

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30031

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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.

Single sex education may empower girls, but it also deeply reinforces gender stereotypes in boys. The amount of choice in Leaving Cert subjects, where girls are encouraged to opt out of science subjects that high achieving boys are encouraged to take, and where some schools for girls may not even offer them is another hurdle. No secondary school student in Ireland could possibly be unaware either of the degree to which the government focuses on STEM subjects that are dominated by men rather than supporting subjects in which women do well because there is much less discrimination against them in these areas.

- 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.)

Ireland should rethink the primacy of single sex education especially at secondary school level, where it is more pervasive. It should rethink the secondary school curriculum to make the experiences of girls and boys more similar. It should pay much less attention to trumpeting STEM unless and until women are equally represented within it.

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.

First, all caring responsibilities, including providing child care, need to be deeply valued by the society. Second much more emphasis should be put on making it possible to part-time, especially for short stages within a career, regardless of whether the job is a private or public one. Culture is an often overlooked example of an area that is increasingly female dominated, and so women artists are asked to work for little or nothing..

- 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.)

We should look to France for childcare, and to Scandinavia for example of other care being funded in part by the state outside the home and in part by the state inside the home. The entire government and society should pay as much attention to funding culture as supporting STEM areas. These are key to our humanity.

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 them in law, policy and practice.

Childcare in Ireland is too expensive and too often provided by people with inadequate training and support. The same is true of other kinds of care, right up through the lack of funding for what is usually excellent hospice care. Boys need to

be socialised and men rewarded to think that caring responsibilities should be shared equally.

- 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 should provide professional child care for free as is the case in some European countries. It should invest much more in all other forms of care. Part time and temporary career breaks should be equally available to men and women to facilitate temporary caring arrangements without long term penalties to careers. From primary school on up, models of equitably shared caring should be displayed and rewarded.

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 my own field of higher education, scholarship has shown that the main reason women do not go up for leadership positions is that they strongly disagree with the masculinist way in which institutions are being run. A larger obstacle across the society is the way in which we define leadership in terms of masculinist attributes. The Dail needs a creche, in which male as well as female TDs and their staff could put their children, and we need to see many more photos and much more discussion of leaders framed in terms of their caring responsibilities.

- 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.)

To take only the case of higher education, the field with which I am most familiar, none of the university presidents have been appointed because they are excellent educators but instead because they are committed to managerial models of leadership which have nothing to do with fostering better third level educations. Across society, we have to question what qualities we look for in leaders and whether they are actually related to the roles we are seeking to fill. And we probably need quotas and requirements that in large organisations all roles regularly rotate back and forth.

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 1
- Home & family life 3
- Education 2
- Politics and public life 6
- Media 7
- Caring for others 5
- Other – please elaborate

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

There is no right way to rank these, as they all matter enormously, but equal pay for equal work would do the most to help achieve the others because we unfortunately live in a society in which money talks.

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

Education matters the second most because it is the first place to challenge stereotypes perpetrated inside the home, above all when women are paid less than men.

