

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

QUESTIONNAIRE

CA30237

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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.

Gender is taught as a given when it is predominantly a construct. Sex and gender are different things. What we teach about gender, and the way we use binary definitions to describe a complexity and range of human feeling and expression is repressive and harmful, and will take generations to undo. It needs to start with the continual reminder at every stage, including the wording in this statement, that we are more than "women" "men" "boys" and "girls," and that these labels should not define or confine us.

- 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.)

This is a cultural shift. It will take time and commitment to the purpose from all sectors; using gender neutral pronouns in legal documents and public communications. Encouraging discourse in school that busts myths open. Building in early reading that doesn't reinforce gender stereotypes and supplementing the existing canonical texts in higher education with alternatives, and alternative readings of classical texts, until it's not radical to do this any more.

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.

If as a society we can undermine assumptions and gender stereotyping, including the assumption that only 2 genders exist, the "feminisation" of caring roles and the assumption of female care giving in the home will dissipate significantly.

- 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.)

See Q1

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.

- 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.)

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.

- 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.)

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
- Home & family life
- Education
- Politics and public life
- Media
- Caring for others
- Other – please elaborate

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The impact is broader than any one of these categories, and it's perpetuated by using binary, gender-based terms to attempt to counteract the inequalities. if we stop talking about men vs women and look at how we're pushing everybody into roles and

responsibilities based on assumptions about them made according to their biology, we could really start to have a meaningful conversation about change.

- Please outline the reasons for your answer below:

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

Please can we, at the very least, ensure that the next Oireachtas resolution isn't so dismissive of gender fluidity that it leaves people with non-binary identity as a footnote? We can't possibly assume to correct one inequality by perpetrating another