

Summary

Gender equality has become an actual and widely researched topic across Europe. For many years, this issue was not addressed due to historical traditions and widely accepted social norms. However as soon as the issue was raised and researchers started to pay attention to this, it became obvious that gender inequality determines many fundamental problems that negatively affect both male and female population. Equally, negative impact was observed in economy and society in general. Situation in Latvia compared to other European countries is below average. Latvia currently is rated 18th in gender equality index developed by EIGE UN and other relevant and appropriate sources and theories. This clearly indicates that there are some significant problems in terms of gender equality and there are wide opportunities to improve the situation. As one of the tools that can be utilized for improvement is budget and budgeting process used at different institutions.

Based on the identification of the above problem a research on opportunities to develop gender budgeting in Latvia was conducted. This was done during the period July-December 2017 on behalf of Latvian Society Integration Foundation. The aim of the research was to analyze gender equality and related aspects in two institutions, namely Aizkraukle municipality and State Employment Agency. The research was particularly conducted on one budgetary program in Aizkraukle and 2 programs in State Employment Agency. These programs were focused on culture, sport and religion in Aizkraukle and training of the unemployed and job seekers in Latvia, as well as support for the training of the unemployed for the State Employment Agency.

The analysis of the above mentioned programs was based on widely accepted theories about gender budgeting and related issues. This includes budgeting as such, as well as different criteria, aspects and instruments that are involved in the budgeting process. The framework for the analysis was developed based on the methodology developed by EIGE and UN for integrated approach for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming and gender equality. Based on the theoretical framework appropriate methodology was developed. This included secondary research, such as desk research and document analysis, analysis of budgetary programs, stakeholders' analysis, as well as primary research, including interviews, survey, focus group discussions and other relevant and appropriate methods. As a result of the thorough and integrated analysis the conclusions and recommendations were developed. The most important conclusions are the following:

- Gender equality aspects are not included in the budgeting process and there is insufficient attention paid to this aspect.
- Data necessary for gender mainstreaming and gender equality improvement are not collected, accumulated and used for planning.
- In general in Latvia there is still a dominating perception that inequality between male and female employees at work and during social activities is something

acceptable and even positive. The stereotypes established during the previous years are not an obstacle and should not be eliminated.

- This holds true also when analyzing budgets of the SEA and Aizkraukle municipality. It can be concluded that in many cases attention paid to gender equality is insufficient leading to concerns about unequal distribution of the state or municipal financial resources.
- Interest and awareness of gender equality and importance of including this concept in planning documents, strategies and budgets is very limited in the institutions that were included in the research as well as other related institutions.
- There are no formal barriers to include gender equality aspect in the budgetary process and planning documents. However, there is no explicit demand from any other institutions that these aspects should be included.

Based on the research results and conclusions appropriate and relevant recommendations were developed that can be taken into account by Aizkraukle municipality as well as the SEA. Also the recommendations can be used by other comparable institutions. The most important recommendations are the following:

- Information campaigns should be run in order to inform and convince different stakeholders about gains and benefits from the inclusion of gender equality aspects into the planning.
- Gender equality can and should be taken into account during the planning process and the costs of implementation is comparatively low compared to the possible gains.
- Data on male and female participation in different events and activities should be collected, accumulated and used in the planning process.
- Different activities aimed at the improving gender equality should be constantly monitored and results should be used in the further development of the planning.

In addition to the specific recommendations at the municipal and agency level some more general recommendations were developed for the state and political level. The most important ones to name are the following:

- Spread of information in order to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality issues.
- Improve the data collection procedures and statistical analysis by gender at all possible levels where data is accessible.
- Educate civil servants and other employees at different state and municipal institutions about the benefits of inclusion of gender equality aspects in budgetary and planning work.
- Conduct a permanent monitoring of the above mentioned activities. Based on the collected data further improve the decision-making process and ensure continuous improvement in the field of gender equality in Latvia.