EVENT REPORT

A Dialogue on the Future of Europe

GENDER EQUALITY

Online | 8 October | 11am-12:30pm

1. Event Summary

This event was the third in a series of five events organised by The Wheel with support from the European Commission Representation in Ireland. The aim of the series is to engage civil society, and by extension the communities they represent, with the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). The topic of this particular event was Gender Equality and it was delivered in collaboration with the National Women's Council of Ireland, an organisation that advocates to protect and advance women's and girls' rights, in Ireland and on an international level.

The event featured an introduction to the CoFoE with a demonstration of how to engage with the CoFoE's online platform, input from Emma DeSouza of the National Women's Council of Ireland on gender equality and the EU. Facilitated breakout rooms allowed participants to discuss their key recommendations for the EU on gender equality. All ideas were collected by breakout room moderators and shared via the Mentimeter app in a plenary session. Emma DeSouza closed out the event with a summary of the recommendations and The Wheel encouraged participants to continue to engage with the Conference on the Future of Europe by registering on the digital platform and sharing their ideas about other topics of importance to them.

2. Participants

There were 26 participants comprised of people working with the topic of gender equality on a professional basis and citizens with a general interest in the topic.

3. Statement from The Wheel

The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) is a year-long EU-wide project to seek citizens' views about Europe's future challenges and priorities on a variety of topics, including issues facing the disability movement. The Wheel's goal with this event series is to facilitate Irish citizens and civil society playing a more participative role in shaping future developments across Europe and thereby influencing the decisions that directly affect them.

Through participation in EU initiatives like the Conference on the Future of Europe, civil society organisations can make their voices and the voices of their beneficiaries heard at EU level and have a chance to make real change. If it proves to be successful, the Conference's online platform might become a permanent public consultation tool – there's no time like the present to get familiar with it and do our part to make sure the future EU is an inclusive one.

4. Main topics and recommendations discussed during the workshops

The following ideas and recommendations were contributed by the participants in the breakout rooms and via the Mentimeter app.

- **Employment & workplace inclusion & leadership**
    - Gender pay transparency legislation with a requirement to address gaps via an action plan with a timetable. (i.e. a business plan with resources, targets and accountability)
    - Gender Diversity Policy, Corporate Governance Statement for publicly listed companies; gender balance in publicly listed companies
    - National and EU policy and support must 'touch' the majority of those engaged in private sector organizations i.e. the 64% in Irish SME <250 employees. (Excluding these SMEs means excluding he majority.)
    - Change of organisational culture needed: more inclusive
    - Better benefits such as illness benefit and supports for self-employed women
    - Better supports for women in STEM
    - Require state actors to ensure representation is reflective of the population e.g. RTE sports coverage should be 1:1 for women/men
    - More women politicians
    - Education is key but need to make sure surrounding environments (accommodation/ health) needs to be conducive to supporting education

- **Care work & parental leave**
    - Equal maternity and paternity leave, and tax breaks for working mothers
    - Better models of childcare
    - Paid parental leave and maternal leave extended to 18 months
    - Flexible Work Practices (time and place) as a right/default unless required physical presence (nursing care)
    - 4 day working week
    - Support and enable state structure to encourage equal parenting; create balance in supports to encourage fathers into child care
    - Higher value of non-paid work

- o Older women facing the challenge of inadequate pension

- **Violence & (online) abuse**
  - o Stop violence against women
  - o Tackle online abuse
  - o ban sexual harassment across the EU

- **Gender & sexuality**
  - o Acknowledgement of intersectional identities
  - o Trans healthcare and protections
  - o The additional rights of non-binary people not to erode women's rights

- **Health**
  - o Tackle mental well-being
  - o Free sanitary protection products to prevent period poverty

- **Awareness, information & education**
  - o We treat so many categories as homogenous but we need to recognise the diversity that exists. Our system is often designed to categorize us and find solutions from one perspective. This perspective is generally white, male and cis.
  - o Bringing marginalised people to the table without tokenizing people is needed.
  - o Gender inequality in Ireland: progressive feminist agenda needs to be more inclusive; for some marginalised groups feminism is almost an area confined to white, middle class groups
  - o Men need to be involved in the conversation if there is to be meaningful change

- **EU & policy**
  - o There needs to be a sustained commitment to an alignment/ cohesion of policies between the EU (WHO & UN when applicable) member states and local authorities on a number of matters e.g. Disability, Environment, Mental health, Civil & Human rights
  - o Introduce EU fines for countries that do to not meet gender equality standards
  - o There is a lack of unified policy from the EU on these issues. For example, there isn't trans healthcare in all countries. We need to establish minimum standards at EU level. Laws that no countries can veto. Issues like minimum pay and health.
  - o There is a gender bias through the courts, variations between private and public legal representation and these are contributing to fragmenting society

5. Follow-up

This report was created based on the ideas and recommendations shared by the participants in the breakout rooms and jointly collected during the event. This report will be uploaded and shared on the CoFoE online platform and sent to all participants to encourage them to continue to contribute their ideas to the platform.