

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

## QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30219

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### **Theme 1: Gender norms and stereotypes**

#### Gender norms and stereotypes as barriers to gender equality

Fixed ideas about what women and men should do in the home or at work are learned by girls and boys in early childhood and throughout their lives. These ideas or gender stereotypes affect their choices in school and as they enter careers and contribute to a lack of progress toward equality between women and men. This limits not only the jobs that women and men consider or are available to them, but also can exclude women and men from social roles and tasks.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

Gender stereotypes are visible in school, with the uniforms provided to female students (the default being a plaid skirt uniform). The continued segregation of schools as 'boys' or 'girls' schools is another problem that reinforces stereotyping due to a lack of representation, and removes the possibility for either gender to have access to the same information regarding career choices. Women are also still fighting for basic rights such as fertility control and equal pay, and attitudes have only started changing recently, with a lot of ground remaining to cover to reach the level of other developed countries in the EU.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

Gender stereotypes manifest strongly in schools and within the compulsory curriculum. The orientation process should be reviewed and adjusted so that girls and female teenagers are not encouraged to follow traditionally 'feminine' career paths, and are instead given a full overview of all the options available to them. Guest speakers and school events relating to orientation and university selection should promote equality and include female representatives, especially in STEM fields. Other aspects of women's rights, such as Family planning, should also be examined by the relevant committees with the objective of improving public policy in that regard.

### **Theme 2: Work: Occupational segregation by gender, gender discrimination and the gender pay gap**

Women and men are often concentrated into different kinds of jobs and within the same occupations, women are often in work that is less well paid and has less opportunities for career advancement. Women often work in areas where they can work part-time so as to fit in with their caring responsibilities. While many men work in low paid jobs, many professions dominated by women are also low paid, and professions that have become female-dominated have become lower paid. This worsens the gender pay gap (the average difference between the wages of women and men who are working).

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

Women are still expected to be the primary caretakers of a family home and of any children they might have, even when they have a partner. The lack of progressive policies allowing male parents to share the burden of caretaking and child rearing puts the onus on women to shoulder it alone. Accommodating circumstances (part-time work, flexible hours, parental leave) are overwhelmingly geared toward the female parent. This attitude also erases the growing number of same sex families who need to be better represented and have rights tailored to their situations. In general, stereotypes represent the woman as responsible for household chores and child rearing, down to book illustrations in school. Teachers also often fall into the trap of using heterosexual, traditional gender roles in the classroom.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

The state must initiate a change by extending the duration of paternity leave. Several companies in Ireland have taken very bold step forward in that aspect and it has generally been received very positively. The attitude must also be changed so that men, and not just women, are given the option of shifting to part-time or flexible work hours to accommodate their caring obligations. The education system should include in its curriculum (for instance as part of Civic education) examples of countries where the gender gap is lower and where gender roles are actively been erased, such as Sweden or Finland.

### **Theme 3. Care, paid and unpaid, as a social and family responsibility**

Care -- the social responsibility of care and women and men's co responsibility for care, especially within the family

Women remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and often work in poorly paid care work. For working parents or lone parents, balancing paid work with parenting and or caring for older and dependent adults presents significant challenges. Women are most disadvantaged by these challenges, yet men also suffer from lack of opportunities to share parenting and caring roles. Despite recent legislation and policy initiatives to support early years parental care, inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care continue between women and men. The cost of childcare has been identified as a

particular barrier to work for women alongside responsibilities of caring for older relatives and dependent adults.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

#### **Theme 4: Women's access to, and representation in, public life and decision making**

Ensure women's participation and representation in decision-making and leadership in the workplace, political and public life

Women are systematically underrepresented in leadership in economic and political decision-making. Despite the introduction of a candidate gender quota (through the system of party funding) for national political office, and initiatives to support women's access to corporate decision-making roles, men continue to dominate leadership positions. There are also issues to be considered around how media represents women and men.

- Please outline what you see as the key barriers/ obstacles and challenges to gender equality under this theme in law, policy and practice.

- Please identify the steps to be taken to address the issues raised and who should address them (e.g. the state, private sector, education system etc.)

#### **5. Where does gender inequality impact most?**

To conclude we would be interested in your response to the following question: In which area do you think gender inequality matters most?

Please rank the following in order of importance, 1 being the most important:

- Paid work 6
- Home & family life 3

- Education 2
- Politics and public life 5
- Media 4
- Caring for others 1
  
- Other – please elaborate

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

Gender role stereotypes are insidious and pervasive. They start manifesting from childhood and only get reinforced over time due to representation issues, education & orientation bias, and social norms. Therefore, the place of men in society needs to be rethought, with greater representation in traditionally female-dominated social roles. Bias in public education, through the curriculum, teacher unconscious biases, or orientation process must also be actively identified and eliminated. This will in turn lead to a natural shift of the perception of women's role in society that will result in better representation.

➤ Please include any further comments or observations you may have here.