

# TENI – the Transgender Equality Network Ireland – CA30119

## 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.

For many young trans individuals education and education-related services are the primary influence on their gender identity and gender expression. These experiences are also shaped by numerous, intersecting factors – such as institutional support, access to resources and family relationships. A young person's perception of their gender identity, expression and any stereotypes that become attached to them can be influenced by the way in which they see themselves represented, misrepresented or erased in school (e.g. within the curriculum, among staff, etc.), and by the way in which they are made to feel included or excluded due to their gender identity or gender expression.

For example, a lack of any mention of trans or non-binary people within the curriculum can lead a young trans person to feel marginalised at a young age, and that their identity is something that excludes them from the kind of social roles and tasks they encounter through their studies.

In addition, many aspects of education - names and pronouns used in the classroom, uniforms, bathrooms, sports, etc. - are heavily gendered or gender-segregated. When a young trans person experiences exclusion due to their gender, for example if staff refuse to use their preferred name and pronouns, it can lead them to expect such discrimination in the future or to attach negative stereotypes to their own identity.

To avoid imposing gender stereotypes onto trans, intersex and gender non-conforming children it is vital to that ensure that these factors don't contribute to limiting a young person's ability to identify and express their gender.

- 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 Department of Education should ensure schools should have access to resources such as training and up-to-date guidelines on trans inclusion.

Visibility and representation should be promoted through the school curriculum, particularly in SPHE and RSE, for example by the swift implementation of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Draft Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools (NCCA, July 2019).

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.ncca.ie/media/4004/draft-report-on-the-review-of-rse.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjat--G5fHnAhVxt3EKHbH5CGsQFjAAegQIBBAB&usg=AOvVaw1VissRFnNurP5W3kHqYffh>

## **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 lack of robust training or policies on workplace inclusion for trans people can make it more difficult for people currently in employment to come out. This in turn leads to a lack of positive role models in certain sectors of the workforce to encourage more trans people to seek employment in those sectors. This is an especially important issue in the public sector, where a perception of certain state bodies as not being trans friendly can damage trust in those services among trans people, or a fear that they will be discriminated against.

- 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 identity, expression, sex characteristics should be added to the nine grounds of discrimination prohibited in the Equality Acts. This will give explicit protection to trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people in the workplace, communicating clearly to employers what their responsibilities are, promoting a cultural shift towards greater employment equality and reassuring employees that they are protected under the law.

Public services should reflect the makeup of the population, including trans people. All public services should ensure they have up-to-date policies in place on trans inclusion, and ensure that people are able to come out in the workplace.

**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 theme (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.

In the past trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people have often been excluded from policy and decision-making in areas that have a profound impact on our wellbeing and human rights. This has led to the trans community having to fight long and hard to improve these policies and to advance our rights.

For example, the Gender Recognition Advisory Group, which did include any trans people in its membership, published its report on gender recognition in 2011. In many instances trans people continue to be well in the minority in groups set up to consider the best interests of trans people. To date no out trans, intersex or gender non-conforming person has been elected to either the Dáil or Seanad.

The media narrative surrounding trans issues continues to be mixed. Stereotypes and misconceptions about trans people still appear in the media while trans people have to rely on our stories being told by cisgender journalists, sometimes filtered through preexisting narratives.

- 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.)

Political parties need to conduct more consultation with the trans community, as well as encourage and support trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people to run for public office.

Likewise the civil service should seek to promote trans inclusion in the workplace, in recruitment, promotion and supporting trans members of staff who wish to come out and transition in work.

Media outlets should be encouraged to access and follow media guidelines published by trans organisations such as TENI.

## 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 4\_\_\_\_\_
- Home & family life 5\_\_\_\_\_
- Education 3\_\_\_\_\_

- Politics and public life 6\_-----
- Media 2\_-----
- Caring for others 7\_-----
- Other – please elaborate 1\_-----

□ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

1 - Other: a critical issue for trans and intersex people is the need for appropriate, accessible and timely healthcare that is patient-centred and based on international best practice. Trans and intersex people have unique healthcare needs related to their gender identity and sex characteristics that require support. This includes not only the need to be able to access transition-related services but also mental health, sexual health and the need to access all health services free from discrimination and stigmatisation. Long public waiting lists, prohibitively high costs for private healthcare, the need to travel long distance and many other factors contribute to poor health outcomes, including poor mental, for many trans and intersex people.

Many of these issues, for example healthcare, education, media etc. are all areas where gender inequality and transphobia in particular have a profound impact. As a result any effort to rank them relative to each other may be an arbitrary and reductive exercise. Politics and public life have a profound impact on gender inequality for trans people, through gender recognition for example.

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

There is still work to be done to achieve formal, legal gender equality in addition to practical and *de facto* gender equality in Ireland. The recommendations of the review into the Gender Recognition Act, 2015, which was published in 2018, have not yet been implemented. As well as the fact that non-binary people are discriminated against in Irish law as they are not legally recognised, transgender people under the age of 16 also cannot access gender recognition. The review recommended that under 16s and non-binary people should enjoy the same right held by men and women to have their gender recognised, along with many other recommendations to promote practical equality and make the process for legal recognition more accessible. However the government does not currently plan to implement these

recommendations in full, leaving non-binary people and under 16s without access to gender recognition.