**Comments[[1]](#footnote-1) from the Center for Research and Policy Making and the Gender Budget Watchdog Network[[2]](#footnote-2)**

The commitment for introduction of gender responsive budgeting that Prime Minister Zaev gave in 2018[[3]](#footnote-3), is not reflected in the proposed Law on Budgets. Republic of North Macedonia, as a signatory to the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, pledged itself in 1995 to the principle of adequate funding for gender equality (paragraphs 345 and 346). Another commitment was given by joining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the framework of the Global goals for sustainable development under goal number 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and "significantly increase investment in order to close the gender gap." Therefore, 5.C.1 indicator “Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment” directly assesses the transition of countries to gender responsive budgeting. The indicator focuses on the process, i.e. it assesses the budgeting process, whether it refers to gender equality, whether it provides access, monitoring and reporting of budget allocations and expenditures related to women and gender equality.[[4]](#footnote-4) The proposed Law on Budget misses a historic chance to set the legal basis for achieving sustainable development goals and international commitments for gender equality; at the same time this would be an opportunity to harmonize the legal framework on budgeting with the domestic bylaws for gender responsive budgeting[[5]](#footnote-5) and the Law on Equal Opportunities.

While Austria has regulated gender responsive budgeting in the Constitution, and all neighboring countries systematically introduce it in the public financial management system, the proposed Law on Budgets mentions gender responsive budgeting only in Article 3 where among the 11 budget principles, one of them regulates the principle of gender equality. It refers to the gender responsive budgeting as taking into consideration the gender equality in the planning phase and execution of budget income and expenditures. The Gender Budget Watchdog Network assesses this as insufficient and submits the following comments to the Law on Budgets.

**COMMENTS**

**Article 2**

**Glossary**

**It is necessary to introduce the following in the list of definitions**

**Gender Budget Statement** - Gender Responsive Budget Statement is a document that demonstrates the political will to include gender equality in the area covered by the program subject for analysis. It is also a document that reflects on the responsibility of the Government whether is ready to take steps to promote gender equality, accompanied by budget funds.

**Gender indicators** - enable regular monitoring and evaluation of budget implementation towards the established gender goals. Gender indicators are data, number, percentage, fact, opinion or perception that indicates for a certain situation or state of affair and measures changes over time in that situation or state of affair in relation to men and women.

**Gender goals** - refers to the results that contribute to reducing inequality between men and women in accordance with the policy or program to which they refer. Each program identifies problems, shortcomings, and recommendations that should contribute to achieving gender goals. Defining gender goals reflects the will and commitment of institutions to contribute to gender equality.

**Gender Budget Initiatives** - Initiatives for Gender Budget Awareness Processes. Their goal is to provide mechanisms by which governments, in cooperation with parliaments, civic groups, donors and other development agencies, can integrate a gender perspective into budget planning, drafting and implementation phases.

**Rationale: Budget users at central and local level with various documents are obliged to prepare gender budget statements, define gender goals and indicators, whereas the Ministry of Finance publishes gender budget initiatives. The draft law fails to regulate them and systematically introduce gender responsive budgeting and achieving the 5.C.1 indicator of the Global goals for sustainable development.**

**Article 31**

**In paragraph 2, point 2, sub-point b) it should be added that the explanation of the draft financial plan for the budget users should encompass an explanation on the set goals and identify at least one gender goal, in accordance with the program classification harmonized with the strategies and long-term development documents.**

This paragraph would stipulate:

(1) The budget users prepare Draft Financial Plans (budget requests) in accordance with the instructions, directions and expenditure limits as per the Circular.

(2) The Draft Financial Plan shall contain at least the following:

1. Realization of outflows for the previous year, estimated realization of outflows for the current year, planned outflows for the next four years in accordance with the Circular.

2. Explanation of the Draft Financial Plan of the budget users which contains at least:

a) Description and competencies of the budget user;

b) Explanation of the set goals **and identify at least one gender objective** according to the program classification harmonized with the strategies and long-term development documents;

c) Legal and other grounds for planned outflows;

d) Sources of funding;

e) Indicators that are the basis for calculation and evaluation of funds needed for the implementation of the programs;

f) Gender responsive indicators where feasible;

g) Other explanations and documents in accordance with the guidelines and instructions in the Circular.

**Rationale: According to the Methodology and the Manual for Gender Responsive Budgeting, budget users define gender objectives and gender responsive indicators in at least one program. However, Article 31 regulates gender responsive indicators, but not gender objectives.**

**Article 35**

**Budget proposal and budget documentation**

**In paragraph 2, to introduce point 6**

**6) Collection of gender budget statements of budget users**

This paragraph will stipulate:

(2) The budget documentation includes:

1. Revised fiscal strategy;

2. Rationale for the proposed budget that includes at least: realization from the previous year, estimated realization of the budget for the current year, Budget proposal and projections for the next 3 years, as well as elements defined in Article 31, point 2, sub-point 2;

3. Proposed annual program for sale of non-financial assets determined by Article 75 of this Law;

4. Proposed annual program for sale of financial assets determined by Article 84 of this Law;

5. Proposed laws necessary for the execution of the Budget Proposal;

**6. Collection of gender budget statements of budget users**

**Rationale: The second criterion of the respective 5.C.1 indicator assess whether the government provides a clear budget statement from a gender perspective, known as gender budget statement. The Methodology and the Manual for Gender Responsive Budgeting for the respective budget stipulate that budget users for the a given program for which they have prepared gender analysis and set gender goals should prepare and submit to the Ministry of Finance a gender budget statement. The proposed Law on Budgets fails to regulate that the Ministry of Finance may prepare a Collection of Gender Budget Statements of Budget Users and by including it in the documentation accompanying the Budget Proposal to achieve the criterion that assesses the achievement of the 5.C.1 indicator.**

**Article 95**

**Publishing on web pages**

**In paragraph (1) to add additional point 4 - Gender budget initiative**

This paragraph should stipulate:

(1) Budget users publish on their websites at least:

1. Approved financial plans;

2. Quarterly performance reports;

3. Annual financial statements;

**4. Gender budget initiative.**

**In paragraph (3) between point 2 and 3 to add a collection of gender budget initiatives.**

**Point 3 becomes point 4, and point 4 becomes point 5.**

**To add point 6 - Report on the implementation of gender budget initiatives.**

**Point 5 becomes point 7.**

These paragraphs would stipulate:

(3) The Ministry of Finance shall publish on its website at least:

1. Adopted Budget with budget documentation;

2. Citizens’ budget;

**3. Collection of gender budget initiatives of budget users;**

4. Reports on the execution of the state budget and the municipalities’ budgets;

5. Mid-term and annual report on the execution of the budget;

**6. Report on the implementation of gender budget initiatives;**

7. Audit report from the State Audit Office;

**Rationale: The Methodology and the Manual for Gender Responsive Budgeting oblige budget users for the program for which they have prepared a gender analysis and set gender goals to publish gender budget statements on their websites and this is already a practice; as is the practice for the Ministry of Finance to publish the collection of gender budget initiatives of budget users. Unfortunately, the proposed Law on Budgets does not systematically regulate this obligation, and thus puts at risk the achievement of the 5.C.1 indicator, more precisely the third criterion - Are allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment made public?**

1. The comments are based on the Gender Responsive Budgeting Strategy 2012-2017; Methodology for gender responsive budgeting for the state administration bodies; The Manual for Gender Responsive Budgeting for the Administration and the Report for achieving the 5.C.1 Indicator of the Sustainable Development Goals - Proportion of Nations with Systems to Track and Make Public Allocations for Gender Equity and Women’s Empowerment. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The network consists of 88 civil society organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, Moldova and Serbia. The network was established with the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://vlada.mk/node/14348 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This indicator measures three important components on gender responsible perspective in the public finances management: (i) Which of the following aspects of public expenditure are reflected in your government programs and its resource allocations? (In the last completed fiscal year); (ii) To what extent does your Public Financial Management system promote gender-related or gender-responsive goals? (In the last completed fiscal year); (iii) Are allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment made public? (In the last completed fiscal year); [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gender Responsive Budgeting Strategy 2012-2017; Methodology for gender responsive budgeting for the state administration bodies; The Manual for Gender Responsive Budgeting for the Administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)