

## **Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality**

### **Recommendations**

#### **The Constitution**

1. Article 40.1 of the Constitution should be amended to refer explicitly to gender equality and non-discrimination.
2. Article 41.2 of the Constitution should be deleted and replaced with language that is not gender specific and obliges the State to take reasonable measures to support care within the home and wider community.
3. Article 41 of the Constitution should be amended so that it would protect private and family life, with the protection afforded to the family not limited to the marital family.

#### **Care**

4. To improve the terms and conditions of those in paid employment as carers (for children and adults):
  - (a) They should have a pay structure and benefits (including sick pay and pensions) that reward their level of skill and training, similar to those of teachers and nurses.
  - (b) They should have a career structure, including access to training and professional registration, which enables them to progress in their chosen area.
5. Reform Carers' Allowance by:
  - (a) Increasing the level of the income disregard.
  - (b) Reimbursing the costs associated with caring.



- (c) Increasing the ceiling on the number of hours in paid work outside the home.
  - (d) Providing access to State employment and training programmes.
- 6.** The State should develop an individualised pension solution for carers to ensure they have an adequate income once they reach retirement age.
- 7.** Improve respite provision for carers by:
- (a) Increasing the level of the Carers' Support Grant in the next Budget and keeping it under review to ensure it keeps pace with other increases in social protection payments.
  - (b) Providing adequate access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs.
- 8.** Ireland should:
- (a) Over the next decade move to a publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of quality, affordable early years and out of hours childcare.
  - (b) Increase the State share of GDP spent on childcare, from the current 0.37% of GDP to at least 1% by no later than 2030 in line with the UNICEF target.
- 9.** Paid Leave for parents should:
- (a) Cover the first year of a child's life.
  - (b) Be non-transferable to encourage sharing of childcare responsibility between parents.
  - (c) Provide lone parents with the same total leave period as a couple.
  - (d) Be incentivised by increasing payment levels to encourage increased take up.
- 10.** Older people and persons with disabilities should:



- (a) Be actively supported and resourced to live independently.
- (b) Have access to person centred financial supports to serve their individual needs.
- (c) Be enabled to participate as fully as possible in decisions on their care needs, based on principles of fairness, respect, equality and dignity.
- (d) Be facilitated and resourced as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home.

**11.** Provision for those who wish to be cared for at home should be improved by:

- (a) Providing a statutory right for payment for home care packages as well as nursing care.
- (b) Increasing the annual home care budget to meet growing demand and reduce waiting lists.

**12.** Lifelong care for persons with disabilities who need it should be seamless and there should not be any break in services provided or need to reapply for support when a person turns 18.

## **Social Protection**

**13.** Adopt a fully individualised social protection system to reflect the diversity of today's lives and to promote an equal division of paid work and care.

**14.** Social protection services should:

- (a) Set social protection payments and/or supports at a level that lifts people above the poverty line, prevents deprivation and supports an adequate standard of living.



(b) Regularly train staff to prioritise dignity and respect in all contact with clients, including giving a choice in how they receive payments.

**15.** Take account of gender equality issues in piloting a Universal Basic Income scheme.

**16.** Address the specific needs of lone parents to incentivise and support them in accessing work or education, including provision of child and after-school care.

**17.** Immediately address the impact of the Marriage Bar by automatically qualifying women affected by the marriage bar for a state pension.

**18.** Regardless of the pension model, enrolment into pension savings should be automatic and start when a person starts earning, subject to a threshold on low incomes and an opt-out clause.

**19.** Introduce a Universal State Pension so that every resident of Ireland receives a pension upon reaching pension age.

## **Leadership in politics, public life & the workplace**

**20.** By the end of 2022:

(a) Extend the gender quota for party candidates at general elections to local elections, elections to the Seanad and European Parliament elections and review every 5 years.

(b) Increase penalties for parties that do not meet the statutory gender quotas.

(c) The 30% threshold should be increased to 40% for women (and 40% for men) for all elections.

**21.** Improve gender balance on boards by:



- (a) Making funding to public bodies contingent on reaching a 40% gender balance quota by 2025.
- (b) Enacting gender quota legislation that requires private companies to have at least 40% gender balance according to specific criteria such as turnover, number of employees etc.

**22.** Public funding to cultural, sports, arts and media organisations should be contingent on:

- (a) A quota of 30% representation of women, and of men, on their Governing bodies by 2025 and 40% by 2030.
- (b) Published plans to advance gender equality in their organisations.
- (c) Annual reporting on progress towards agreed quotas on gender representation and funding.

**23.** Improve family-friendly practices for all representatives elected to public office by:

- (a) Making maternity, paternity and parental leave available to all elected representatives, including Ministers (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).
- (b) Providing flexible working options including remote working and voting and adjusting meeting times and rules to suit caring responsibilities (*through legislation or constitutional amendment as required*).

**24.** Strengthen legislation, reporting and monitoring of press and social media by:

- (a) Holding technology and social media companies accountable for immediately removing online content that constitutes sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, sexually violent or abusive content that they have identified or about which they have been informed.
- (b) Penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender, with regular reviews to ensure legislation keeps pace with technological advances.



**25.** Work places should be required to develop, resource, implement and monitor gender-neutral recruitment and promotion policies and practices including:

- (a) Specific policies to promote gender equality in leadership positions.
- (b) A requirement to operate gender-sensitive and anti-discriminatory selection and promotions processes.
- (c) Equal access to training, assignments and mentoring opportunities for all employees including part-time and remote workers.

## **Norms & stereotypes & education**

**26.** Appropriately resource schools to facilitate:

- (a) Provision of a broad range of subject choice that counters gender stereotyping.
- (b) Provision of gender-neutral career information and advice from early second level education.

**27.** Curriculum review and development should:

- (a) Promote gender equality and diversity.
- (b) Explicitly cover gender power dynamics, consent and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence – both online and offline – within the revised Relationships and Sexuality curriculum.

**28.** All levels of the education system from pre-school to third level, led by the relevant Government Department, should:

- (a) Ensure that initial education and continuing professional development for staff includes modules promoting gender awareness and gender-sensitive teaching methods.



(b) Monitor policies and practices – including school inspection and whole school evaluation – through the lens of gender equality and report regularly on trends and outcomes by gender.

**29.** In view of the gendered impact on women, reform the Third Level Grants Scheme to ensure that those accessing part-time courses are eligible to apply for a grant.

**30.** Media and advertising, including social media, organisations should:

(a) Be more strongly regulated to promote gender equality and avoid gender discrimination and stereotyping and take action where discriminatory behaviours occur.

(b) Be obliged to annually publish details of their monitoring of, and compliance with, gender equality and inclusion measures.

(c) Make special efforts to improve the visibility of men performing caring roles.

**31.** Provide appropriate State funding and resources for:

(a) Strengthening existing programmes to encourage women into male-dominated careers (e.g. STEM, Science Technology Engineering and Maths) and including apprenticeships.

(b) Developing initiatives to encourage men into female-dominated careers (e.g. caring professions).

## **Pay and workplace conditions**

**32.** The State should set targets in legislation to reduce the hourly gender pay gap (*currently 14%*) to 9% by 2025 and to 4% by 2030 with a view to eliminating it by 2035.



- 33.** The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill should be enacted and implemented without delay. The law should include penalties for non-compliance and an obligation for annual reporting.
- 34.** Increase the minimum wage to align it with the living wage by 2025 while considering potential employment impacts on small businesses.
- 35.** Support employment contract security through:
- (a) Establishing a legal right to collective bargaining to improve wages, working conditions and rights in all sectors.
  - (b) Increased resourcing of the Workplace Relations Commission for more effective enforcement of current employment laws.
- 36.** Introduce a statutory right to reasonable access to flexible working.

## **Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence**

- 37.** All Government action to prevent and counter domestic, sexual and gender-based violence should be coordinated by a Cabinet Minister with direct responsibility for implementation of a national strategy.
- 38.** Eliminate tolerance in our society of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence by developing and implementing awareness, prevention and education campaigns which may include children of an appropriate age on:
- (a) The impact and harm caused by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
  - (b) Supports available to victims/survivors.
- 39.** Support justice for victims/survivors by:



- (a) Reviewing and reforming the courts system – including the family courts – to better protect and support victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and their dependents and remove barriers to justice.
- (b) Developing guidelines and specialist training for judges and lawyers regarding the treatment of victims/survivors, including the exclusion of the consideration of sexual history, character, attire and counselling/medical records.
- (c) Introducing tougher sentences and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and sexual crimes.
- (d) Providing specialised confidential health care and other support services for victims/survivors including legal representation.
- (e) Putting in place a Victims/Survivors Commissioner as an independent advocate and voice for victims/survivors.

**40.** Ensure sufficient publicly funded provision of beds, shelters and accommodation for victims/survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence across the country and their dependents in line with the Istanbul Convention.

**41.** Recognise female genital mutilation (FGM) as a ground for seeking asylum, and provide culturally sensitive specialised services for victims/survivors.

## **Gender equality principle in law and policy**

**42.** Empower and adequately resource a statutory body for gender equality under the responsibility of a Cabinet Minister charged with cross government coordination of gender equality issues.

**43.** Ensure data gathering on key gender equality issues (including care), regular publication of such data and remedial action where necessary.



**44.** Reflecting international best practice, require gender impact assessment of all proposed legislation and legislate for equality budgeting across all Government bodies including local authorities.

**45.** Anti-discrimination and equality legislation should be:

- (a) Regularly reviewed to ensure effective monitoring, investigation, reporting and enforcement.
- (b) A standard part of employee training.

**Members also voted in favour of the following:**

Our recommendations call for better public services and improved social protection in order to advance gender equality. These should be funded firstly through greater efficiency and accountability for public funding and reprioritisation between current spending and revenue raising. If necessary, we are also prepared to support and pay higher taxes based on the principle of ability to pay, to make a reality of our recommendations.

