ances could be found in many contexts, e.g. women in administrations, women at universities, women organized in churches, women from parties.

The focus on participation is multifaceted and complex. There are multiple forms and sites of participation. There may be different ways in different contexts. Still, transparency is always a crucial issue. We have to improve people’s understanding of budgeting processes.

The question is what Gender Budgeting initiatives can do. An important aspect is to be plugged in to different kinds of networks, especially establish links to progressive women’s networks. Initiatives have to try to get in the expertise. In the UK for example, the WBG has established regular contacts with and access to the Ministry of Finance. By this means it is possible to position its expertise. The opportunities differ according to the specific situation. Finding ways towards democratisation is a special challenge when dealing with finance ministries.

Entry points at the local level might be easier to establish. In many countries the economy of communities is changing very fast. There is a tendency to shift all social problems to communities and drain their financial capacities. The European and national level policies often restrain financial resources at lower levels. This occurs in parallel to processes demanding more participation.

Participants agree that the success and relevance of depends to a large extend on the participation and lobbying of civil society initiatives and women’s groups.

2.2.4 PANEL IV - STRATEGIES VIS A VIS GOVERNMENTS

- Lobbying, Public Relations, Sensitization

In her opening input Sheila Quinn presented the experience of Ireland where three activities both, inside and outside government existed at a certain point in time, but nothing survived. The reasons are threefold: lack of political will, civil society was co-opted in an arrangement of partnership and in Ireland there is a situation of a large surplus leading to “give away budgets”.

In her input Diane Elson brought in the experience of the UK Women’s Budget Group (WBG), one of the very first Gender Budgeting initiatives. A primary strategy of the WBG was initially to set up a watch dog organisation and a network organisation bringing together expertise. This continues to be at the core of the WBG. The central focus of the WBG’s activities is on two official budget documents presented annually: the budget (on taxation etc.) and pre-budget paper (expenditure). The WBG coordinates reports to these documents which are distributed widely (to ministers, officials, key parliamentarians, selected members of the press etc.).

The WBG differentiates itself from lobbying of specific interest groups. It presents itself as bringing together all these expert views. Channels to transmit its messages are manifold. One is the Women’s National Commission, representative of all women’s organisations. Good relations to key members of the Labour party are important. The WBG has also worked on a project within the Ministry of Finance and managed to influence guidelines given for the review of public spending. The press should get more attention.

The WBG’s strategy is to work in close contact with the Finance Ministry. A key entry point has been a high level female minister. It is a strategic choice on how far to get involved with the Ministry. By showing cooperation and basic agreement with policies it might be possible, according to Diane Elson’s experience, to reach more than by voicing mere opposition.

Initiatives should and want to influence governments, but the question is on how to stay independent. It is also a question of what compromises one is ready to engage in. Civil society initiatives often feel a responsibility to pressure the state and put forward its ideas on what is important to do. The question is what to lobby for. Gender Budgeting initiatives tend to focus on broader issues of