

## **5. Short Presentations of some more Gender Budgeting Initiatives in Europe**

### **5.1 Austria: Watchgroup. Gender and Public Finance**

by Elisabeth Klatzer

The origins of the Watchgroup. Gender & Public Finance go back to 2000/2001. A group of women from NGOs, public institutions and universities initially aimed at making the concept of Gender Budgeting known in Austria, spreading knowledge and motivating both government, opposition parties and NGOs to pursue the issue further. With this in mind, the group published a book in 2002: "Frauen Macht Budgets, Staatsfinanzen aus Geschlechterperspektive" (available in German only). This book introduces the concept of gender budgeting, its potentials and its limits, reviews the main international initiatives and presents some approaches to engendering the Austrian federal budget. The work done on the Austrian federal budget addresses the overall macroeconomic strategy and its impacts on women as well as gender impacts of government revenue (focusing on taxes, social security and user fees) and selected areas of public expenditure (education and research, labour market policy and funding for women's organisations). The analysis is by no means comprehensive but is intended to illustrate how gender budget analysis may be done in practice. The expenditure analysis in the area of education and research is guided by the Swiss example and methodology.

The purpose of the book was twofold: governments at all levels (federal, regional and local) are addressed with a list of demands to introduce the concept of Gender Budgeting in a meaningful way into government policy, and specific recommendations are given how to change policies in order to achieve more gender equality.

The Watchgroup pursues the approach that Gender Budgeting is much more than a Gender analysis of government income and revenue. The aspect of transparency of the whole budgeting process, the translation of results of the analysis into alternative policies, the inclusion of the overall macroeconomic strategy into the analysis as well as the focus on participatory processes are included as equally important. This approach equally guides all subsequent work.

In response to the book and the promotion of its ideas, attention was drawn on the issue, especially from women activists, NGOs as well as opposition parties (Greens and Social Democrats). Many women active in local politics have been motivated to think about how to introduce the idea of Gender Budgeting in their practical political work. At this point there was a high demand for readymade recipes on how to do gender budgeting and disappointment when discovering that gender budgeting requires perseverance.

Especially as a response to the demand for more practical assistance in how to do gender budgeting at the local level, some women from the Watchgroup started a new project, the development of a handbook with more practical guidance on how to introduce Gender Budgeting at the regional and local level (published in 2004, available in German only). Furthermore, a workshop design was developed in cooperation with WIDE Austria, building on the experience in Economic Literacy workshops to foster training of political activists and interested groups.

Governments at all levels increasingly have shown interest in the concept and embarked upon pilot projects within public administration (as in Vienna) or commissioned external pilot studies (as the federal government or the Province of Upper Austria). All these pilots are (about to be) finished. Here in Austria, we are at a crucial point again, the challenge is to move from pilots to implementation in regular administrative work.

In 2004 the Austrian federal government decided to implement Gender Budgeting. A Gender Budgeting Working group has been set up but without adequate political power or clear guidelines and without additional resources. And somewhat hastily a section on "Gender Budgeting" was included in the 2005 and 2006 budget material. Due to little preparation and coordination the material in-