Public sector accounting (PSA) and reporting was subject to considerable national reforms during the last decades and is in the focus of the European Commission aiming to harmonize the accounting systems of its Member States by developing European Public Sector Accounting Standards (EPSAS). Therefore, the topic is of high relevance for both academia and practitioners.

This book provides different views about PSA in Europe as of today. It spans topics such as history of PSA, its differences to private sector accounting and finance statistics, as well as budgeting. A main part is devoted to International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) by addressing their spread, conceptual framework and selected public sector specific standards, including a case study. Also, consolidated financial reporting is covered by drawing examples.

This textbook is not only of use for students and researchers, but interested readers that seek for broad perspectives on PSA such as practitioners and members of intergovernmental organisations. It intends to complement university teaching modules on PSA as those accessible for free under www.offene.uni-rostock.de/online-course-european-public-sector-accounting.
CHAPTER 4
BUDGETS AND BUDGETARY ACCOUNTING

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SUMMARY
This chapter describes various approaches to budgeting, which is the traditional essence of public sector accounting. This includes budget planning and budget-linked accounting. The roles and functions of budgets are presented as well as the ideas and practices of both traditional budgets and modern variants such as output- and performance-based budgets.

KEYWORDS
Budget planning, budgetary accounting, budget models, types of appropriations

1. Introduction

In the public sector, the traditional core area of financial decision-making and management is related to budgeting and budget implementation. Elected representative bodies are the ultimate decision-makers in a democracy. One elementary part of this role is the budget power of the representative body.
The duty to be publicly accountable is more significant in government than in business financial reporting. As a consequence of the accountability of public administration to citizens and to their representative bodies (parliaments, councils, etc.), the principles of publicity and transparency are important in budgetary and financial reporting. This includes the lawful and regular behaviour of budget entities, compliance with the approved budget and striving to provide as much value as possible with the entrusted collective resources. Instead of the narrower profitability assessment in the private sector, in the public sector, the many-sided performance and value-for-money assessments are crucial.

Public sector budget structures and accounting conventions have been shaped by national practices. It is just lately that harmonisation pressures have emerged. Public sector accounting (PSA) is nowadays shaped more than ever before by international accounting standards, in addition to domestically developed accounting conventions. However, this international standardisation is more targeted to general-purpose financial statements than to budgets, and even this phenomenon is at an early stage in many countries.

In this Chapter 4 we first explain in Section 2 the budgetary accounting as one part of PSA. Section 3 is devoted to functions and principles of budgets such as the publicity and transparency principle. This is followed with a description of traditional annual budgets and modern variants such as budget appropriations in Section 4 and budget-linked budgetary accounting in Section 5. The last section gives a conclusion.

2. Budgetary accounting in the family of PSA systems

The budgetary accounting approach emerges from the agreed budget in the public sector. Bookkeeping must follow the logic and structure of the budget regarding the allocation of income and expenditure to the correct budget codes. If the budget is cash-based, then the follow-up bookkeeping must also be cash-based. If the budget is accrual-based, then the follow-up bookkeeping must also be accrual-based.