



**Tithe an
Oireachtais
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Tithe an Oireachtais

An Coiste um Chomhionannas Inscne

Clár Oibre

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Houses of the Oireachtas

Committee on Gender Equality

Work Programme

February 2022

Membership of the Joint Committee on Gender Equality

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Introduction

The establishment of a Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was approved by resolutions of Dáil Éireann of 9 July and Seanad Éireann of 11 July 2019. The resolutions set out specific objectives for the Assembly, namely

“bringing forward proposals that:

- challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men;
- in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life;
- recognise the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance; and
- examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family;
- following on from the above, to prioritise the proposals, which may include policy, legislative or constitutional change, having regard to the legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact.”

The resolutions approving the establishment of the Assembly included the following:

“the Government will provide in the Houses of the Oireachtas a response to each recommendation of the Assembly and, if accepting some or all of the recommendations, will indicate the timeframe it envisages for the holding of any related referendum.”

The report of the Citizens' Assembly was published on 2 June 2021. The report contained 45 recommendations which cover the following themes:

- The Constitution
- Care
- Social Protection
- Leadership in Politics, Public Life and the Workplace
- Norms and Stereotypes and Education
- Pay and Workplace Conditions
- Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- Gender Equality Principle in Law and Policy

Alongside the final report on Gender Equality, the Citizens' Assembly wrote an open letter to the Houses of the Oireachtas, urging them to keep their recommendations in mind and show the same level of commitment when implementing new laws and policies in the long term.

On 8 July 2021 the Oireachtas Business Committee agreed to the establishment of a Special Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality.

The Joint Committee on Gender Equality

Committee Remit

By Order of the Dáil on 10 November 2021, and the Seanad on the 7 December 2021, the Committee on Gender Equality was established to consider the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly and make recommendations to the Oireachtas to advance gender equality by bringing forward proposals on a number of determinants of inequality, such as social and economic norms that facilitate gender discrimination, the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women, early years parental care and work-life balance, and opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life.

The Committee remit will be to consider the recommendations contained in the Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, together with the response of the Government to each such recommendation, having regard to the open letter to the Oireachtas contained in that Report. In doing so, the Committee's consideration of the recommendations will have regard to legal requirements and the costs versus the potential impact.

The Committee will make its proposals to the Houses of the Oireachtas based on its examination of available research, analysis of written submissions received and oral evidence received during public hearings.

Work Schedule

Regarding its work schedule, a consensus emerged that stakeholder sessions should be organised based on a modular approach to the categories of recommendations, which are outlined in the main body of this report. The Committee agreed to hold its first public session on March 3rd 2022, with further public sessions to be held on a weekly basis from March until November 2022.

Final Report

The Committee is required to present a final report to the Dáil within nine months of its first public meeting, whereupon the Committee shall stand dissolved.

At the first meeting of the Committee, a preliminary discussion took place amongst members as to how the Committee should approach its task, and formulate a project plan, including a work schedule. Members emphasised the very short timeframe of the Committee, and the need for its work to be tightly focused.

Proposed Approach to the Work of the Committee

The Committee will adopt a structured approach to this project to achieve its goals within the nine-month deadline for reporting.

The final report of the JCGE will consider the recommendations within the Final Report of the Citizens' Assembly together with the Government response to each such recommendation, and will make recommendations on foot of their considerations.

Call for Written Submissions

In light of the limited lifetime of the Committee, the Joint Committee is regrettably unable to invite all stakeholders to appear before the Committee in person. As such, the Committee will seek written submissions from stakeholders on their substantive response to the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly in order to determine selected witnesses.

Oral Evidence

The Committee agreed that its focus in oral sessions will be the implementation of the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly, having regard to any potential legislative impact and the costs versus potential impact. The Committee will prioritise engagement with Government Ministers and Departments, academics, civil society and representative groups and relevant professionals.

Proposed Committee Work Streams

The Committee has adopted a modular approach to the categories of key issues and Work Streams which it will address in order of priority.

Table 1 (below) provides a summary of the Work Streams that have been identified, flowing from the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly. Based on the work streams a list of potential witnesses is being developed. The work schedule, and the order in which the Committee addresses the different work streams may also vary, subject to availability of witnesses and other factors.

	Committee Work Streams	Rec. No.	Dates
A	The Constitution	1-3	March
B	Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence	37-41	March - April
C	Norms, Stereotypes and Education AND Gender Equality Principle in Law and Policy	26-31 42-45	May – June
D	Care AND Social Protection	4-12 13-19	June - July
E	Leadership in Politics, Public Life and the Workplace AND Pay and Workplace Conditions	20-25 32-36	September - October

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference of the Committee

That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, Dáil Éireann:

- (1) a Special Committee consisting of nine members of Dáil Éireann be appointed, to be joined with a Special Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on Gender Equality;
- (2) the Joint Committee shall consider the recommendations contained in the Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, together with the response of the Government to each such recommendation, having regard to the open letter to the Oireachtas contained in that report;
- (3) members of either House, not being members of the Joint Committee, may attend and take part in proceedings of the Joint Committee, or any sub-Committee thereof, but without having a right to vote or to move motions or amendments, save where they attend, pursuant to Standing Orders, as a substitute for an absent member (or for a substitute not in attendance);
- (4) the Joint Committee shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the matters contained in paragraph (2) within nine months of the first public meeting of the Joint Committee;
- (5) the quorum of the Joint Committee shall be four, at least one of whom shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, and one a member of Seanad Éireann;
- (6) the member of Dáil Éireann nominated by the Labour Party to serve on the Joint Committee shall be Cathaoirleach; and
- (7) the Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (9) and (10) of Standing Order 96.