

Be More Ambitious.

To benefit the children (and parents) of today, actions need to be *in place* by 2025. By delaying 8 years, you'll have missed the opportunity for all of today's primary school children. A 6-year delay means missing all the current secondary school children. 3 – 4 years delay misses all third level undergraduates. For today's adults, if you were aiming for gender equality in opportunity, you would not start from here. Let's not miss this opportunity for our children.

Considering gender norms, theme 1, sport is used as an example of the opportunity for change that impact government investment and oversight with the benefit of healthier happier and fairer opportunities for girls and boys.

Theme 2: Education has a long-term effect that unlocks (or leaves shut) opportunities.

Theme 4: Political representation, who sits and participates at the decision-making table is influenced by the encouragement, opportunity and the cost associated with being a politician.

These three areas are considered below. Action items are suggested for each area.

## Theme 1 / Gender Norms

### Sport as a Male Activity

In sport, there has been a "slight shift in the balance of power in favour of females since the 1970" (Liston, 2005). This is insufficient progress in the 40 years since the marriage ban was removed.

Sports Funding: FAI and similar national sports organization that serve both female and male populations should be required to invest equally in both girl/boys and women/men. High profile sports yield more sponsorship for clubs, sports and individuals There is, now, an opportunity to create gender-balanced opportunities for children playing soccer.

### Benefits of Sport

Many people enjoy playing and watching sports. Internationally there is evidence that playing sport protects girls; by creating safe places and build their 'social assets' (Brady, 2005), protecting them from partner violence through building self-esteem (Taylor et al), and avoid self-objectification (Slater and Tiggemann, 2012). It's called the "sport protection hypothesis".

### Role Models & Women's Gender Norms

Investment in sports addresses, at least partially, 3 of the barriers to exercise identified through the CSO (2007); motivation, lack of facilities / accessibility and prohibitive cost. CSO notes "lack of motivation was the most common reason for non-participation for females (18.5%), the 15-24 year age group (35.4%), the unemployed (36.7%) and students (39.0%)".

This is an interesting (and kind of heart breaking) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs>

### Sports Media Coverage

Sports (coverage) inspires people of all ages; name who you admire?

Saturday afternoon on RTE 1, for example, is heavily dominated by coverage of men's sporting events. Little wonder, then, than the CSO suggests boys are more motivated to play sport. We need both gender equity in sports coverage, and to move away from sport-women (or indeed business women, etc), as exceptional. In 2020, women's sport should have equal media coverage, not outliers given special space.

Be guided by 'serving the entire community': Men/boys received disproportionate resources, media coverage, and more. The FAI international women's soccer team sharing tracksuits with underage boys is a compelling example (2017, Mackey). The 2016 men's team, who qualified for UEFA Euros negotiated a bonus (2016, FAI).

Action: sports funding must give priority to organizations that create gender balance in social and sporting activities. E.g. a sea scouting Ireland application that provides fun activities and teaches water sport and skills to boys and girl, would 'beat' (be awarded more points/ have a successful application) in comparison to a similarly scoped applications that serves only boys, 50% of the population.

Action: as a first step, for national community and social bodies with responsibility for female and male populations, require that funding is equally shared/spent. i.e. similar to ensuring that organizations receiving state funding have appropriate child protection measure in places, introduce gender equity. Start with large national organizations and overtime (5 years?) move to all state-funded social / sports organizations. e.g. if a community radio is state supported then coverage should be gender balanced. E.g. if an organization applied to the National Lottery for funding gender balanced applications should beat single gender applications.

Action: require the state broadcaster to provide gender equity in sports coverage. Set measurable targets which increase over a maximum of 3 years to achieve minimum of 40% of men and minimum 40% of women, with target of 50:50.

## Theme 2: Occupational Segregation

### Secondary School Education

20% of girls-only schools do not offer physics closing the door on interests, future-oriented and well-paying jobs to 1/5 of the female population (Donnelly, 2019). In Glasnevin / Phibsboro there is no boys school that offers the subject home economics, yet we have an obesity crisis.

Action: tie educational funding to subjects offered.

Action: require schools to indicate which subjects they *do not offer* so parents and potential pupils have an opportunity to be aware of same.

### School Hours

Teachers report it is very difficult to fit everything in. Give teachers and pupils more in-school time. This upskills our children's education and reduces some of the time pressures on teachers. Ireland is an outlier on the length of school summer holidays. This is a challenging undertaking for which we should undertake now. A shorter school break relieves some of the entertainment and financial burden from parents. Many children spend weeks in various summer camps. Should some of these camps activities be core to the curriculum. Is there an opportunity to have more school outdoor activities in the summer months? If this requires changing teachers contracts e.g. paying them more, then pay them more. There may be the opportunity for quality part-time employment for teachers.

Action: Explore how to shorten the school summer holidays by 2 weeks with input from teachers, parents, pupils and other relevant stakeholder (such as pedagogy professionals) by 2023.

Action: Move teacher training and new curriculum training (etc) to summer holiday: If this requires changing teachers contracts e.g. paying them more, then pay them more.

### Third Level Education

Employers continue to point to the gender imbalance in technology and engineering undergraduates. There is a smaller pool of qualified undergraduate females. Programme like Athena SWAN offer a path to addressing this issue with the 'carrot' of research funding.

Action: require third level institutions to develop, resources and measure progress against plan to address gender inequities. Athena SWAN provides some of this model.

In a GE Academy workshop 2019, some participants indicated that managing Athena SWAN falls to interested female academics. In practice this is more burden without resources to research, implement and evaluate gender action plans. However an underlying problem in academia appears to be that 'operating' the universities and colleges is undervalued. Quality third level institutes need the following capabilities:

- teaching,
- research and
- management.

Without this third leg, management, excellence in what third level delivers to the country, and to those employed in the sector, is challenged. There is research in other sectors indicating that unpaid, undervalued 'office housekeeping' disproportionately falls to women. One could think of this as "organizational unpaid care work". This problem is not confined to Ireland. There may be an opportunity for Ireland to be a leader in addressing this structural weakness. Some universities allow 10% of time to be allocated to management: this is simply insufficient. A healthier mix of all three capabilities should provide viable career paths in our third level education organizational systems.

Action: figure out how to restructure third level salary, promotions and career paths to value the critical role of management together with research and management.

### Theme 4 / Political Representation

There continues to be insufficient gender balance in public representation in local and national elections. The first hurdle is gender balance in elected representatives. Once elected politicians, work within the organizational structures of the Dáil, were designed by and built for single income couples. These single income couples consisted of a man in public and a woman managing the man's personal situation (food, housing, etc), her own situation as well as their children and the household.

Obvious barriers to gender equality include lack of maternity leave and, frankly, silly hours that make no sense in the context of dual income families and technology. Similar to consider gender inequality in company organizational culture, we need to examine the Dáil and makes changes to reorient the workplace of politicians. Yes, some situations in government are time sensitive requiring attendance at all night meetings. Most are not. The Welsh assembly offers some inspiration on changing school.

Action: Require a minimum of 40% men and minimum 40% women in local and national candidates.

Action: Fund womenforelection.ie or similar organization to prepare women for political leadership roles.

Action: Examine the working structures of politicians and reorient towards dual income families.

In short, there are opportunities to be more ambitious. Be more ambitious.

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