender budgeting.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

European Level

If the EU has gender equality at heart, gender budgeting and gender auditing should be introduced through a specific EU directive, rather than leaving the individual Member States to decide whether to implement these tools or to ignore them.

¹⁷ Personal Communication (7th January, 2020) Renee Laiviera, Director, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

¹⁸ See: <https://meusac.gov.mt/eu-funding/> for details on the support provided by MEUSAC for those seeking to secure EU funds

National Level – Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting and gender auditing rely heavily on the availability of updated and reliable data which is disaggregated by gender. In Malta gender disaggregated data is lacking, and is not obligatory in the budget breakdown. This needs to change before any gender audit can be conducted.

In order to assist the different ministries to carry out gender auditing and gender budgeting, there needs to be a well-resourced and well-funded unit that provides the technical support to the different ministries. The unit should set clear targets and standard procedures and, be responsible for the monitoring of progress, or the lack of it.

National Level – ESIF Funds

In order to encourage more NGOs working in the area of gender equality to apply for ESIF funds, government should first help them to become more professional rather than having to rely on volunteers to do the work. Unless this is done, it will continue to be difficult for NGOs, especially women's NGOs, to apply, secure and manage EU funds effectively.

The logistical and technical capacity of the national machinery for gender equality should be strengthened by having more experts within it, who are able to access EU funds to enable government in collaboration with NGOs, to implement the mainstreaming strategy once this launched, by using ESIF and other EU funds.