

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30108

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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.

Key barriers include the manner in which girls continue to be channelled into occupations that are not valued economically or culturally. They include the manner in which a focus on activities associated with men and boys are assumed as the norm in society, taking up place in media, public discussion as well as the common use of metaphors that also serve to normalise these interests as those that are normalised and thus valued in society. The association with these and economic roles and livelihoods continue to be present in Irish society.

- 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.)

Assuming gender equality is not helpful. There needs to be a recognition that gender inequality is present at all levels and of society and throughout the life course. In the workforce, for instance, that flexible options and work patterns that do not conform to traditional expectations continue to be viewed as atypical is not helpful. Long work hours and the valuing of 'working into the night' need to be challenged as harmful to all and a move needs to be made to move towards work patterns that do not assume constant connectivity. Work hours need to be limited and these limitations need to be enforced through changes in work culture. Gender relations and the role of power in gender relations need to become part of our mainstream education so that discussion on gender expands from gender identities, which are important, to the manner in which gender intersects with power relations and inequality

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.

A reductionist perspective on care does not help in critically appraising how work and the activities we engage with are valued. Paying more attention to the role and centrality of care in our lives and for the sustainability of our societies and economies would help re-orient our perspectives from assumptions about how we currently value only a very small proportion of human life in ways that are increasingly unsustainable. There are some very interesting and valuable discussions ongoing in literature on the feminist ethics of care that, if taken seriously, have the potential to re-orient our perspectives on valuing jobs and occupations and those involved in those activities.

- 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.)

In the first instance addressing these issues could take the form of general public discussion / awareness on the dimensions and centrality of care. The state has a central role in this as does the education system. The state also has a role in putting in place frameworks whereby this understanding can be translated into how people are supported and valued.

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.

Care is a public concern and needs to be publicly funded and supported. The narrow focus that there is currently on valuing only what is deemed productive work ignores this reality and while this continues to be the case care will continue to be considered as atypical. Care is something that every human being needs at all times of our lives and is not atypical. This needs to be taken on board fully in order to move towards a society in which whatever the initiative care work, paid and unpaid, will be viewed as a burden and undervalued. Adding care in as an extra component to a framework in which it is viewed as something at the extremes of our lives will never be fully inclusive. Nor will it lead to alleviating a 'care burden' because of its original conceptualisation as atypical.

- 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.)

Similar to my answer on the previous Theme

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.

Public life continues to assume constant availability and value decisions made under conditions whereby decision makers are expected to be available for extended periods. This is true for political decision making, corporate decision making and leadership. Being publicly present is also considered valuable as is a familiarity with roles and interests originating in traditional interests of men. The manner in which

leadership/policy/practice are intertwined favours traditional roles, activities and interests of men.

- 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.)

Ways of communicating views on leadership need to be identified in challenging the associations mentioned above. Apart from the introduction of gender quotas nothing in the practice of political life has changed. Gender quota alone will not effect change without a commiserate change in the practices and norms of political life.

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
- Home & family life
- Education
- Politics and public life
- Media
- Caring for others
- Other – please elaborate

All of the above, in different and intersecting ways

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

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

