

1. What are the concrete steps your Government or organisation has taken to ensure the realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl? Please also elaborate on the impact these steps have had, where appropriate.

The Irish education system aims to provide all learners – male and female – with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy. Education is compulsory for both males and females from age 6 to 16 and all children are entitled to free, state-run primary and post-primary education.

In the 2014/15 academic year, females represented 49.5% of all students in fulltime education (48.7% of first level students, 50.3% of second level students, and 50.6% of third-level fulltime students were female). In the 2014/2015 school year, 131,206 females aged 15-19 years were in fulltime education, representing approximately 95% of females in this age cohort.

The rate of early school leaving for females has fallen from 8.1% in 2008 to 5.4% in 2015. The male rate of early school leaving has fallen from 14.7% to 8.4% over the same period.

The educational attainment rates for women in Ireland are higher than they are for men. For example, 82.5% of females aged 25-64 in Ireland have successfully completed at least upper secondary level compared to 77.0% of men. In addition, 58.6% of women aged 30-34 have successfully completed tertiary education compared to 45.1% of men.

2. Which measures would your Government or organisation propose and implement in order to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2030, taking into account goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other relevant SDGs?

While both males and females have access to the same range of subjects and courses, it is notable that females remain underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) type careers. Teachers, parents, students and industry all have a role to play in attracting more girls into these areas.

One of the key challenges for the education system in encouraging participation in STEM type courses and careers is increasing the numbers of girls taking certain STEM subjects at higher level in the final school exam. Increasing the uptake of higher level mathematics is particularly important in this regard and a range of initiatives have been introduced to encourage both males and females to take the higher level maths exam. The results are encouraging – the overall percentage taking the higher level paper has risen from 15.8% in 2011 to 27% in 2015. In addition, the number of girls presenting for the exam has increased by 86% between 2011 and 2015.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the national foundation for investment in scientific and engineering research, also plays a key role in promoting STEM type careers. Its Smart Futures programme is a Government-industry initiative that promotes STEM careers to post-primary students. Smartfutures.ie highlights the range of opportunities open to students that study STEM subjects at second and third level and includes a particular focus on female career profiles.

- 3. What are the challenges that *your Government or organisation* faces in implementing policies and programmes toward the realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl? Please elaborate on the nature of these challenges and the steps taken to address them.**

See answer to question 2 above.

- 4. In the view of your Government or organisation, what are the obstacles and barriers *faced by girls in particular* in effectively accessing education? Please elaborate on the nature of these obstacles, how they manifest in practice, and what steps have been taken to address them.**

See answer to question 2 above.

- 5. Does your Government or organisation have experience with the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators to assist in monitoring of equal enjoyment to the right to education by every girl and if so which have been used and why?**

The Department of Education and Skills in Ireland publishes annual statistical reports that include information on the retention rate of post-primary pupils by gender¹ and the destination of early school leavers by gender². The Central Statistics Office publishes data on the enrolment rates in full time education by single year of age for males and females³. Data on enrolments and new entrants to higher education by gender is also published by the Higher Education Authority⁴.

¹ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Retention-Rates-of-Pupils-in-Second-Level-Schools-2009-Cohort.pdf> (graph B, page 8)

² <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Early-Leavers-What-Next-2016-Report-.pdf> (table 1.2, page 12)

³ http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=EDA39&ProductID=DB_ED&Language=0

⁴ <http://www.heai.ie/node/1557>