

Presentation by the Secretary General of
Finance Mr. Ignacio Méndez Cortegano

Public Hearing – Parliament of Victoria (Australia)

Monday, October 11, 2021

Good Morning,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today in this public hearing about Gender Responsive Budgets. I hope our contribution will be useful to you in the journey you are currently undertaking in the State of Victoria and that you reach a good outcome.

As you know, the Autonomous Region of Andalusia is the most populous region of Spain, with a population of nearly **8,5 million people**, a budget of **EUR 40,188 million** in 2021, and a GDP of **EUR 167,815 million** for the same period, which places the region in the third place in volume of GDP among the autonomous communities of our country.

As in many other contexts, we are currently suffering the consequences of the **COVID-19** pandemic and although, fortunately, we can already see hopeful signs of recovery, there are many effects felt in our region, and they could reverse the social and economic progress achieved in the last years.

The Government of Andalusia believes that in the current situation **it makes even more sense to contribute to equality of opportunities** for men and women due to the different social, economic and lifestyle effects that this post-pandemic situation is having on people. And so, in line with the recommendations of international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Government applies the Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) with an internationally recognised strategy (by organisations such as the OECD itself, the World Bank, or the European Commission), and continues to move forward and innovates every year.

The Government of Andalusia understands that gender equality is a **principle directly linked to the objective of economic growth** and to the achievement of higher levels of well-being for citizens. We believe that policies, from the moment of their planning, must be oriented towards accelerating the reduction of imbalances between women and men, and must contribute to ensuring that equality is not limited to a mere legal requirement.

And with this underlying idea, the government supports the budget as the most suitable tool to identify inequality and to redirect the priorities in the use of public resources, by planning public policies that are more coherent and responsible to gender equality. The **Gender Responsive Budget** allows us to transcend the traditional approach to gender equality policies, characterised by its sectoral nature, and to analyse and program each and every one of the actions that

comprise it from a different outlook, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of budgetary policies.

The Andalusian Government has worked for over fifteen years in the implementation of a **Gender Responsive Budgets Strategy**, originally inspired by the approach of other countries such as Australia. This work has been led by the Ministry of Finance and European Funding, which I represent. It has its own methodology and instruments aimed at identifying the inequalities between men and women, and to propose corrective measures from public policy, with a focus on quality and improvement in public services.

The Government of Andalusia applies the Gender Responsive Budget with the belief that a **responsible budget with equality between men and women, favours the creation of a virtuous circle in which the policy itself facilitates the reduction of inequalities**. As we mentioned before, the path of the Andalusian GRB strategy has become an inspirational practice for several administrations nationally and internationally, due to its comprehensive nature in terms of the process of the budgetary policy, its constant innovation capacity, and its reach to all the levels of the Andalusian administration.

The strategy began with the **enactment of a law in 2003**, through which the two main elements were established. On one side, the **Gender Impact Commission of the Budget**, which constitutes the main institutional mechanism for strategy promotion in the Andalusian administration. This Commission is made up of two representatives (a man and a woman) from each council (or regional ministry) in addition to two representatives of the Andalusian Institute for Women and another two from the Andalusian Institute of Statistics.

The aforementioned organisations are key for the implementation of the budget and gender strategy in Andalusia. The Andalusian Institute for Women establishes the gender equality references in coherence to the Andalusian regulations, while the Institute of Statistics provides the statistical analysis, which is essential to produce diagnostics when it comes to gender in different areas of public policy. Andalusia has made progress in the last years in this area, by performing studies, in collaboration with the Andalusian University, with an **intersectional approach** in which gender inequalities are studied in intersection with other inequalities that can widen the gap, such as location, age, ethnics, disabilities, etc.

The Gender Impact Commission of the Budget leads, promotes and coordinates the budget and gender strategy in the Andalusian government. It is chaired by the Secretary General of Finance, which ensures this effort is bound to the highest level within the department responsible for public finances. **This is one of the characteristics of the Andalusian experience**, and what differentiates it from other administrations: the **coordination capability and the monitoring of the Gender Responsive Budget** sits with the Ministry for Finance and European Funding which ensures the application and development of the budget, the central axis of the administration.

The second characteristic, is the **Gender Impact Report** which is established by law and must accompany the Autonomous Region of Andalusia's Annual Budget when presented to the

Parliament of Andalusia. This report presents an ex ante assessment of the foreseen effects of budgetary resources on the reduction of inequalities between men and women of our region.

Regulatory anchoring is one of the key elements of the strategy, which has made it possible for its continued application to the entire administration. After the aforementioned 2003 law, the Statute of Autonomy of Andalusia and the main Law of Equality in Andalusia, both enacted in 2007, ratified what was previously established. Lastly, the General Law of Public Finance of Andalusia states that the Gender Impact Report is part of the documentation of the annual budget draft.

In 2007, continuing with the development of the strategy, we launched the **G+ Program, our own methodology of classification** in four categories (G+, G, g1 and g0) for the 159 programs of the Andalusian budget according to their importance and gender relevance. The goal of this methodology is to concentrate efforts in those programs which have a greater impact in the reduction of inequalities between women and men. Through this methodology, those responsible for budgetary programs know which requirements they must meet regarding gender equality in the planning of the budgetary resources.

The last phase of the implementation of the Strategy consists of the **Budget and Gender Audits**, which were set in motion in 2013, and are currently in full-swing. The audits assess the degree of integration of gender equality in the making and executing of the public budget. Their main goal is to improve budgetary practices with a gender approach through continuous learning, as well as progressing on accountability in matters of equality. We have audited a total of 37 budgetary programs, with a combined total of EUR 20,746 million.

Simultaneously, we have deployed a **system to incorporate gender equality** in the process of preparing the annual budget, which has led the budgetary programs to link the planning of their resources to the objectives of the Gender Equality Law of Andalusia. This progress has occurred since this became mandatory thanks to the Budget Preparation Orders from 2016 to the present day, and to the continuous training efforts towards gender responsive budgetary planning for the personnel involved in the making of public accounts.

This brings me to the last element of the gender and budget strategy, made up of the **training, awareness, and promotion strategies for gender and budget**, in order to increase the involvement of the personnel responsible for the process of planning and managing the budget. Since its inception, this strategy has been accompanied by a constant effort to promote gender cultural change in relation to budgeting, as well as strengthening the skills of the **responsible technical personnel** at the different levels of the Andalusian government.

Annually, the **Gender and Budget Training and Awareness Plans** are approved by the Gender Impact Commission, both directed mainly to the personnel responsible for the budgetary programs in the management centres and special purpose entities, such as the members of the Gender Impact Commission of the Budget.

The Training Plan seeks to increase the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of the personnel, regarding budget and gender, in the Management Centres of the Government of Andalusia. One of the main lines of work of the plan is related to the training in collaboration with the IAAP (Andalusian Institute of Public Affairs), the institute responsible for training all personnel. Collaboration with the Institute is crucial for training programs to reach all people responsible for and involved in the implementation of the budget and gender strategy in the different Management Centres of the Andalusian Government.

The **Awareness Plan** includes an international annual conference that seeks to continue raising awareness in the personnel of The Government of Andalusia. The conference addresses the need to deepen the detection of the gender gaps that still persist, and the budget's ability to correct them through budgetary proposals. The exchange of experiences and good practices with other administrations as well as the academic and research fields are crucial to have feedback on the strategy, improve learning processes and innovate on work methods. Within the framework of this Plan, among other things, we publish and promote a monthly newsletter with statistical indicators and a weekly dossier with relevant news about the economy, Budget, and gender equality.

The target audience of this Plan amounts to more than 2,000 staff members belonging to the technical/political and administrative levels who are critical to the process of budgeting, to ensure that a gender perspective permeates through the administration of the Government of Andalusia.

Annually, the Ministry of Finance establishes a **program of work for the strategy of the entire Andalusian administration**, where all the actions to be carried out are detailed. The Secretary General of Finance and the Directorate General for the Budget make a coordinated effort to set up a work plan to be followed, **which is then assessed annually**.

In the last two years, progress has been made in another field of our interest in the Ministry of Finance and European Funding: the inclusion of an **environmental perspective in the Gender Responsive Budgets**. Since climate change has different consequences for men and women, and decision-making in environmental politics has a high underrepresentation of women, a public policy that integrates a gender perspective along with ensuring a fair and sustainable transition, is needed.

Of course, we must also consider equal opportunities between men and women in the management of the **Next Generation European Fund**, as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) recommends in their manual published in 2020 to integrate gender mainstreaming in the funds through the budget. This increases the accountability and result orientation in matters of gender equality while also contributing to better budgeting.

In the next 2022 Budget, we will be able to see concrete progress in both areas.

In conclusion, the Budget and Gender Strategy of Andalusia has achieved:

- Institutionalisation of gender equality in all public policies through the budget.
- The carrying-out of gender budgeting in the entire policy – planning – execution – evaluation cycle, an exercise that begins with the annual preparation of the budget and ends with the internal audit per budgetary program.
- A cultural change in the staff of the Government of Andalusia, so that the budgetary policies are oriented towards the correction of gender inequalities.
- An improvement of the accountability process regarding gender equality in Andalusia, since the Andalusian Audit Office has been auditing compliance of gender responsiveness in the General Accounts of the Government of Andalusia for the last three years.

The Government of Andalusia is committed to Gender Responsive Budgets as a fundamental tool to move forward in matters of gender equality in our community, with the view that if women can't access the same opportunities and rights as men, if we don't respond to the need and life aspirations of our entire citizenship equally, then we will not be able to enjoy a truly prosperous, cohesive and sustainable society.

Thank you very much for your attention. I'm available for any questions or comments you may have.
