

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30132	Name: New Communities Partnership
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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.

The Public Consultation- Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality is an excellent initiative to advance Gender Equality in Ireland. This consultation must reflect and represent the state's notable and increasingly diverse population.

New Communities Partnership (NCP), is a National umbrella network for migrant-led organisations. We advocate and strive for migrant people rights. We have started running a new project titled "Migrant Women Opportunities for Work (Mi-WOW)"; The project is coordinated and run by migrant women, and supported by the Department of Justice and Equality, Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes (2014-2020), and the European Social Fund. Mi-WOW is looking to explore, support, and overcome specific barriers that migrant women face throughout their job-seeking journeys in Ireland. It is designed to empower migrant women to reach their potential, rebuilding their confidence, and upgrading their skills to facilitate their access to the labour market and/or career progression linked to their professional goals. Additionally, Mi-WOW aims to provide support and a critical thinking space to enterprises, creating and developing inclusive and equal routes for Migrant Women to participate in any space of the Irish Labour Market.

Migrant women are facing clear and specific obstacles in Ireland when it comes to accessing the labour market. This happens because of their gender, ethnicity and, at times, national background. These women are forced to stay at home and to remain as housekeepers, or to accept low-paid positions and in no managerial roles, where their professional skills are underused. As a consequence, this situation contributes to the lack of progression towards equality between women and men, especially for those from ethnic minority backgrounds; It also does not allow the new generation to have many social role models that would encourage girls to achieve their professional and personal goals at any level, and in any space of the labour market.

This social-economic and political situation clearly contributes to perpetuating the role of migrant women at home due to lack of family support and, access to well-paid roles, notwithstanding the high costs of childcare, all of which diminish the opportunity of migrant women to access the labour market to begin with.

According to the ESRI Policy and Practice targeting the labour market integration of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland, Research series 89, June 2019 (Dublin) “research has shown that migrants face a number of challenges in the Irish labour market, including lack of career progression (McGinnity et al., 2018c; MRCI, 2015a; Barrett and Duffy, 2008), discrimination (McGinnity et al., 2018c), and poor recognition of qualifications and potential need to up-skill (O’Connell, 2018; Gusciute et al., 2016)

In addition, the ESRI-Monitoring Report on Integration (2018) suggested that “the low employment rates among African women may be partly due to the high costs of childcare in Ireland, which may be unaffordable for African mothers with relatively large families, relatively low earning potential, and, because of their immigrant status, less recourse to relatives to provide childcare (O’Connell and Kenny, 2017)”. These statements can be easily transferrable to the wider Migrant women population.

These challenges exclude Migrant Women from the competitive Irish Labour Market, perpetuating the above mentioned gender stereotypes within families living in Ireland.

- 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.)

Some of the steps identified to raise awareness to the challenges faced by Migrant Women (and second generation descent of Migrant Background) living in Ireland, and to further overcome some of these barriers are identified follow:

- More visibility and accountability to the challenges faced by migrant women in Ireland which facilitate and encourage discrimination in the workplace, and which result in migrant women being virtually dependent and voiceless in Ireland as a group.
- Ensure migrant women’s full and active participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, political and public life.
- To have more platforms like “Public Consultation-Citizen’s Assembly on Gender Equality” to raise migrant women’s voices, and to make discriminations faced more visible.
- To allocate specific mentoring programmes to increase the participation of migrant women in Politics and public roles, public sector, leadership and decision making roles, law, pharmacy, education and finance sectors.

- To reduce the costs of childcare for migrant women (and indeed, women more broadly), so that they have the choice to leave the house. According to interviews in a recent Report on mental health Experience of Migrant Women, “Let’s talk” All participants emphasised the lack of affordable and accessible childcare as a major barrier to social integration as it limits opportunities for employment and increases social isolation. As P. 11 highlighted when asked about improvements to services; For me top on the list would be like childcare because as a mom by being by myself, I want to do something, and then where do I keep the kids, and if I need to put them in childcare centre, can I afford it?”, (Akidwa, Dublin, 2020).

We suggest that the challenges raised above must be addressed from different angles and entities, mainly at Statutory and Local government levels, as part of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Local authorities, the Department of Social Justice and Equality and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

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).

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Research on the experience of migrants in the Irish labour market has identified a number of challenges. For instance, “Non-Irish nationals, Black non-Irish nationals and individuals of African origin face higher rates of work-related discrimination than Irish nationals (Kingston et al., 2012; Kingston et al., 2015, McGinnity et al., 2018c). Other challenges identified include: low pay (MRCI, 2015b); over-qualification; lack of progression, and exploitation (MRCI, 2015a); inadequate English language skills; weak network; lack of recognition of qualifications; and potential need to up-skill (O’Connell, 2018; Gusciute et al., 2016)” The Economic and Social Research Institute Policy and Practice targeting the labour market integration of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland, Research series 89, June 2019, Dublin.

These key barriers faced by migrants are amplified for Migrant Women due to the addition of gender discrimination. This vulnerability exposes Migrant Women to labour

exploitation at the workplace, to be isolation, uncertainty and dependence. Additionally, as highlighted by Akidwa report on mental health Experience of Migrant Women let's talk said that "For many inactivity, unemployment, with no active role in Irish society, impacted on their sense of identity. They felt they had lost their status as independent adults and parents, unable to take control of their lives, which posed a major threat to their well-being" (Akidwa, Dublin, 2020). Furthermore, the report shows how Migrant Women suffer from Mental Health issues as a consequence of not getting access to good and fair job opportunities (Gender-diversity gap), retention or progression in the career, despite their level of qualifications and professional expertise. Another case study of a migrant woman with a degree in media studies and a MA from TCD felt that despite her qualifications she was discriminated against in seeking employment Her exact words: "You are looking for a job and you can't get it so, you are stressed. Like for example you apply for jobs and sometimes you don't even get an answer. So, you start maybe to question yourself, is it my name or maybe there's something wrong with me "(AkiDwA, Dublin, 2020)

- 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.)

Steps include:

- To have specific mentoring and campaign programmes for professional Migrant Women to gain access to areas with clear absence of diversity in their teams, especially in decision making roles. As an example, in 2018, the Minister for Equality and Social Justice, Charlie Flanagan, ran a campaign to recruit people from different backgrounds to An Garda Síochána. This could be replicated in other areas.
- To establish gender-diversity quota in specific public and states sector positions, and to enable Migrant Women to access the Labour Market and Leadership positions in areas such as politics, public jobs, Law, Communications, Education, among others.
- Within Education more specifically, to implement clear policies to promote the recruitment of more Migrant Women teachers to provide diverse representation in Irish primary, secondary and further education schools. This will in turn be reflected in future Irish society, in line with recent patterns, which reveal that 17% of the population living in Ireland to be foreign born, with a large proportion of migrant students at a primary level, especially in North Dublin. (ESRI, 2018)
- To establish free programmes, such as Advanced and Proficiency English classes for Migrant Women to overcome the barrier of English skills for work.

- In terms of law, re-consideration the implementation of the Gender pays gap bill 2019 should be given once the new Dail is fully formed. This could include adding provision within statutory legislation to demonstrate whether Migrant Women are indeed disproportionately affected by gender pay gaps. This bill should be a priority for the state once the new government is established.
- To create a specific unit to verify good practices during hiring processes. Additionally, this unit would also promote intercultural, gender and diversity training to identify and avoid unconscious bias.

The implementation of these suggestions must be followed from different State Departments, organisations and in some cases, it would demand changes in the employment legislation to amend the current laws.

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.

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The barriers presented above escalate when we consider the situation of Migrant Women on account of cultural matters; not to mention lack of family and community support. The Equality Authority report published in Dublin in 2006, already highlighted these issues amongst the Migrant Women community. "Childcare was identified as a major problem for women migrant workers, particularly because the costs of childcare were so high. The absence of family support systems was identified as a major problem, particularly for women who came from cultures where family support systems are central to childrearing. Several of the women interviewed had organised their shifts with their partners to ensure that their children were cared for. One woman had brought her mother over to live with her, whilst another woman rotated childcare support from temporary visits from family members" See the

Equality Authority, an introduction to the situation and experience of Women Migrant Workers in Ireland, Dublin 2006.

Many of the findings of that report remain valid nowadays. The absence of family support, together with the patriarchal culture of some communities, imposes many Migrant Women to stay at home, remaining isolated and depressed. An example of this can be seen on the fact that some migrant women cannot speak English, even after living in Ireland for many years, as they have little to no opportunity for interaction outside of their own communities. Additionally, "Migrant women felt that issues such as language barriers and living away from family support networks led to feelings of isolation. This reflects the findings in Cairde's Ethnic Minorities and Mental Health in Ireland report, which noted that shame, together with isolation and exclusion, were the most challenging barriers ethnic minority communities face when dealing with mental health issues in Ireland" (Out of Silence, NWCI, Dublin, 2019).

- 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.)

Childcare is a national issue, one which that the government should address immediately to challenge the inequality between women and men.

In addition, the public-private sector, non-governmental organisations and education bodies should fully understand the diversity within the Migrant Women group, to guarantee that all women are going to be provided with the right support depending on the stage of their professional careers in Ireland. For instance, free Business or/and Proficiency English class with childcare support would be essential to boosting their confidence and skills, and re-launching their careers.

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 the media represents women and men.

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There is an evident lack of diverse representation in leadership and decision-making positions, making it very difficult to accurately represent and address specific issues related to gender and diversity.

Although last year we had specific programmes and campaign empowerment to encourage migrant people to run in local elections, as one of those candidates, and based on my personal experience, I believe that parties and organisations were not ready to support the specific needs of Migrant candidates, who in turn became very isolated within their parties.

Additionally, this empowerment initiative happened only at local levels. There was nothing related to the General Elections or the Seanad, which continue to have predominantly Irish born-white candidates. This underrepresentation doesn't empower and/or encourage the future generation of Irish mixed raced children to participate in political and public life.

Moreover, in others areas of public sector, non-governmental organisations and other areas, Migrant Women in leadership roles continue to be not existent in Ireland.

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We believe in the implementation of gender-diversity quotas in areas such as the public sector, politics and education systems in order to guarantee a fair and equal representation of the new Irish society. I (see above) also believe that parties should have a quota of Migrant candidates within its representatives.

In addition, the Irish citizenship naturalisation process is one of the most expensive application process of tis kind-s in Europe, costing over 1000nEuros. As a result, an important number of Migrant Women who have been living in Ireland for over 5, 10 and 20 years are not allowed to vote or run in General Elections and Referendum. This renders them to become second class citizens- as women 100 years ago in Ireland when they did not have the right to vote-, and underrepresented and voiceless.

Therefore, the government should reduce the cost of acquiring citizenship through naturalisation, reflecting the reality in countries such as Finland, where cost ranges from 380 Euros please see the following link <https://migri.fi/en/citizenship-application>. It should also amend the law for people who have been in Ireland for over 5 years to be able to automatically be granted the right to vote in the General Elections and Referendums. This should happen as an act of democracy and integration.

The state should also provide mentoring-leadership programmes for Migrant Women to increase the participation of Migrant Women in Leadership positions with in the public sector.

