

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30245

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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.

From birth a child will be subjected to gender stereotypes which are upheld by parents from the outset. From the colour of baby clothing (pink and blue) to the selection of nursery decor and toys, parent purchasing decisions are formed by multi-million euro marketing tactics which dictate their consumer decisions. Toys for boys are made adventurous and on wheels which cultivate active play, whereas toys for girls are made cute and cuddly which cultivates sedentary and nurturing play. Toddler and pre-school boys are introduced to toolsets and construction toys, whilst pre-school girls are introduced to kitchen sets and baby dolls. These gender stereotypes are further enforced when a child sees how their same-sex peers are represented and portrayed in TV ads, films, cartoons, books and in real life. This continues into school where gender differentiated uniforms, and hair styles, are rigidly enforced often with punitive sanctions for failing to comply. By the time a child has reached pre-teens s/he has been socialised to perform in a manner demanded by society and to assume archetypal stereotypical roles. These are primarily driven by capitalists who profiteer from differentiated socialising and are unincumbered by any legislative restrictions or limitations. They are also driven by conservatives and theocrats who act as school governors and seek to uphold 'traditions' of gender conforming roles which most often limit the accomplishments of girls and women and confine them to subjugated roles of reproduction and caregiving. In summary, the absence of legal restrictions or obligations on corporate consumer goods producers and advertisers, and the primacy of self governing policy in schools (often informed by theological and religious ethics) enable barriers and obstacles to gender equality to persist.

- 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.)

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1. The prohibition of creating and marketing toys with gender stereotypes built by design. A standards Authority should be charged with rejecting such products at any point in the stage of design and development, and/or prohibiting their sale in this jurisdiction. 2. Introduce a new enforceable Trading Standard for children's toys and paraphernalia creators, which rewards companies who achieve new production standards. 3. The State should assume primacy of law, in particular under the Education Act, with new amendments to the Act to prohibit school governors from enforcing sex differentiated policies and practises

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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The paradigm of the world of work as we know it, is unfit for a 21st century society and by extension, the possibility of achieving greater equality is triaged out by design. A legacy of the Industrial Revolution where the economic currency of labour was vested in large congregations of workers located in a factory environment, engaged in processes designed for productivity of tangible goods, has little to offer a 21st century workforce. A process of both creative and divergent thinking is required to re-imagine the world of work, to create a new paradigm where more people can participate at levels which harness their capacity and rewards them accordingly - financially, socially and psychologically. Pay equity of itself may not be the sole object of an enlightened and radical shift in work practices. If debt must be increased in order to achieve pay equity in the current paradigm, the net enrichment may be marginal. Paying a large mortgage on a home that is empty 50 hours per week, in addition to paying for childcare and long commutes, in order to acquire a higher salary will not reap a financially better return nor a more rewarding lifestyle where servicing the higher salary comes at a premium opportunity and psychologically deflating cost. For women to greater benefit from economic opportunities requires a paradigm shift in how work is structured in order to optimise the opportunities to participate whilst relinquishing them from debt or costs incurred in doing so. This goes beyond the limitations of what we currently understand as flexi-time and structured part-time hours and moves towards a system where all of women's labour is valued and rewarded financially as both an economic and social benefit where such work is in a traditionally unpaid caring role, and/or combined with labour sourced by others in unconventional trading arrangements. It is insanity to continue to view

indentured mortgaged homes which lie idle whilst parents work elsewhere to pay for them, as a sustainable model for future development, when the infrastructure of housing could be viewed as a workplace and its occupants a valuable workforce to employers willing to pay decent wages for remote work. A critical factor in re-imagining work dynamics is a process of shifting from the presenteeism of conventional work practices and coupling home and workplace within residential settings.

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External commercial forces are already disrupting workplace practices as the 'gig' or 'collaborative economy' expands. As is always the case with capitalism, the market will have profitability as its core object and has no legal requirement to address legacy issues of inequality. The State must collaborate with employers and educators to develop commitments, policies and practices which intentionally design these new systems to explicitly benefit more women and for higher reward

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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Unpaid care work is not quantified or calculated as a net contribution to the national economy or to Gross Domestic Product. Unpaid care workers are denied both the financial rewards and pension rights of other industry sector contributors. Care labour MUST be paid for by all the beneficiaries of the State and its value recorded as an economic and fiscal contribution

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All corporate bodies, the State, industry sectors and self-employed traders must pay a levy to finance wages for home based carers. Women are both the reproductive and productive class which nurtures future workforces from which capitalists make profit and the State can sustain its processes and functions. Women can no longer be treated as unpaid surrogates for capitalists and state governors and must be paid a universal wage throughout their family caring years during which time pension contributions will be made on their behalf

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.

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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 2
- Home & family life 3
- Education 7
- Politics and public life 5
- Media 6

- Caring for others 4
- Other – please elaborate 1

Treatment in law. Rape, femicide, violence against women, family law, freedom of speech and online abuse are just some of the circumstances where women have no recourse to either legal or natural justice

➤ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

It is an arbitrary hierarchy as the options only permitted for sequential selection. 'Home and family life' and 'caring for others' are on-par and as both are concerned with the injustice of unpaid work, are inextricably linked to paid employment. Equal justification could be made for ranking political life highest as one might assume that having more women in power might achieve more progress and faster, but then again - it may not!

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