QUESTIONNAIRE

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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.

1. Gender stereotypes largely focus on differences in agency (i.e. independent, self-orientated) and communion (i.e. interdependent, other-orientated). Men are thought to be more agentic and less communal than women, women are thought to be more communal and less agentic. In particular, the belief that men are not as communal to women i.e. the belief that men aren't as naturally good at, or interested in the home/family life is actually reflected in current paternity leave entitlements in Irish law - which allow 2 weeks for fathers. This excludes men from taking equal share in early opportunities to bond with and care for their children. Likewise, the law reinforces the idea that women are the primary care givers and responsible for the domestic life. 2. Stereotypes about gender are learned by children/young people not only from parents and peers, but are continuously reinforced through children's media and advertising. While current policy in Ireland (ASAI) does specify ads should avoid gender stereotyping and any demeaning of men and women, what constitutes stereotypes needs to be defined more clearly. For example, under this rule would an ad presenting men as incapable of looking after a child be acceptable? Likewise, would an ad showing a women unable to work a piece of technology or a tool be acceptable? Or what about ads which show only girls playing with dolls, or only boys playing sports? Would those be in violation of this rule? This is important, because there is good research evidence that such rigid representations of gender can lead to harmful outcomes of people's mental and physical health, but can also limit their career and educational aspirations and outcomes. Not least for those who do not clearly identify as a man or a woman.

➤ 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.)

1. The state could work in collaboration with the private sector to provide a more equal leave system for parents. One option is to allow couples to make up their mind about what way to split the leave that they are entitled to. This system while in principle is equal, it has not proven particularly successful in encouraging men to take parental leave in other EU countries. This is because gender stereotypes are not only descriptive (i.e. what men and women are like) but are prescriptive (i.e. what men and women ought to be like). This means that there may be costs for men who opt to take a longer leave period. These costs could be reputational (i.e. they may be seen as less committed to their employment), identity based (i.e. they may be seen as less masculine) or they may receive backlash for not conforming to how men "ought" to act (i.e. stigma, slagging, verbal abuse/conflict). An option which can mitigate some of these costs and result in a genuinely equal share of leave is to operate a system of enforced parental leave as in Norway. Mothers and fathers have 15 weeks each parental leave (post-natal, there is a separate pre-natal leave entitlement). Father's leave cannot be transferred to the mother and must be taken within the first 3 years of the child's birth. This policy has resulted in 80% of men taking up parental leave, and has also helped mitigate some of the career stagnation effects that women experience after taking maternity leave (so called "motherhood penalty".   2. The state could work with ASAI and consult researchers of gender stereotypes about more specific guidelines on what constitutes stereotypical representations of gender.

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.

1. Women are more likely to report wanting to work in jobs which helps others, are flexible (for caring responsibilities) than men. Likewise, women (relative to men) are less interested in jobs with high prestige or that are perceived as competitive. As such, women are over represented in Healthcare and education, but also in administrative and human resources roles. Early on, women psychologically opt out of high status, prestigious and well paid roles because they see them as not fitting with their communal goals (i.e. wanting to help others and have flexibility).   2. There is lots of research from the behavioural sciences which suggests that even when people are aware of the importance of, and value, not discriminating in employment decisions they can still make biased decisions (see Ellemers, 2014; https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2372732214549327). This is

because we hold implicit (i.e. unconscious) beliefs about the genders and in a related way who is best suited for which roles.

➢ 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.)

1. One solution to this is promoting the communal aspects of high status jobs in STEM fields for example. Likewise, job adverts should be written in such a way as to promote both the communal and agentic aspects of a role - so as to not unintentionally communicate that a given role does not fit with women's goals. Another is changing law/policy to promote work flexibility with caring responsibilities.   2. All protected characteristic information (i.e. gender) must be removed from decision making within education and occupational decision making (where possible). For example, this is easily done in shortlisting candidates for a job (remove all names, make the process blind), but it is not so easy at interview which is in person.

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.

1. Childcare: The cost of childcare means that many families with children make a cost benefit analysis about whether it is more financially sound for one parent to stay at home instead of paying for childcare. Unfortunately, because women often occupy lower paid/lower status jobs than men it is decided that the woman will stay at home and provide the childcare. Not only does this contribute to the gender gap in share of paid and unpaid labour, it also reinforces stereotypes that men are more agentic and therefore suited for paid work, and women are more communal and therefore suited for unpaid/domestic work. Likewise, because people form beliefs about the innate capabilities of social groups from the roles that they typically occupy in society (see Social Role Theory; Eagly & Wood, 2012), the more we see men in work, and women

at home the more we believe that men and women are best suited to those roles or roles that require similar attributes. Thus, reinforcing gender stereotypes.

➢ 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.)

The state could reduce the cost of childcare either through subsidy or through a national cap on cost per child. Other possibility is regulating insurance costs for childcare providers which allow them to reduce their prices for consumers

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.

Gender stereotypes are prescriptive, meaning they tell us how women and men should be. For example, women should be kind and polite. When women (or men) act in ways which are incongruent with these stereotypes or normative expectations they can experience backlash. For example, female politicians and leaders often experience backlash or are evaluated more negatively (than men) for acting in similar ways. In the media for example, female politicians and broadcasters branded "bossy" "cold" or "domineering" for acting in similar ways to their male counterparts. In addition, women in public life are objectified more readily than men. For example, the "sex appeal" of female politicians is often discussed in the media (see Daniel McConnell in the examiner for an example: https://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/columnists/daniel-mcconnell/theresno-denying-mary-lous-sex-appeal-469696.html). With exception of Simon Harris during the repeal campaign I find it hard to think of any examples of objectification of male politicians in the media. Women in public life are more likely to evaluated negatively for acting in non gender conforming ways, and also more likely to be sexualised in the media relative to male counterparts.   Other things that might be important are the young women's opportunities to engage with leadership

initiatives from early on. Developing children's interest in civic engagement, and providing (girls especially) with relatable leadership role models (who they perceive as similar to themselves) might be useful.

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The state can enforce stricter regulations on the fair coverage of men and women in public and leadership positions. For example, the objectification or out of context reference to women's physical attributes or appearance should not be allowed. Education and highlighting relevant role models in leadership might be useful. This could be implemented within the education system. The recent centenary of women's sufferage was a good opportunity to highlight important female leaders in ireland (e.g. hanna sheehy skeffington) and link that to current female leaders.

5.   Where does gender inequality impact most?

To conclude we would be interested in your response to the following question: <u>In which area do you think gender inequality matters most</u>?

Please rank the following in order of importance, <u>1 being the most important</u>:

- Paid work   3

- Home & family life   2

- Education   1

- Politics and public life   5

- Media   4

- Caring for others   6

- Other – please elaborate   7

➢ Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

This was hard to answer mostly because there is confluence between each of these. I think all are equally important, and feed into one another. For example, having equality in home and family life will reduce the gender pay gap (because men and women who choose to have children will be equivalently handicapped from taking

career breaks). Likewise, if women do not disproportionately take on domestic duties and related career breaks they will have greater access to career advancement, representation in leadership and higher status positions, which can begin to change stereotypes about women (as more suited to communal roles only).

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