



*School of Social Sciences and Philosophy Public Lecture*

## Positive Action Initiatives: Precedents, Lessons and Remedies

Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019

### **Background**

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy is pleased to invite you to a Public Lecture on “Positive Action Initiatives: Precedents, Lessons and Remedies”.

On 21 June 2019, Minister of State with special responsibility for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O’Connor, announced the opening of a call for applications to the Senior Academic Leadership Initiative (SALI), a targeted positive action initiative which aims to accelerate gender balance at senior positions in Irish higher education institutions. But what is Positive Action? Does Irish higher education need it? What are the arguments for and against targeted positive action? What other arenas in Irish social life have introduced positive action initiatives and what impact did they achieve? These are some of the questions that will be discussed and debated in this Public Lecture. The issue is not without controversy and different perspectives will be explored.

### **Public Event**

Thomas Davis Theatre (Room 2043), Arts Building, Trinity College Dublin

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 5.50pm      | Speaker group photograph   |
| 6.00-6.05pm | Opening by Chair, Professor Ivana Bacik <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Prof. Elaine Moriarty</li><li>➤ Prof. Alejandra Ramos</li><li>➤ Dr Lisa Keenan</li><li>➤ Prof. Adina Preda</li></ul> |
| 7pm         | Chair Comments/ Q & A session  |
| 7.30pm      | Event Ends   |

## **Event Chair**

### **Prof. Ivana Bacik, Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology (1996), School of Law**

Professor Ivana Bacik is a barrister, and teaches courses in Criminal law; Criminology; and Feminist Criminology at Trinity College Dublin. Prof. Bacik is also a Senator for Dublin University. Her research interests include criminal law and criminology, constitutional law, feminist theories and law, human rights and equality issues in law.

## **Speakers and talks overview**

### **“Gender specific positions: A game-changing moment in Irish Higher Education?”**

#### **Prof. Elaine Moriarty, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology**

The 2018 report of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Gender Equality Taskforce reported that on current estimates it could take 20 years to reach gender balance at professorial level in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), i.e. minimum 40% female professors. In order to accelerate gender equality in HEIs, the state has introduced a range of required gender focused measures, implementation of which is linked to HEIs' access to HEA block grant funding. This paper will specifically examine the 'Senior Academic Leadership Initiative', a targeted Positive Action to accelerate gender balance at senior positions in Irish HE which will create 45 women only professorships over 3 years across Irish HEIs. It will draw lessons from similar initiatives in other European HEIs particularly focusing on Gender Specific Positions, Gender Specific Competitions and Financial incentives for hiring women.

### **“The case for female role models in Economics”**

#### **Prof. Alejandra Ramos, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics**

Women are persistently under-represented at all levels in the economic profession. From the undergraduate to the full professor, we lose women at every step of the career ladder. In this presentation, I examine how the role models can help to attract and retain women in the profession. Nonetheless, under the current representation levels, this strategy can come at a productivity cost for the role models themselves. As a result, women's quotas need to be accompanied by policies to overcome these limitations.

### **“Positive Discrimination in Ireland – the case of the gender quota”**

#### **Dr Lisa Keenan, Teaching Fellow, Department of Political Science**

This talk will discuss one form of positive discrimination in political life, gender quotas. It will examine their usage globally, as well as analysing the arguments made by their supporters and their detractors. Finally, it will review the case of the candidate gender quota which came into effect at the 2016 general election due to the passage of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012.

This measure targets political parties directly, imposing a 30 percent gender quota at the candidate level, rising to 40 percent seven years later with a steep penalty – a loss of fifty percent of the party's state funding for the full parliamentary term – for any party failing to comply.

This quota is an example of a successful measure to address women's numeric underrepresentation: thanks to its introduction, the share of women in Dáil Éireann jumped to more than twenty percent for the first time in the parliament's history.

### **“What is affirmative action and what is it for?”**

**[Prof. Adina Preda](#), Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy**

Many debates about affirmative action proceed as though arguments for or against it apply to all policies suggested under this heading. But many different kinds of measures or policies can be used to pursue affirmative action and they have different advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, it is somewhat unclear what the goal of affirmative action is or should be: compensate for past discrimination, increase diversity, counteract ongoing discrimination and bias? My talk will suggest possible answers to these questions and the implications they might have for actual policies in different areas.

### **School of Social Sciences and Philosophy**

The School is at the forefront of research and teaching in Ireland across the disciplines of economics, philosophy, political science and sociology. All four departments are rated highly in international research evaluations and our academic staff include some of the leading scholars in Ireland. School students, staff and alumni play an important role in enhancing public debate and understanding of economic, political and social issues and the evolving challenges facing society.

**[www.tcd.ie/ssp](http://www.tcd.ie/ssp)**