

## **Saturday Feedback Session**

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

### **Gender, gender norms and stereotypes, and the family.**

#### Chair

So welcome back to everybody who's following the Citizens' Assembly here in Malahide on the web. We're delighted to have you following our proceedings and what we're going to do now we have the members of the assembly here are sitting at 14 round tables and we're going to get feedback from those round tables. First of all we will hear from seven of the facilitators about what was discussed in the morning and then the next seven will report on the afternoon. So I'm going to ask a facilitator from table one now to tell us what your table discussed this morning thank you.

#### Table 1

The citizens from Table one in relation to the first question regarding gender inequality in Ireland there was a unanimous yes that there is a gender inequality in Ireland. In relation to the second point in respect of their own experiences they identify this in the workplace, the home, parental direction, historical experience of women to quote chained to the sink, the segregation in public houses and the chapel, taking the name of the husband and single sex schools. And it was also the historical experience of women just after childbirth having to be cleansed at the altar before they could proceed with the sacraments. In considering how they would have changed their view from the earlier survey, 50% it was about half and half had changed their view from what they had put down in terms of the priorities on that survey. There was one further question about and are you taking forward questions? It was one further question is why is gender quota not applied to local elections? There was an administrative matter but you've already dealt with that.

#### Table 2

The citizens at table two did feel that gender inequalities exist but felt it was difficult to know to what extent this was the case. In many employment positions men and women earned the same hourly rate however inequalities are more visible in such areas as the government, in banking there are more males at higher management level and then in such areas as physiotherapy there are more females. Women can face some intangible obstacles some who are mothers can feel that they must always be available for their children however men who have children are better able to compartmentalize work, work from home and to be fully focused on work when at work. A question then arose as to what extent a father would act differently if a mother wasn't available in the background for their children. Parents with childminding obligations can face difficulties if one parent needs to leave work early to collect children. Staying in work for longer hours can create more opportunities for promotion and it was discussed that in other countries there's a move towards a four-day working week which would value efficiency over long working hours. The table actually thought that Ireland would have performed better than the EU average instead of being roughly on par in respect of the

gender pay gap. Gender inequality is particularly visible in the table thought the gender inequality was particularly visible in children's toys for example one issue or one example was raised that a company makes pc's for boys and girls and the pc's made for girls had half the number of apps and was pink in colour. And then enclosed the same company for example had a male child's top with I'm Superman on it and a female or a female top with I hate my thighs on it so that was notable. And finally there was discussion on the use of gender-neutral names for girls to reduce gender bias in job applications.

### Table 3

The citizens at this table felt there is still gender equality in Ireland today however they were reassured by the fact that we are seventh on the European gender equality index. They felt that Ireland is quite progressive when it comes to gender equality and that we can take consolation from the fact that anti-discrimination legislation commenced enactment in the 1970s in Ireland. They felt that we are a country on a journey and they felt that the language used this morning lacked inclusivity regarding people who are identify as gender fluid and non-binary it's not either/or but both/and. There is move to there's more to be done on norms and attitudes towards men and that there was an honesty about acknowledging this this morning in the presentations and the research. They were reassured that biology was given some context this morning as well and that overlap between men male and female remains considerable a lot of socialization is built on small biological differences and expectations that go with that. We had lots of discussions around education and they felt that education is staring children towards stereotypical jobs. They felt that the curriculum should be developed more and the schools need to provide a range a fuller range of subjects for boys and girls. There is more diversification of subjects on the curriculum and they learned something new this morning as well the pink vacation of girlhood and they wanted to know was the no blue a vacation of boyhood. Research can be one dimensional and the equivalent male research doesn't seem to have been done.

### Table 4

All the citizens from this table acknowledged that they also felt gender inequality still do exist however it's also felt that they feel its getting better has improved and there is growing awareness. Some of the issues are similar to what has already been mentioned but in addition paternity leave was mentioned. It was felt that until there is equality in terms of paternal and maternal leave inequalities will still exist. There was also discussion around job selection and when choosing a job men tended to be primarily motivated by the pay whilst women had many additional factors and were had to consider maternity leave and flexible working conditions as important factors and motivators in choosing their job. There were also discussions about the nature nurture debate and there was a general feeling from the table that women had a more instinctive gene as it were to be the primary caregiver to the children particularly in the very younger years. Considering personal experiences an example was given that in our school situations where there may be an issue with a child it's nearly always the mother who's contacted first and in addition when they're filling out the forms for schools parents themselves self-select the mother to be the primary contact. Finally in relation to the final question the citizen's views generally remained the same. The CSO presentation had brought greater

awareness and a new awareness to the extent of some of the inequalities in particular to the area of the paid and unpaid work differences.

#### Table 5

In relation to the first point there was broad consensus from the citizens at this table that there does continue to be gender inequality existing in Ireland today. In relation to personal experience there's quite a bit of conversation about personal experiences from the citizens of this table and in terms of observations there a couple of observations made in relation to that. First of all that the entitlements and rights for lone fathers are not necessarily advertised or made available and perhaps some men don't actually know what they're actually entitled to in relation to children and support. Men don't seem to have a voice in this in this in this regard and perhaps they're not as supported as they might be. Also in relation to sick children and children with special needs there was an observation that perhaps more equal rights for fathers on decision-making for their children in relation to unmarried couples and I know this will probably travel into tomorrow's discussions so I want to talk too much about that. In relation to the earlier survey that that was done the first issue that was broadly agreed at the table was that the economic aspect was the first issue that popped into their head in relation to the inequality and that quickly turned into focus on the importance of education and that became a real concern for the citizens at this table and I think that's pretty much it.

#### Table 6

The citizens at this table feel that gender inequality still exists in Ireland and they made the following observations. Career progression affected by childcare duties, dealing with multiple identities as well as sexism e.g. being an immigrant woman of colour, different faiths. Promotions in the military for women tend to be not married whereas a male counterpart general is expected to be married. Lack of opportunity to choose subjects in school based on history of education in Ireland which was delivered by faith-based schools. Unconscious bias of women in the workplace, stereotyping women politician politicians based on appearance, economic and workplace opportunities available to more due to the opportunity to attend private schools i.e. politicians and CEOs. And just one comment and I know the chair has addressed it already. Citizens would like copies of the presentations ahead of sessions.

#### Table 7

The citizens at this table similar to the other tables that they feel that gender inequality exists and from what they've heard this morning they fear that in order to break gender inequality that it needs to start at a very young age. In terms of the second question the citizens at this table were relaying their experiences of inequality that they would have gone through at a younger age but also in the present lives. And then in terms of the third question in the main or generally the citizens at this table have their opinions haven't changed however there was a small number where they feel that their opinions would have changed slightly.

### Table 8

The citizens at table eight we were addressing the afternoon questions. So the first one is yes gender does affect life choices but it is only one of many things that affected family environment also affect it. Difference in development of maturity between boys and girls they develop different rates particularly the younger years. Boys should be offered home economics maybe perhaps rename it as we had it many years ago as domestic science maybe be a little bit more attractive and also that girls should be offered the other choices like woodwork, science, metal works and whatever. And again it was noticed that an example of Lego was always a unisex toy but more recently it's now being targeted at specific genders and also in that separate aisles in toy shops for boys and girls you know when has that come into play. STEM subjects should be offered from an early age say from crèches and introduced as a fun factor would also help. Equivalent opportunity should be a better way of dealing with gender issues rather than just aiming towards results. Finally encouragement in schools should be equal and gender-neutral.

### Table 9

The citizens at table nine. One citizen asked that you note that a citizen had observed negative negativity towards a male colleague when requesting paternity leave. Citizens suggest that there should be more time between speakers so they composed they composed questions for each speaker and then at the end or observe the topics absorb the topics. And gender stereotyping understanding should which includes sports and school should be part of teacher practice and may be introduced to preteens and sixth class students. Thank you.

### Table 10

Thanks very much from table 10. Yeah we've clearly felt that obviously gender does obviously affect their life choices people make it was evident from just about all of their presentations and probably saw this morning a particularly the employment graph clearly showed that that's the case. We felt that it was actually very hard to think of any examples where that was not the case more so. The second question should understandings of gender stereotyping be incorporated we felt it should be and from a very early age should be incorporated into teacher training before they you know as part of their core training. We're not on 100% sure that it doesn't already do that but that would be a suggestion from us. With regard to the need to cover for initiatives to encourage girls to take STEM subjects yeah we felt again that if you could address the second question there'd be much less need for initiatives to encourage girls into those type of subjects. But I think with both question three and four that would have been the same view we would have had and I think we felt that you know access having access to these subjects within schools is the key to it and that might involve something like sharing between two schools because obviously there's an issue with facilities and not having enough teachers for some of the subjects anyway if you could share between schools that might be a way of getting around that problem. I suppose one other point we had to make was we made was that maybe there should be less same-sex schools and more mixed schools in society.

### Table 11

The citizens at table 11 considered yes the gender effects the life choices that people make. Furthermore they considered that we should be trying to educate children as young as possible into on gender stereotyping i.e. preschool age. Moving on to the next two questions the citizens of this table considered that structural problems created by timetabling clashes should be removed so that all students can meaningfully have access to all subjects in particular students in same-sex schools equal opportunity for all. And finally curriculum changes and timetabling changes alone won't suffice but will require broader social home and cultural support e.g. being mindful of those cultures with differing value systems and understandings.

### Table 12

Good afternoon the majority of citizens at table twelve decided that social conditioning about gender have a greater effect than gender alone on life choices. On question two the majority of the citizens thought it should be included in teacher training rather than an already full curriculum. Question three the citizens think that all careers should be promoted equally rather than pushing genders into careers that may not that they may not have an aptitude or appetite for and the same applies to the fourth question. And just also a note the citizens have requested for the presentations as early as possible.

### Table 13

They citizens at table 13 made the following points STEM should include arts and renamed steam to include and encourage boys and girls interested in arts as well as maths etc. Is there a concern for men to enter caring profession e.g. abuse scandals. Should employers incentivize apprenticeships for girls? Does gender influence choice of travel for girls/women if long period for long period's boys more free to do so and gain other life experiences before making life choices. And is education too focused on work professional life educated to toil.

### Table 14

Afternoon the citizens at table 14 felt in respect to the first question that they were shocked that there's such a female high percentage in respect to crèches in primary school and it would even out towards more males entering and working in secondary schooling universities they found out extremely interesting. They felt that single sex schools should certainly be abolished. In respect to the second question they noted that they wish to implement gender-neutral activities and subjects from primary school upon the children entering in baby infants. In respect to the third question all the table noted that there was no mention of trades or apprenticeships in STEM subjects and they felt that there may be an element of snobbery towards ignoring such roles. In respect to the fourth question they noted that home ec should be compulsory for boys and vice versa construction study should be compulsory for girls upon entering school for at least one year. There was experience at the table of feeling that they were to select a gender appropriate subject upon entering secondary school and they had no exposure to such a subject so they made the easy decision they felt that if it was compulsory for one year they could try it

out and then if they did not have an aptitude could leave. And finally the table also wanted to make two comments that the use of technology should be used further to assist in respecting niche subjects one of the speakers spoke about learning physics and there was not enough students in the school they noted that video link technology or using a cluster of schools should be utilized. And overall the table felt that men are the big winners in the recent improvement of the gender imbalance examples were given whereby grandfathers would now get to care and show emotional sight or grandchildren which they would never had previously been able to show to their own children when they were growing up.

### Chair

Well thank you all very much. I think that's a really rich harvest of comments and I'm interested where you have not only looked at things in abstraction in general but also brought some very practical suggestions to the table so we'll take note of all of this and then weave it into the presentations and the discussions that we're going to have in the coming weekends so thank you very much for all of the very interesting points that you've made in reaction to what you've heard today.