

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001933/25
to the Commission
Lynn Boylan (The Left)
(14 May 2025)**

Subject: The Irish Marriage Bar and Directive 2006/54/EC

The Irish Marriage Bar required women who worked in the public sector to cease working once married. It was removed in 1973 for civil servants, and in 1974 for the wider public sector. When compelled to end employment, women received a ‘marriage gratuity’ of one month’s pay for each year worked. Consequently, the years they worked for the public sector would not be taken into account for the calculation of their pension rights. While civil servants were still entitled to a civil service pension, those who worked in the wider public service are not able to use their years worked to qualify for a Social Welfare Contributory Pension. No such disadvantage applies to male pensioners.

Directive 2006/54/EC sets down the principle of equal treatment between men and women in relation to, *inter alia*, occupational social security schemes. Although the Irish Marriage Bar predates this directive, the consequences of this institutionalised gender discrimination is still restricting the access of women to occupational social security schemes.

1. Has the Commission made any assessment of Ireland’s Marriage Bar and its consequences for gender equality?
2. Does Directive 2006/54/EC apply to decisions that predate that directive but which still have a discriminatory effect today?

Submitted: 14.5.2025

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(30 June 2025)**

The Commission recognises that the Irish Marriage Bar, which required women to leave public sector employment upon marriage and was lifted in 1973-1974 shortly after Ireland’s accession to the EU, was a measure that had clear negative consequences for women’s participation in the labour market and their pension entitlements.

As far as the occupational social security schemes that the Honourable Member refers to are concerned, Directive 2006/54/EC ⁽¹⁾, which codified earlier legislation including Directive 76/207/EEC on gender equality in access to employment and occupation (in force since 1976), applies to equal opportunities in access to the labour market.

The Irish ban lifted in 1973/74 would on substance not seem to be compatible with this legislation but is not covered by the application of the directive *ratione temporis*.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng>.