

Women's Support Network News

WSN—Supporting the development of Women's Organisations

There's no mistaking it, we are all going to suffer in one way or another for the debt racked up over the boom years. This budget's spending cuts will impact on most of the vulnerable in society for years...

- **Petrol prices - up 1p in October:** While the Chancellor said "no new rises", the scheduled 1p/litre rise in Oct is still on.
- **VAT rise - up to 20% on 4 January:** Almost everything we buy will cost 2.5% more as VAT rises from 17.5%.
- **Mortgage help decreased - Oct 2010:** The 'Support for Mortgage Interest'—current generous 6.08% help will drop to a new rate (currently 3.67%).
- **Child benefit frozen - until April 2014:** It's not being cut, there'll just be no increases in the next three tax years.
- **Tax credits changes - 6 April 2011:** Next tax year most families with £40,000+ annual incomes will get fewer tax credits, while some on lower incomes will see the 'child element' increased by £150 above inflation.
- **Tax personal allowance increase - 6 April 2011:** Next year most will be able to earn £7,475 tax free (currently £6,475).
- **Wine, beer, spirits & tobacco - April 2011:** While there are "no new rises", duty is scheduled to rise 2% above inflation next April.
- **Benefit rises linked to CPI - April 2011:** Currently linked to the RPI measure, it'll change to CPI inflation, which tends to be lower.
- **State pension triple guarantee - April 2011:** From then it'll always rise by the HIGHER of earnings, inflation or 2.5%.
- **Disability living allowance medical assessment - 2013/14:** Their aim is more medicals to cut £1.4bn from the system.



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WSN hosts Ballybeen Women's Centre EU workshops

Ballybeen Women's Centre recently held 2 EU training workshops and a debate in the Women's Support Network. These were facilitated by Fiona O'Connell, the Network's Policy and Research Co-ordinator and were part of a series of awareness raising workshops in a Europe for Citizens project called 'Contribute to Change: Young Women in Political Careers'.

BWC, along with partner organisations from Romania and the Czech Republic, have been involved in a year long project aimed at increasing the participation of young women in political life by changing attitudes, raising confidence levels and self esteem.

In addition to the EU workshops, women from BWC took part in study visits to Castlereagh Borough Council, Belfast City Council, the Assembly at Stormont and Dáil Éireann in Dublin.

There has been very positive feedback from the women who took part and key outcomes have included

- **Increased knowledge**
- **Increased self development, confidence and self esteem**
- **Opportunity to put learning into practice – public debate**
- **Broke down barriers to participation**
- **Increased engagement at local and EU level**

All participants really enjoyed the lively discussion and debate on women's rights and active citizenship.

BWC is also involved in another year long Europe for Citizens project called 'Dialogue with the EU- the Voices of the European Citizens'. Along with partner organisations, from Greece, Germany, Czech Republic and Romania, BWC has been developing activities aimed at empowering women with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to express their opinions on a range of issues and policies the an EU level through forums, blogs etc...

Women from BWC have been able to engage with women from partner organisations and discuss issues such as European values, active citizenship diversity at international conferences in Greece and Germany. They will be undertaking a study visit to the EU Parliament in September.