

WOMEN



RISING

For far too long Ireland has been known for the lack of gender equality in political decision making. Just 17% of City and County Councillors and 18.5 % of representatives in the Oireachtas are women. 2014 could be the year this starts to change.

In a time of social and economic challenge, many of our current female representatives have made strong contributions to public life and more women are now keen to add their voice and vision to the debate.

More equal representation leads to better decision-making and the 2014 Local and European elections are an opportunity to support greater participation by established and emerging women candidates, from all parties and none.

The **National Women's Council of Ireland** are asking all candidates, male and female, to actively promote women's rights and gender equality and to make sure that women, in all their diversity, are being heard on issues that matter.

Inside you will find **six important questions** which every candidate should answer.

Women are rising to the challenges in our society!

**Do you want to be part of a movement for equality?
Join NWCI today!**

National Women's Council of Ireland is the leading national women's membership organisation, seeking full equality between men and women. With 170 different member groups and many individual members, our mission is to be a catalyst for change, making sure women's voices, in all their diversity, are being heard wherever decisions are made.

National Women's Council of Ireland

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*100% of text cost goes to NWCI across most network providers. Some providers apply VAT which means a minimum of €1.63 will go to NWCI

Women Rising: Six Questions

1

Will You Bring Women & Gender into Decision Making?

By 2016 at least 30% of political party candidates should be female. In addition to increasing the numbers of women in politics at all levels, representation is also about looking at the different ways issues like transport or housing might impact on men and women and setting targets so we can be sure that policies are working for everyone.

Rising to the Challenge

- Commit to 40% gender balance on locally selected committees or boards in line with best practice at national level. Local Community Development Committees should include representatives from minority groups.
- Increase regular open public consultation on matters of local importance and encourage equal participation by women and men in consultation. Encourage introduction of participatory budgeting approaches.
- Ensure all policies, including local development plans, are underpinned by equality targets and sound analysis of issues affecting men and women.

2

Will You Take A Stand On Violence Against Women?

Violence against women affected millions of women across Europe last year and is damaging lives in communities across Ireland. 1 in 5 women have been abused by a partner and helplines receive 40,000 calls each year, the vast majority from women. Frontline services are overstretched leaving many women feeling trapped, isolated and without options as they struggle to access the housing, refuge, welfare or legal supports they need.

Recent European-wide research by the Fundamental Rights Agency found that 52% of women in Ireland avoid certain areas for fear of violence. We need better planning, awareness and policing. Initiatives like Dublin City's commitment to seeking UN 'Safer City' status are positive steps forward.

Rising to the Challenge

- Actively support and resource frontline services, shelters and refuges.
- Encourage local Courts to provide out-of-hours access to emergency barring orders, giving legal protection to women when they need it most.
- Involve women's groups in planning and monitoring of infrastructure and services like lighting or transport as part of a commitment to safer public spaces for all.

3

Will You Invest in Well-Planned Quality Public Services?

Over recent years many public and community services were cut to skeleton levels. This is no longer sustainable. To build a more equal society, we need to plan for the long term and reinvest in the services which so many rely on to support their full participation in society.

Rising to the Challenge

- With 98,000 people on the housing waiting list, many of them women in poverty, investment in social housing and delivering on commitments to affordable housing and Traveller accommodation must be a priority.
- Promote equitable roll-out of high quality childcare, including flexible after-school services and childcare to support return to work or training.
- Consider lifting the recruitment embargo in public services, particularly for frontline staff.
- Join up thinking on transport services, including rural transport and school bus services, to ensure equal access to medical services, employment opportunities and social participation.

4

Will You Support Women's Health & Reproductive Rights?

NWCI are working with the HSE to improve health results for both women and men. This approach, called 'Gender Mainstreaming', has been successful in Sweden, Canada and the UK.

For Your Candidates

Care is a core issue as cuts to home help and respite compromise health and dignity and increase pressure on carers, most of them women. Women over 64 are still excluded from essential cancer screening services and inadequate health information is a concern for young women. NWCI continue to call for improved maternity and reproductive health, repeal of the 8th Amendment and regulation to decriminalise abortion and protect the life and health of women.

Rising to the Challenge

- Encourage local health services to engage with 'Gender Mainstreaming' tools, training and planning.
- Promote local access to health information, including on reproductive rights and ensure equal, timely and appropriate health screening services for women of all ages.
- Encourage local GPs and pharmacists to provide sufficient weekend cover to ensure access to emergency medication.
- Support and sustain residential, community, respite, and home care and advocate for the highest standards in quality and regulation of services.

5

Will You Promote Economic Independence for Women?

Economic challenges for men and women are quite different. Ireland has a pay gap of 13.9% and a third of women are in part-time work, often casual or low-paid. Unemployment remains high and 'activation' is not reaching everyone equally. Men are leaving the Live Register four times faster than women, employment for women under 35 is falling even as overall employment improves, and a majority of emigrants under 25 are women. Lone parents and women with disabilities face particular challenges in accessing quality employment and training. The legacy of past inequalities has left many older women living in poverty on severely reduced pensions and, without individualised social welfare payments, more women will continue to fall out of the system.

Rising to the Challenge

- Introduce Ethical and Transparent Procurement Policies to ensure that local councils only give

contracts to companies with good employment and gender equality standards.

- Insist on gender targets for activation initiatives and gender-equality training for staff and caseworkers.
- Ensure local community development projects, employment services and women's groups are given a strong voice not only in delivering activation initiatives but in shaping their direction, focus and approach.
- Support gender equality in our social protection system and the right of all workers to join a Union.
- Ensure local Education and Training Boards offer courses at flexible times and challenge gender-bias within training areas.

6

Will You Help Build Equal & Inclusive Communities?

Building equal and inclusive communities involves ensuring that communities are given the space to build a shared vision, and have their voices heard. Real inclusion is about enabling communities to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Public representatives must therefore commit to supporting community development, challenging racism, promoting equality and operating in a way that particularly empowers and includes marginalised groups.

Rising to the Challenge

- Ensure the Community Sector is given the voice, autonomy and resources to fully engage with local structures and people of all ages. Deliver a local strategy of supports across the life cycle.
- Actively implement key strategies including the National Women's Strategy and the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy.
- Challenge racism and promote initiatives at local level to promote intercultural dialogue and integration.
- Encourage wider engagement in cultural life, design inclusive, creative and accessible public spaces and ensure that the historical and current contribution of women is reflected in public art or monuments.

Women Rising in Europe

Women in Decision Making

The EU Parliament and Commission have proposed a temporary 40% quota for women in boardrooms of companies across Europe. Only 10.7% of seats on Irish boards are held by women. Greater diversity in decision making has been found to have a positive impact on company performance. MEPs should actively support this law.

Violence Against Women

The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence sets out powerful and practical measures to challenge violence against women. MEPs should press Ireland to sign and resource full implementation of its proposals when the Convention becomes European law. Ireland and the EU should also promote and implement UN resolution 1325 to support and protect women in situations of conflict.

Well-Planned Quality Public Services

Commitment to, consultation on and targets for high-quality, sustainable, public services, including childcare, transport, water and energy should be strengthened and deepened at EU and national level.

Women's Health and Reproductive Rights

The EU has an important role to play in promoting health standards including gender-aware planning in Health policy at a European and national level. The EU should also support women's health and human rights at a global level by supporting development aid for women, promoting gender at the UN and ensuring Trade Agreements support rather than undermine human rights.

Supporting Economic Independence for Women

The European Youth Guarantee is one of a number of recent EU initiatives focusing on 'activation'. However it is important that any projects designed to 'activate' people into work or training, are underpinned by clear quality standards, gender targets and an understanding of the different challenges faced by men and women in the labour market. MEPs should also support a Financial Transaction Tax and ensure funds generated are used to tackle economic inequality.

Equality and Social Inclusion

Much EU funding, including the European Social Fund, makes a high level commitment to Gender Mainstreaming, equality and social inclusion. However, this is not always followed through when it comes to budgets and projects on the ground. MEPs should demand gender monitoring and targets in all EU funded initiatives and ensure consistency in other areas of EU policy.

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Women Rising / A 2014 Manifesto from the NWCI

1 in 5

women have experienced violence from a partner.

13.9%

gender pay gap in Ireland

30%

gender equality target for political parties by 2016

40%

proposed gender equality target for Boards

4,000+

Irish women still travel to have abortions in the UK each year.

40,000

calls to Helplines on Violence Against Women each year.

52%

of women avoid certain areas for fear of violence.

98,000

are on the waiting list for social housing.