

Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group

17th June, 2019

Present

Ronnie Downes (Chair, DPER), Carol Baxter (DJE), Eilís Ní Chaithnía (NWCI), Laurence Bond (IHREC), Seamus Taylor (NUI, Maynooth), Kieran Culhane (CSO), Helen Russell (ESRI), Laura Weymes (D/Finance), Anne Marie Walshe (D/Finance), Deirdre Shanley (DEASP), John Burke (DPER), Caroline O'Loughlin (DPER), Noel Howard (DPER) and Mary Dunne (DPER).

1. Minutes of Meeting held on April 5th

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2. Expansion to Disability sector – discussion

The group discussed the possible addition of a new member to this group: a representative from the disability sector. There was consensus that such a person should be added, and that it will be beneficial to have this sector explicitly represented. Members agreed that a representative from the National Disability Authority may be suitable.

- **Action: DPER and DJE to communicate with National Disability Authority about the inclusion of a disability sector representative in this group.**

3. Publication of Performance Report

DPER gave an overview of the recently published Public Service Performance Report (PSPR) 2018. The group was informed that a review of Performance Budgeting is currently underway within DPER. This process will be informed by interactions with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Budget Oversight Committee, Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), Line Departments, and this group. There is discussion of the possibility that the PBO will meet with this group at some point in the future.

The potential benefits of drafting an Equality Budgeting Statement are noted. Future development should also see the inclusion of big-ticket spending items, along with further work to clearly establish equality outcomes. Participatory budgeting is suggested as an avenue for consideration. The Pre-Budget Forum that will be held by DEASP in July 2019 is discussed as a possible stepping stone to full participatory budgeting.

Concerning the future of the Equality Budgeting Update, there are two options: integrate the Update with the main report, having an Equality report on each vote page; or keep the Update separate but ensure that each line Department reports at least one big-ticket, and one targeted item. The group

discusses the possibility of using the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a lens through which to view all budgetary aspects; the CSO has an SDG portal available on its website.

4. Equality Mainstreaming & Budgeting Policy Scan – DPER and DJE

DPER gave an overview of the OECD policy scan that will take place later this week. The OECD delegation hopes to meet with all members of this group, along with other key stakeholders. It is noted that DJE are funding the policy scan, and that the report of the OECD will help to inform the future development of Equality Budgeting in Ireland.

5. Equality Budgeting Circular: Discussion on approach

It is noted that DPER are still considering the best approach to this, and feel it is appropriate to wait for the OECD report before drafting the Circular. Some discussion ensues around the possibility of using the Civil Service Finance Officers' Network to spread the Equality Budgeting message.

6. SWITCH Model – Department of Finance

D/Finance delivers a presentation on the SWITCH (Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes) model. It is noted that DEASP publishes Social Impact Assessment literature very close to the publication date of the Budget. The group explores the possibility of further developing the CSO's *Survey on Income and Living Conditions* (SILC) to allow for better measurement of distributional impact. Discussion moves to the possibility of an intersectional approach analysis using SWITCH. It is noted that SWITCH analysis is available to the public through papers published by the Tax Strategy Group within D/Finance. The group discusses the importance of the SILC data to the work carried out using SWITCH, pointing out the need for further investment to make SILC richer and allow it to yield disaggregated data across all protected categories.

7. AOB

Next meeting proposed for September, date to be finalised in the coming weeks.