

Transcript

18 April 2021

Catherine Day - Good morning everybody and welcome to day 2 of our weekend on deciding and voting on recommendations on Gender Equality. I hope we can continue with the same enthusiasm and determination as yesterday. I hope that you feel, that together, we got the balance right between enough time for discussion and also keeping things moving on, in terms of deciding. We actually have fewer recommendations to work through today and we don't have any sequential voting so I think we have broken the back on the really difficult process yesterday and that is why we are proposing to follow the same process as yesterday. I am asking you again to please keep open the email with the voting codes.

I was just listening to some of the informal chat before we started and I heard what I thought was a very good discussion, that some of you would like to set up a WhatsApp group and I think it would be helpful if those of you who want to be part of a WhatsApp group, you should send your agreement and your mobile number to the Secretariat and they will help you to set it up. One member would have to agree to be the administrator, because at a certain point in the not too distant future the Secretariat will move on to other things but the Secretariat will still be here for a little while because we have to do our final report, so they will be very happy to help you set up the WhatsApp group.

So you might think about that and email the Secretariat but just to say, not today please Mary Clare is just signalling. We need to keep the focus on the work that we are doing today. After today, if anybody is interested in being part of a former Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality WhatsApp group then send your indication that you want to be part of it, your phone number and the Secretariat will be in touch to let you know how to do it. If one brave volunteer could step forward to be the administrator for the group and you can maybe change that around over time.

So now without any further ado and because you have all logged on early in the morning in order that we can use as much time as possible I am not going to keep you any longer we are going to put you into the breakout groups and you are going to be discussing Bloc F of the recommendations. So they are the recommendations on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, you have 20 minutes for that and we will bring you back at around 9:25am to hear how you got on in your discussions on that set of recommendations.

Hope you have a productive discussion and we will see you in 20 minutes time, thanks very much.

Catherine Day - Welcome back, I can see you have been busy already this morning, we have received a number of amendments, we will hear from the breakout groups now, everybody will hear together. We will do like yesterday we will consider them and we will come back to you later in the morning with our proposals as to the amendments that we propose to accept and then if there are any that we don't propose to accept we will explain why.

So, I want to go quickly to each group now and to hear whether your group has had enough time or whether there are outstanding issues or your groups have amendments to propose et cetera.

So, can I start as always with Group 1 please?

Facilitator 1 - Thank you Chair, citizens in Group 1 have put forward 2 proposed changes to wording, one involving a move to a 'Cabinet Minister', rather than just a 'Minister' and the other part was the reference to an 'Independent Authority'. The citizens wanted to make the point that the 'Independent

Authority' had been proposed in a previous survey, but seems to have been dropped and they just wanted to make this point, this is from the citizens of Room 1, who knows this, they wanted to know what had happened, why was it dropped. Finally, just as we were wrapping up there was a request from 1 citizen to have further time to discuss all of the other recommendations within that bloc, Thank you.

Catherine Day – We will see if anybody else needs more time, I will come back at the end on that, Thanks very much, Group 2

Facilitator 2 - Group 2 were happy with the wording of the questions, however the majority expressed a concern regarding the phrase Domestic Violence, we did get a clarification on how that was defined in legislation with the majority of citizens at Group 2 considering that the phrase Domestic Violence resulted in the violence being looked at as lesser/greater violence than other violence and that it dilutes the seriousness of it. They did not have an alternate suggestion in terms of wording to make.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 3

Facilitator 3 - Good morning Chair, we actually didn't have enough time, we only got as far as 34C. There was a lot of discussion on 34C. They would like to introduce the word rehabilitation after sentences but that was as far as we got. The other questions weren't discussed.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you very much, Group 4 please

Facilitator 4 - Thank you Chair, so there was some discussion from the citizens in Room 4 on the wording of some of the questions. There was a majority vote to add in to 34C the word 'tougher', to add in and more appropriate sentences and other than that, generally there was a consensus on the recommendations.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 - The citizens in Room 5 had 1 proposed wording change and that is to section 34B, where instead of developing guidelines for the court system, which they felt wasn't strong enough, that they wanted to change that to encourage the court system to implement a set of rules regarding the treatment of victims. The citizens also asked me to mention that they had a long discussion about section 36, particularly the words 'as a grounds for seeking asylum'. Some citizens felt that should be removed and other felt it should be left in. After a vote, a narrow majority felt we should leave it in.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 6

Facilitator 6 - Good morning Chair, all of my group were in agreement. There was one change that they wanted to propose which we have emailed in, it's under 33 and they wanted just some wording put in, we have emailed that in. Thank you

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 7 please

Facilitator 7 - Good morning Chair, the citizens at Group 7 were in broad agreement except for alterations that we have sent in through the info email to 34 and 35, but they have been submitted.

Catherine Day – Ok, Thank you very much, Group 8 please.

Facilitator 8 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 8 were in unanimous agreement with the wording and with the exception of four changes which we've emailed in to the Secretariat.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 9 please

Facilitator 9 - Good morning Chair, the citizens in Group 9 were unanimously in agreement with the wording and happy to proceed.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, so we have 2 groups who would like more time, I think that we can give more time given the importance of the topic and also that we are slightly under less pressure today. So, let's take another 10 minutes. We will put you back into the breakout groups. If your group has finished, you don't need to continue discussing but the groups that need it, we will give you 10 minutes but no more than that because you are keeping the other groups waiting, which is fine but not for too long. So, we will see you back again at 9:45am. Thank you.

Catherine Day – So, welcome back we have had some more communication from different breakout Groups. So, I am going to run very quickly through the groups just one more time to hear before we move on to the next Bloc of recommendations, so can we hear, I'll just vary the order this time can we hear from Group 9 first please, not to always be starting with the same group.

Facilitator 9 - Thank you Chair, Group 9 we are happy with the wording in that Bloc.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 8 please.

Facilitator 8 Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 8 had 4 changes proposed which were emailed in. The changes proposed were unanimous and otherwise the ascent to the current wording is also unanimous.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 7

Facilitator 7 - The citizens in Group 7, we are happy to proceed, apart from 2 proposals which we have sent forward.

Catherine Day – Ok, Thanks very much, Group 6

Facilitator 6 - Group 6 we are happy to proceed Chair. They had 1 change which we did email in earlier but they are happy to proceed now, thank you.

Catherine Day - Thanks very much, Group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 - Group 5 gave 1 change earlier on and that is it and have no additional changes beyond that.

Catherine Day – Ok, that is clear, Thank you, Group 4 please.

Facilitator 4 - Yes so again Chair, we have emailed in a change to 34B but other than that, we are happy to proceed.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 3 please.

Facilitator 3 - Group 3 were happy with the remainder of the questions although they have an addition. They would like to add 'Appointee' to number 34 which we are emailing into the Secretariat.

Catherine Day – Ok, Thank you. Group 2 please

Facilitator 2 – The citizens in group 2 had nothing further to add, apart from what was stated earlier on.

Catherine Day – Ok, thanks very much Group 1 please.

Facilitator 1 - Thank you Chair, there were 2 further amendments to recommendation 34 and they have been sent in to the Expert Advisory Group.

Catherine Day - Thanks very much. So, we need a bit of time now, because some of you are asking for some legal guidance on things, so we need a bit of time. We will work away on that, while you are working now on Bloc G. So, we are going to put you into your breakout groups to discuss Pay and Working Conditions - the ones in your ballot paper that are labelled Bloc G.

This time, you will have 25 minutes, so we will bring you back at 10:15 and we will hear from you then. In the meantime, we'll be working on the amendments to Bloc F, ok, so have a good discussion and we will see you at 10:15. Thanks.

Catherine Day - Welcome back, now we are going to hear from the groups, most of you are finished, so I take it that you had enough time, but you will tell me if I'm wrong. Can I start with Group 1 this time, please?

Facilitator 1 – The citizens from Group 1 had further amendments to propose in relation to recommendations 30, 37 and 39 and those have been sent into the Expert Advisory Group.

Catherine Day – We have got them yes, thanks very much, Group 2 please.

Facilitator 2 - Thank you Chair. The citizens were happy with question 41, they have submitted amendments in respect of questions 37 and 38 and they sought more time to discuss questions 39 and 40.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you, we will see if anybody else needs more time as well. Group 3 please.

Facilitator 3 - Thank you Chair. The citizens in Group 3 were broadly in agreement with everything and had one suggestion on Number 40a, which we sent in.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you, Group 4 please

Facilitator 4 - The citizens in Group 4 had some further amendments to 37 and 38 and we have sent those in to the Secretariat.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 – The Citizens in Group 5 are happy with the proposed wordings. We submitted 1 question but otherwise happy.

Catherine Day – Ok, thanks very much, Group 6 please.

Facilitator 6 - Good morning Chair. The Group was in agreement and we had 3 suggestions under 37, 38 and 39. We just wanted to add in some different wording changes which we have emailed in, but everybody was in agreement apart from that, thank you.

Catherine Day – Ok, Thank you, Group 7 please.

Facilitator 7 – Group 7, there was broad agreement, we had one revision that we have submitted.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 8 please.

Facilitator 8 - Thank you Chair. The citizens in Group 8 had 2 proposals which we have emailed in. The first was a question in relation to 'zero hour contracts' and the fact that it hasn't been stated on the

ballot paper. The question is in relation to whether or not it's been addressed or it's being abused and if it is and they would like to see some mention of it in the ballot paper to address it. There was also a proposal in relation to a wording change in question 40a which we have emailed in.

Catherine Day - Thank you, I think you have had an answer to the question on the 'zero hours contract' in the meantime, and Group 9 please.

Facilitator 9 - Thank you Chair, the citizens of Group 9 are happy with 40 and 41, they have offered some revisions for your consideration on 37, 38 and 39.

Catherine Day – Ok, so we will do that now, so we have only one group who feels they need more time. How much time do you think you need?

Facilitator 2 - We will take whatever time we can get, Chair.

Catherine Day – Ok, So what I think we will do is, we will move you now to Bloc H and I'll give you an extra five minutes in that session, so Group 2, you can organize your time between the two and then when you report back if you still need more time you can tell us that, but put the two Blocs together because otherwise I have 8 Groups waiting for 1 Group to take more time.

So we are going to move you now into the breakout groups for the final Bloc which is Group H and we will have you back in 35 minutes which is @ 10:55.

Ok and you can tell us then if you need more time or not. So, Group 2, you organise, maybe finish off your discussion on the previous Bloc and then move on to H, and everybody else can start discussing Bloc H.

We are continuing to work through your amendments and I'll present them all to you together with explanations when we are finished our work on that. See you in 35 minutes, thanks very much.

Catherine Day – Hi everybody, thank you, we're having quite a few amendments coming in, so we need a bit of time to work on them. What I am going to do now is ask the facilitators to tell us what has been going on in the Groups and then I will tell you what will happen next. So, can we hear from Group 1 please?

Facilitator 1 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 1 are happy to go forward to voting having submitted amendments on 2 of the recommendations in Bloc H, thank you.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 2 please.

Facilitator 2 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 2 are happy with the wording for questions 42, 44 and 45 and they have submitted amendments in respect of questions 43, 46, 47, 48 and 49.

Catherine Day – Ok, we will have a look at them, thank you, Group 3.

Facilitator 3 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 3 had a very long discussion on question 48 and asked me to highlight, that it could be open to abuse. They would like it to be totally reworded actually to include men and women who have limited or no time in the workforce or/and caring professions should receive a state pension on reaching pension age. This was sent it to the Secretariat but they would like it highlighted here.

Catherine Day – Ok, Thank you very much, Group 4 please.

Facilitator 4 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 4 had some changes to the recommendations for 43A, 43B and 44. These have been sent in otherwise they are happy to proceed.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 - The citizens in Group 5 are happy with the wording of the recommendations and they submitted a couple of questions which were answered, so they are happy to proceed.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you very much, Group 6 please.

Facilitator 6 - Thank you Chair, the citizens of Group 6 are happy to proceed to the voting and they asked me to say a big thank you to yourself and your team and all the excellent staff, including facilitators, they want to thank everyone for all their hard work and efforts and they wanted me to note that here.

Catherine Day - Thank you that's much appreciated, Group 7

Facilitator 7 - Group 7 unanimously agreed that these questions should be on the ballot paper.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 8

Facilitator 8 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 8 proposed amendments to the wording in question 46 and 49 which have been emailed in. Those proposals were unanimous and other than that they also unanimously approved the wording of all the other questions.

Catherine Day - Thank you, that's good to know and Group 9 please.

Facilitator 9 - The members in Group 9 unanimously agreed on the wording in 42 - 48 inclusive. However, they did have an amendment. They would like to present on 49 and the point of clarification, these have been emailed to the Expert Group.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you and well I haven't been able to go through all the amendments yet but I can already see that some of them go in opposite directions, so this is going to present an interesting challenge. We can't accept two conflicting amendments, so we need a bit of time now to work on these, you are due to have a comfort break now anyway, so I think we will need probably 30 minutes.

I think you won't object to having a 30-minute break, so we will bring you back at 11:35am please. I hope by then we will be able to go through the amendments and tell you which we propose to accept and which we propose not to accept and why and then we will go further with our work. So go and have a cup of tea or coffee or a breath of fresh air or whatever, but please be back at 11:35am where we will resume again, thanks very much.

Catherine Day – Welcome back everybody, I am sorry for keeping you longer than we had originally intended, we had 44 amendments so it's quite complicated to go through them all and to look at the rationale and to also check what is compatible with existing legislation etc. So just to explain why it's taken so long. What I want to do first is, the group that needed more time on the previous recommendations do you want to just come in first and tell us was there anything additional from your extra discussion that was group two I think

Facilitator 2 - We have made the amendments and we have sent them back.

Catherine Day – Ok, yes we have them, ok that's fine, ok what I'm going to do, is not comment on every amendment because some of them are duplicates, some of them are contradiction but to show

you and to explain as we go through them where we are proposing to make changes, so where we are not proposing to make any change we won't comment on the text it will stay the original text. There are a lot of changes that we will take you through now, so if we could have them up on the screen please.

Ok, so here again the suggestion came, to have a Government action coordinated by a Cabinet Minister, this may be inspired by yesterday's discussion. Then it was also correctly pointed out that we didn't need to use the word 'coordinating' twice, so the proposal would be to amend as you now see on the screen.

In this one, the suggestion came, that the word 'public' might not be understandable, so what we are proposing to put in is eliminate tolerance in our society and I think that is the best way of describing it.

Then another Group wanted to add in, that the awareness, prevention and education campaigns may include children of an appropriate age. We had a lot of proposals to change, sorry have I missed out something here, yes to change our Recommendation 34.

I want to explain first of all, why, we are proposing to stick to the original wording of developing guidelines and this is because, in Ireland in the Constitution we have what is called a separation of powers, that means that the Oireachtas cannot interfere with the work of the courts and that is a protection for citizens' rights. So, this is why the Government is always very careful about what it puts in legislation and how it tries to nudge / prompt etc., the court, to do things in a certain direction. In this area, there is also what is called the O'Malley Report which has gone into the whole area of Gender-Based Violence and where recommendations are now being taken up, on foot of that report. So having discussed with our legal experts we think it is best to keep the words 'developing guidelines'. That is already going quite far and the courts don't always like it but, we do take up the proposal to include training for the Court system.

We were going to put in specialist training for judges and lawyers here, we will put that in because we did agree to put that in. So sorry for that, that's just in all this complication it's to 'developing guidelines and specialist training for judges and lawyers and then delete 'for the Court system'. You can see how difficult this gets.

Ok, so the judges and the lawyers would get the necessary training. Then, we had another proposal among the list of exclusions of things to be considered, 'should be counselling and medical records' which we proposed to accept. Then there was a debate between different groups, some wanted to replace the word in number C to take out the word 'tougher' and to put in 'more appropriate', now our Expert Group finds the words 'more appropriate' very vague, so we would propose to keep in 'tougher sentences' as being overall more representative of the discussions. We would also take up the proposal for 'rehabilitation programs for the perpetrators' and I think that balances the 'tougher sentences' there.

Then there was a suggestion to have an 'independent Statutory Body' which we did not propose to take up because we weren't sure what it would do, but there was another proposal which was to have a 'Victims' Commissioner' as an independent advocate and voice for victims and survivors and we propose to put that in. I think that would do a lot. Whichever group, that wanted the Independent Group, this would have been designed to do, we think a Victims Commissioner could be their advocate and voice is probably the correct way to follow up on that suggestion coming from the groups.

Then 35 we haven't proposed any changes but one group wanted to put in the word 'proportionally across the country', just to let you know that in fact, that is already contained in the Istanbul Convention and that is why we are not proposing to add it in here because it's not necessary as it is already included in the Istanbul Convention.

This, we are not proposing to change either. Then 37, here there was a lot of discussion on different proposals. Here, some people wanted to propose legislation. Now here we are talking about the State obviously when we are talking about public employees, the State can't decide to close the gap. The State can, set targets for private companies. So what we have done is, take up the thinking behind the suggestion and to say the State should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly Gender Pay Gap. Then we have included what should happen, by adding a date to actually eliminating the entire Gap by 2035. So hopefully that will reflect a number of suggested amendments that we got. This is how we have tried to combine them in a revised text.

Here some Groups were debating how to go further. Now, the Gender Pay Information Gap Bill is already very close to being finalised and adopted by the Dáil, it will apply to companies over 50 Employees. So, we are proposing here not to delete the example but to say that it should be implemented without delay and that it should also include an obligation for annual reporting. I think then, on the basis of the reporting it can be decided in future whether to bring it into play for companies with less than 50 employees. We are proposing to delete the original wording there and you will have the choice between the original and the revised wording now here.

There is a discussion to be had on which companies should be affected. The definition of small and medium-sized companies is actually quite big because small applies to less than 50 employees medium-sized is between 50 and 250 which tends to be actually quite large companies in the Irish context. So what we would propose to say here is to explain that the minimum wage should be aligned with the living wage by 2025, while considering potential impacts on small businesses, in other words those employing less than 50. Any Company above 50 employees should be required to align the minimum wage with the living wage by 2025 would be the consequences of this recommendation if you want to revise it. Here the suggestion was to ensure that the legal right to collective bargaining should apply in all sectors. So we propose to poll you on that. There was one group who wanted to add further explanations about the obligations of employers and access to negotiating with employers, all of that is already contained in the legal right to collective bargaining so we don't feel it's necessary to spell out in further detail. So we are proposing just to make the one adjustment here and to remove low paid to apply the recommendation to all sectors and then in the introduction to this we would propose to remove the word 'greater' which is a qualification in a way and simply say 'support employment contract security through establishing the right for all sectors'.

Now 41, here we propose to say 'social protection payments and/or supports' just to extend the remit of the recommendation, there were suggestions to say 'lift people out of poverty', but in terms of the legal and technical way in which these things are, the reference to 'above the poverty line' is already established and seems to be more operational and in B, we propose to delete, this came from one of the groups to propose to delete, giving a choice in how they receive payments to leave that unsaid here but to be clear that prioritising dignity and respect in all contexts with clients should be done by regular training of staff.

Here, there were also different suggestions, so we proposed to give a sense of urgency to this recommendation and to say: immediately address the impact of the marriage bar on pension eligibility and take further retrospective corrective action there. We had a few suggestions as well which would

just elaborate on this but we think it is best to keep it simple and direct and not to go into the detail that will come whenever action is to be taken.

Here we are taking up in a slightly different way, suggestions about 'auto enrolment' where we say subject to a threshold on low incomes that means below a certain income level, people would not have to contribute and the opt-out clause is a feature of these kind of systems anyway, so we propose just to put that in as well, so the recommendation would be subject to a threshold below which people would not be automatically enrolled and there would also be an opt-out clause.

Now 49, as you know, I think this is an important statement to be included in the final sets of recommendations. We had a number of suggestions here but I have to say to you, as your Chair, I think, that we need to stick to a fairly general statement on this question. I think if we are not clear and if we try to refine it too much, we undermine the credibility of the whole exercise. So my recommendation to you, is to stick to the original wording, however if you don't want to follow my recommendation, which is fine, then I think, we should make a number of limited changes to the text. I would propose to add, based on the contributions that we have received, would be a reference to accountability for public funding and also, instead of saying that we are prepared to pay higher taxes we would say 'we are also prepared to support and pay higher taxes' which broadens out the implication of the statement. I really think all of the 48 recommendations will be taken much more seriously if a clear statement is included, but obviously, like everything else, it is up to you. That will be for you to come back and say what you want, but my recommendation to you is to stick to the original wording.

So now, we will send the text of the revised recommendations and there are a lot of them, but we will send them to each group, so that you will be able to see them for your discussions. I propose to give you 20 minutes to discuss the amendments and then bring you back, if you need more time we will give you more time, but let's start with 20 minutes and see how you get on. So we will call you back and this time we will call you back at 12:30pm. So because we have now given you our take on the amendments it's up to you now to have a discussion and then come back with your reactions so we will bring you back at 12:30pm. Thanks again.

Catherine Day – Welcome back everybody, we have now had further amendments from some of the Groups and again we need time to go through them. So, I am going to give a few explanations here that I have been just able to pick up, some of them, is, why did we not comment on previous recommendations, I am going to comment on some more of them. I am then going to ask each of the groups to report and then we are going to let you off for lunch because we need time to look at the new round of amendments and see whether we can take them on board or not.

So one question was why I didn't mention recommendation 48 which is the recommendation on a universal state pension. I'm sorry I was remiss about that, we were not proposing to change the original wording, there were two recommendations, one was to eliminate the recommendation because one group was worried about a possibility of abuse, I think. I have to say that there is always a possibility of abuse but it is not a reason not to do things that are positive and desirable and it is important for the State to safeguard against abuse. I think it is overkill to knock out the whole idea just because there might be a risk of abuse, there is a risk of abuse with almost anything, so we didn't propose to delete it, but you will decide when you get to voting, whether you want to vote yes or no to that recommendation.

The other proposal that was made was about introducing different references and as a whole, we feel, that the universal pension that is suggested here is designed to take account of the needs of carers who are not necessarily paid carers, people who have done a lot of caring without having PRSI contributions, who should nonetheless receive a pension because of the contribution they have made to society and we don't feel that it is necessary to add in any more detail, so that is why we are proposing to leave the wording unchanged. You will have the opportunity if you are not happy with it, to vote against it, when we come to voting.

Then on 43B, there was a question, do people currently have a choice about how they receive their payments? Yes, they do, you can go to the Post Office and get the money or you can have it paid into your bank account but we have deleted the reference to choice over method of payment because it already exists. **(Note: an updated position was provided on this issue and appears later in the transcript)**. On the targets in legislation another group asked why will it take time, why can't it be immediate? Well, we have made the suggestion that it should be, we had originally said, 'set targets' it takes a bit of time for the State to set them and then for them to be implemented and companies would have to adjust to it. We have given you alternative wording which is to make the target stronger by setting them in legislation, but equally that would take time, so there is no instant solution to this and these things take time, payrolls have to be adjusted and the issues have to be proposed/ argued over and then decided, so it's not possible to do it instantly.

Those are the 3 things on which I can give you an immediate reaction on, so it is now 12:43pm. I am going to ask each group just to report back, if there are other issues and then we will break for lunch. We will come back with a final round of any amendments that we think we should offer you. At some point, I think, we have to stop proposing amendments and that is what I meant when I said yesterday we have to have a balance, the need to be discussed thoroughly and properly which I really believe we have done. I think that when we come back after lunch, I will tell you, if there are any final recommendations that we think we can take on-board then we will zoom poll you on whether you want the original wording in each case or whether you want the revised wording. I know some people are happy with some parts and not others you will always have the opportunity to vote no to the recommendation if you don't like the revised wording or if you don't like the original wording so when we come back after lunch we will zoom poll you first of all on whether you want the original wording or the revised wording to be on the ballot paper, and then, we will ask you, if you choose the revised wording, whether it should be on the ballot paper or not and then we will move to voting.

So, we still have quite a lot of work to do in the afternoon but I feel having been at it since 9:00am everybody needs a break in the next few minutes. Then we will come back with renewed energy and finish our work.

So, can I just go through the Groups and I'll start with Group 9 again, just to vary it a little bit, so Group 9, is there anything to report from your latest discussion?

Facilitator 9 – No, the members in Group 9 were broadly satisfied with the wording and all of the questions. We are happy to proceed to the next stage.

Catherine Day – They are happy to go to the zoom polling, ok, thanks very much, Group 8 please.

Facilitator 8 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 8 had 2 additional recommendations and one was a change to the wording in question 37 and they don't feel the word should remain in there and the citizens also unanimously wished to change the last sentence, the wording of the last sentence for Question 49. I think that was sent in.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 7

Facilitator 7 - The citizens in Group 7 have no new queries.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 6 please.

Facilitator 6 - Thank you Chair, the citizens of Group 6 wants to just keep some wording in 43B which we have emailed in and they were very happy with the wording of your willingness to pay on Number 49 and they are happy to proceed to voting.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 - Thank you, the citizens in Group 5 are happy with the revised wordings on the basis of genuinely, they strengthen the recommendations.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 4 please.

Facilitator 4 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 4 were broadly happy with the revised wording and they are happy to proceed with the voting.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, Group 3 please.

Facilitator 3 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 3 had an issue around question 36, they would like the insertion of the word threat, recognise the threat and also they wanted clarification around question 48. I think you have provided that already. We have emailed them into the Secretariat.

Catherine Day - Thank you, Group 2 please.

Facilitator 2 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 2 were happy with questions 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 43, 46 and 47, they had 3 issues and 37 you have addressed in your discussion at the start of the session, 48 the edition they had suggested which I don't think was addressed was the addition of 'Pension funds are ring fenced and protected'.

Catherine Day - Thank you, let me just come back to that, we are not talking here about a pension fund. The State doesn't fund, the State pays pensions out of its ongoing capacity so private sector companies have pension funds but the State doesn't have a pension fund, it comes out of State obligations. So we did not accept that, because it simply doesn't work in a state-funded system. I apologise I forgot to say that.

Facilitator 2 - Thanks very much Chair, and then the in terms of 49, they are happy to go with the original wording, thank you.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you very much and Group 1 please.

Facilitator 1 - Thank you Chair, the citizens in Group 1 had a point for clarification which was sent in and I believe we got a response on that, in relation to 43. With regard to recommendation 46 and there was a process going on, drafting a further amendment to that because it was felt it didn't go strong enough in supporting how women are impacted, but we just ran out of time on that one. It was a point in relation to the final statement in 49, it was felt that the original was less clear than the amended version that was proposed by Group 1 earlier on. Thank you.

Catherine Day – Thank you very much, ok well look, I think it is time for everybody to have a break now, so it's coming up to 12:50pm let's say you come back from lunch at 1:30pm and we hope we will be able to then have some further clarifications for you and then move to the zoom polls.

Ok so Bon Appétit and see you at 1:30pm.

Catherine Day - Welcome back, now I think as we heard, before we took the break, almost all of the groups are happy now to proceed to the zoom polling but there were just a few additional amendments that I want to comment on before we do that.

So taking them in order, on recommendation 36 one Group wanted to introduce the word ‘threat’ of FGM (Female genital mutilation) as opposed to the actuality of it, but that is not the international practice at the moment and it is very difficult to prove a threat so we are proposing not to take that wording. If people are unhappy with their recommendation then you have the option of voting against it.

In 37 one group wanted to delete the word ‘should’ but we need a verb in order for something to happen, so we are proposing to keep the amended wording with the word ‘should’ in so that the Government understands what we want them to do.

On recommendation 43B, we have been trying to check with Social Protection. I understand that in most benefits you have a choice of either having them paid into your bank account or going to the Post Office to get them or having checks paid to you, but there are some limited cases where the Department decides not to apply choice, so therefore we are going to show you an amendment to that slide, Lena can put it up now. You remember that the original wording already had it, we are in section B here, the original wording had including giving a choice and I we want to keep that wording in so, we are proposing not to delete it, because, I think, it was the majority of you. People should have a choice, so we are going to keep that in and then just add by regular training of staff which was the other suggestion from that group.

So I hope that gives you now the choice that will allow you to exercise your choice between old and new wording. On recommendation 46, one group was very keen to have a changed wording, immediately address the impact of the Marriage Bar by automatically qualifying women affected for a state pension. We will give you the choice, we will poll you on that in a minute and you can choose between that or the original wording.

On section 49 there were still one or two suggestions, but I found them too complicated and what I’m proposing is that we stick with the choice of either the original wording or the revised wording. You can say on the zoom poll which you prefer and then whether you want it on the ballot paper or not.

So now we are going to go straight to the zoom polling, we are going to ask you first of all to choose between the original wording or the revised wording in each case, in all 3 Blocs, so this will be quite tedious but necessary. Once we have your answers and in the cases where you vote for the revised wording we will then need 10 minutes to adjust the slides in the zoom poll for whether you want the revised wording to go on the ballot paper or not.

This should be fairly quick to go through and then we will move to voting, so the end is in sight but it still will take a bit of time so we ask you for your patience again. We will have to be going backwards and forwards but we will do 2 sets of zoom polls and then we will move you to voting. We have asked Tony to give an extra explanation before we start the voting on just what you should look out for and he will be on hand once we put you to voting. He will be on hand for anybody who has any concerns or difficulties, he will be able to talk you through them.

We will need time to change the e-voting system as well we won't be able to go straight, we will not be able to go straight from the second Zoom poll into the voting as we will need another 10 minutes just so that the voting system will have the correct revised wording.

So, again I am sorry this is not the most exciting part of the Citizens' Assembly but it is the only part that will get us to you actually voting and indicating your preferences, so I think we are nearly there but it just takes a little bit more of this dance of backwards and forwards. So we are going to now immediately move to the zoom polling on whether you want the original wording or the revised wording.

So we are starting with Bloc F, you have the original wording in the paper version that you have received, this is the revised wording, so we want you now to respond in zoom to whether you want the original wording or the revised wording can we have the poll now please Darren thank you.

Ok so we have the result on that and 23% for the original wording and 77% for the revised wording.

Ok, then we come to 33 here you have the revised wording, we are going to say in 'our Society' instead of 'Public' and we are going to add in 'which may include children of an appropriate age', again, if you can indicate your preference between the original wording and the revised wording please. Ok we have a result, revised wording very clear, ok next we come to 34 which was long because we had quite a number of changes there, so I won't read it all out, you see we have made changes in B and C and we have added an extra E. So, we won't ask you again whether you want E on the ballot paper, if you say yes to including E now, we assume that you want it on the ballot paper.

So could you now answer the following questions please? The result is the revised wording in the cases where it's relevant and strong support for adding E to the ballot paper, so we will do that.

Next one please Lena, I think it should be 37, here we have explained we are keeping the word 'should' because we need a verb but we are now going to strengthen the recommendation by asking for the targets to be set in legislation and we have included an end date so could you indicate which version you prefer original or revised please. We have a result which is in favour of the revised wording.

Ok and we move on to Number 38 and 39, where we have had some discussion, you can see the changes, to eliminate the addition of the reference to the over 50 and adding in the obligation for annual reporting and explaining that 39 should apply to considering the potential employment impacts on small businesses. Can we ask you to give your views on that please? The results are again the revised wording is preferred.

Very good then we move on to Number 40. Here we remove the word 'greater' and we change from 'low paid' to 'all sectors', can we ask for your opinion on those two changes original wording or revised wording and the results revised wording wins again.

Ok 43, we want to preserve the possibility for the clients to have a choice and we have added in the reference to regular training of staff so can we poll you on this please? Ok and the results are again in favour of the revised wording.

Now this one you haven't seen before, because we have just put it up so take maybe another minute to look at it, compared to the original wording and now we will ask you to give your preference please original or revised wording. We have a result there, revised wording, yes, that was what will go on the ballot paper, if you agree.

Then 47, where we explain that there should be a threshold and an opt-out clause can we poll please thank you. Ok do you have a result? Revised wording wins

Now 49 this is the revised wording that we suggest so you have seen that already, can we now have the poll please for whether you want the original wording or the revised wording?

Ok, so can we see the result on this please, we took a little bit longer because the result is a lot closer here, but there is still a clear majority in favour, the revised wording so.

As always we will go with the majority and in a few minutes we will poll you on whether you want all these questions on the ballot paper or not. So just give us maybe 10 -15 minutes and then we will come back to you for the second and last zoom poll of the day.

Catherine Day – We are now ready and I really do appreciate your patience and thank you for chatting among yourselves. We are now going to zoom poll you on each of the recommendations from Blocs F, G and H and so in each case we are just asking you to say, yes or no, if you want this question on the ballot paper. So the wording that you will see, is the original wording where no changes were made or the agreed revised wording where changes have been made.

So we will run through them, this will take a bit of time, we then need 20 minutes to transfer the results to the voting system but what I am going to do is, when you come back to vote, I am going to bring forward my concluding remarks which are very short, so that once you go into voting you are free to leave the meeting. Once you have voted, that means it is more under your own control. So first of all we will do the zoom poll on Blocs F, G and H, we then need 20 minutes, that will be the last time we ask for your patience and then after that, we will proceed to the voting and Tony will give his little introduction to voting and then be on hand for anybody who needs a bit of extra help or questions answered etc.

So let's start with the zoom polling now with Question 32 from Bloc F, so here you have questions 32, 33A and 33B, take the time to read them and now we will poll you on whether you want these questions on the ballot paper.

Ok so at least 80 people have voted, yes, that's very clear, then we move on to question 34 which has four parts, remember that you have already agreed that the new part E on the 'Victims Commissioner', should go directly on to the ballot paper, so you are not voting on that now, this is the revised wording for 34 A, B, C and D. So Darren, can we have the poll question now please? Ok, there we have a clear result. Ok, then we move to the next one which is 35 and 36, if you agree that they both go on the ballot paper, choose now. Ok and the results are yes, in favour of these going on the ballot paper.

Then we come to 37, 38 and 39. Ok very clear results now we come to question 40A & B and 41. Again if you can just indicate your preferences. We have results to these 2 questions, yes all to be on the ballot paper.

Next, Bloc H, now we are on 42 and 43. I just want in the same openness and transparency that we have tried to have throughout this process, in 43B so the very bottom one, we have slightly reworded it, it doesn't change the substance but somebody pointed out to us that where we had put the reference to training staff. It didn't make sense, it looked like we were going to train staff on the choice in payments, whereas in fact, I think what you want to say is regularly trained staff to prioritize dignity and respect in all contacts including giving a choice in how they receive payments. So we have slightly amended the wording just to make it work more grammatically correctly. It's not a change of substance, just to be totally above board with you, as always. So could we get your preferences on this now please? Ok we have a result there, yes, that's very clear, then we move on to 44, 45 and 46

and again your preferences please? We have a result, yes they will all be on the ballot paper and then we have 47 & 48, could you give us your preferences on these?

Ok they will both be on the ballot paper and then the last one is question 49. With the revised wording, so can we have your preference on this one please? Do we put it on the paper or not? Ok so large agreement it should be on the ballot paper.

All right now, 1 further thing I just want to check with you, somebody has pointed out that in recommendation 36 we have forgotten to do what we have done elsewhere, which is every time we mention victims we mentioned survivors or where we mentioned survivors we mention victims. So I think we should be consistent in our language throughout. This is the terminology, we actually consulted the legal side of the Advocacy Organisations and they say the accepted terminology is victims / survivors.

So, if you don't disagree, I would propose that on the ballot paper it will read victims / survivors just to be consistent throughout. If that's in agreement, I think it is important to be consistent, so we will now take, I think we need 20 minutes just to make sure that the voting questions, that you will be asked to vote on are totally aligned with the revised wording. This is the most important thing so we need to check 2 or 3 times, just to make sure it's absolutely right. So, if you could come back at 2:35pm we will then have Tony give his explanation of the voting system.

I will then make my concluding remarks and then we will finally allow you to vote, after all that work, to vote on everything that you haven't already voted on. You can leave the meeting at your own pace and I will in my concluding remarks explain our thinking about next Saturday too. We hope as many of you as possible can join us. So we will see you at 2:35pm for that, this is the last break that you will be having, so again, thanks for bearing with us so patiently.

Catherine Day - Welcome back everyone, now for the last time today we bring you back.

Short recap of e-voting system provided before Chair's concluding remarks

So, let me just say a few concluding remarks, I am going to save my big concluding remarks for next week, but I don't want to end this meeting just by saying now please go off and vote and then that will be the end of it.

So what I want to do today, is to thank you from the bottom of my heart, all of you, for a remarkable experience. I heard the chat before we started this morning and somebody said this was a happy and a sad day and I think that is a very good summary. It is a happy day because we have all worked so hard to get to this point, where you are now, going to vote and formally adopt your recommendations that is the happy part. The sad part is that we come to the end of what has been a really collective and fascinating journey. I am delighted that you are talking about setting up a WhatsApp group that you want to stay in touch, because, I think, going through an experience like this really forges some bonds that will last for a long time. For me, from the very first meeting, you have all been committed, serious and determined to use the opportunity of participating in the Assembly to make a difference. So, what you are doing is an act of public service. I am full of admiration for the way that you have stuck with the process, you have given up so much of your personal and your family's time and you have been very accommodating of the changes that we had to make, to go online and to make all of this work online. You turned up for evening meetings, you got up early yesterday and today and you did it all with great humour & respect for each other and a really keen sense of what really matters. So, I really am full of admiration for all of that.

Now next Saturday the 24th of April we will let you know the results of your votes. We will send you details during the week of exact timings and how to join us, but at the moment, we are thinking of starting at 10am next Saturday. Where we will hold a special private session for members of the Assembly, so that you are the first people to hear how the votes went, which recommendations were carried and by what amounts. That will actually be the last time that you will be seeing each other all together on the screen, because the same Saturday maybe around 11 or 11:30am we haven't quite decided yet, we want to invite you to a public closing ceremony and you will be able to use the link that we will send you to share with your friends and family, if you want them to see the closing session of what you have been doing in secret, hidden away in the bedroom all this time, since last January 12 months.

So, I really hope that will be an opportunity for you and whoever you would like to have, join us to conclude our work and to tell the Media, the Public and we might have some Politicians watching as well, the outcome of all the work that you have done so well together.

You know that I would love to have done this in person, I would love to have done it back in Dublin Castle where we started but it is still not possible. We do intend, I can't say when, but we do intend to get you together when we are allowed to meet in a group of around 100 people. It will be in a nice place, I guarantee that, where exactly, will depend on when we can do it. We will have a chance to see each other in person and to have a good laugh and a bit of nostalgia and maybe also to see who has listened to the very strong recommendations that we will be shortly sending to the Oireachtas.

We will be in touch during the week with the details. We will be looking for some volunteers to do a few things to help us, with the closing ceremony, but the Secretariat will be in touch to tell you all of that. Next week I will have an opportunity to express my own thanks to you and also to your families because they have also had to make a sacrifice, of not having you with them on weekends and being willing to allow you to lock yourselves away and set up yourself for so many Saturdays.

I do want, in finishing today, to say a particular thank you to the Secretariat. I think they did a wonderful job. I know that you shared that view as well, they have been absolutely marvellous from start to finish. They took on every challenge head-on and they found really creative and ingenious solutions. I am in awe of the creativity that they have displayed and also very envious of the way that they stayed very calm and remarkably good humoured in the face of everything that zoom and Covid threw at them. It was a lot, you didn't see a lot of the work going on behind the scenes and the very detailed planning that made it possible for us, the first online Citizens' Assembly in Ireland to work so well. In particular to deliver what I think is a seriously good set of recommendations.

I have enjoyed the whole experience it has been a wonderful opportunity for me to meet you all and to work together on such a worthwhile topic. So, I will say a lot more next Saturday, but I didn't want to end without saying thank you to you and to the Secretariat. Without the Members and the Secretariat. We would never have come so far and we wouldn't have been able to do the terrific work that we have done.

Jerry Crowley - Very quickly, sorry Catherine, very quickly from all the citizens I'm sure they echo this, thank you Dr. Catherine Day for your tremendous support, for your amazing guidance and leadership throughout this process. So we just want to thank you for your efforts.

Catherine Day - Thank you, it has been a real privilege and as I say, I am delighted to have gotten to know you all and to have done this work together. However, you are not quite finished yet because now you have to take the ultimate responsibility, the individual responsibility of voting on the things that we discussed today. So, I am going to now invite you to move into voting on Blocs F – H as Tony

has just said, you can click on the blue button in the original email or in the email that he sent you this morning. You have 45 minutes to vote but you can leave as soon as you have voted.

So, this is goodbye for now, we will see you again next Saturday but now you move to the voting and please just be careful that you have voted on everything that you want to vote on.

I really look forward to seeing you again next Saturday for a final roll of the dice and farewell and in particular to inform you about the outcome of the voting. If anybody isn't able to make it next Saturday we will record the public event and it will be on the website if you want to look at it or if you want to share it with friends or family, it will be on the website shortly afterwards. Again, a heartfelt thank you, from all of us here, goodbye and very big thank you and I hope we see as many as possible next Saturday. Take care, thank you very much.