



Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Ireland

*Assessing progress
in key policy areas
of the strategy*

Prepared by:
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Central Statistics Office
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
HAP	Housing Assistance Payment
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HRC	Habitual Residence Condition
HSE	Health Services Executive
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTHAP	National Traveller Health Action Plan
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
SICAP	Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There have been some welcome positive policy developments in the struggle to advance Traveller and Roma human rights since 2017. These include formal State acknowledgment of Traveller ethnicity in March 2017; the publication of a new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) in June 2017; and the acknowledgment by the State of the need to provide robust data disaggregated by ethnicity which builds on the Census question on ethnicity. This is reflected in the initial work of a cross-Departmental working group on ethnic equality monitoring, in line with NTRIS Action 146. Chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality and comprised members of Traveller/Roma organisations and Statutory representatives nominated by the National NTRIS Steering Group, the group sought to develop a methodology for introducing ethnic equality monitoring into routine administrative datasets that would monitor outcomes for Travellers and Roma with regard to access to and participation in public services. The working group commenced a national mapping exercise on ethnic data collection and in doing so, each government department was asked to report on their data collection practices. This work has since ceased as the ESRI¹ have been commissioned by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration to conduct a mapping and analysis of relevant data held by public bodies. Mapping will provide a clear indication of ethnic current data collection practices by public bodies and government departments it will also identify where gaps exist.

Some State agencies have also taken positive action measures, for example, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency will implement an education initiative to assist retention of Traveller and Roma children in the education system. In line with Action 17 in NTRIS, this interdepartmental initiative will be rolled out in four pilot locations across the country and focuses on attendance, participation and retention of Traveller and Roma children in education. Additionally, funding has been made available through the Dormant Accounts Fund to support dedicated Roma employment initiatives for a two-year period. The total funding available is 500,000 EUR and will be divided into lots of between 50,000 and 75,000 EUR per initiative.

While both are welcome developments, long-term sustainable initiatives are required in order ensure positive outcomes for Travellers and Roma.

Across the four domains of employment, education, accommodation, and health, the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma has not seen any tangible improvement and the inequality gap between Travellers and Roma, and the majority population remains entrenched. In the domain of accommodation, in particular, the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma has deteriorated, within the wider Irish context of an unprecedented housing and homeless crisis.

There is an intrinsic link between poor outcomes in education and poor outcomes in employment. Poor outcomes in the domains of health and accommodation have a considerable impact on outcomes in education and employment. Without concerted cross-Government, targeted measures to address the specific needs of Travellers and Roma across each of these domains, the significant inequality gap between Travellers and Roma and the majority population, will persist. The recent implementation of the NTRIS action 73 – to develop a National Traveller Health Action Plan – with the concomitant organisation of four regional consultations is welcomed.

¹ The Economic and Social Research Institute works towards a national vision of informed policy for a better Ireland.

Employment

The persistent employment gap between Travellers and Roma and the general population attests to the lack of progress in increasing access to employment and related supports, for Travellers and Roma. Census 2016 indicates that the unemployment rate for Travellers is six times that of the general population.

National employment strategies are insufficiently targeted to address persistently high levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities. In particular, there is a need for cross-Government action to address the persistently low levels of educational attainment of Traveller children and young people, in tandem with any targeted measures to increase access to vocational training and employment. Without concerted efforts to address the poor educational outcomes experienced by Travellers, in tandem with targeted employment-related training and services, Travellers will continue to experience lower outcomes in regard to accessing and participating in vocational training and employment, than the majority population.

For many Roma, access to State funded employment-related services and supports can be severely curtailed due to the impact of implementation of European Directive 2004/38 on the freedom of movement and residence and the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC).

Housing and essential public services

The unprecedented nature of the worsening housing and homeless crisis in Ireland presents the starkest backdrop to the housing situation for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The Traveller and Roma communities, already significantly marginalised in terms of access to adequate housing and related supports, as well as experiencing high levels of discrimination in access to housing, have become increasingly marginal in current policy focus and political debate on the housing and homeless crisis.

Local authorities are significantly under-spending in regard to the provision of Traveller accommodation and thus failing to achieve even half of their targeted provision at present. Travellers and Roma are experiencing significant levels of over-crowding and sub-standard accommodation, and Travellers continue to be significantly over-represented in the homeless population.

The absence of any actions in the NTRIS relating to addressing the housing and accommodation needs of Roma is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

Travellers and Roma continue to experience unacceptably poor health outcomes in comparison to the majority population, with high levels of discrimination continuing to underscore their experiences of access to healthcare and the quality of care received.

Roma without financial means continue to be denied access to medical and healthcare benefits, such as a medical card, due to the restrictions of statutory regulatory conditions. The Habitual Residence Condition continues to pose a barrier to many Roma in seeking access to state welfare and health related benefits as well as certain statutory funded services such as domestic violence refuges.

There is an urgent need for the publication and implementation of the forthcoming National Traveller Health Action Plan and for a new institutional mechanism, resourced and with dedicated staff, under the aegis of the Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE) to drive the implementation of the Plan, as the principal statutory structure to develop and drive measures to improve Traveller health outcomes (the Traveller Health Advisory Committee) has been dormant since 2012. This renewed institutional mechanism must also have political accountability.

Education

The entrenched education inequality gap, between Traveller children and their settled peers, persists, with levels of educational attainment for Traveller children remaining unacceptably low. The majority of primary level educational supports that had been in place for Travellers were withdrawn following the austerity budget of 2011 and have not been reinstated. Between 2008 and 2012, State funding to Traveller-specific educational supports was reduced by 86.6 per cent. Vital education supports have not been reinstated, despite significant improvements in the Irish economy.

Much of the 2006 Traveller Education Strategy has yet to be implemented and the advisory forum to oversee the implementation of the Strategy has not convened since 2016. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the Education Strategy, with the involvement of Traveller and Roma stakeholders as Government committed to in the NTRIS action 11. Shockingly, and most disappointingly, we have witnessed a regression in education under the auspices of NTRIS whereby the Department of Education and Skills have now formally disbanded the National Traveller Education Advisory Forum in favour of a NTRIS working group established to advance a specific NTRIS action (17).

A positive development in the domain of education, is the forthcoming legislation to include Traveller culture and history into the school curriculum. There is cross-party support for the Traveller Culture Education Bill, which holds potential to create a more inclusive school environment that celebrates and welcomes Traveller diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Although we recognise Roma as an umbrella term, throughout this report we refer to 'Travellers' and 'Roma', to clearly identify the distinct situation, identity, and experience of the Roma and Traveller² communities in Ireland. There are approximately 35,000 Irish Travellers living in Ireland.³ There are between 4,000 and 5,000 people living in Ireland who identify as Roma.⁴

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS) is the national strategy for Roma and Traveller inclusion and the first national policy framework to explicitly include Roma as a key focus.⁵ NTRIS strategic objectives fall within the remit of a number of governmental departments, with overall implementation driven by the Department of Justice and Equality. The strategy has the primary aim to improve the lives of Travellers and Roma and encompasses ten themes, comprising a total of 149 specific actions, covering the domains of: cultural identity; education; employment and the Traveller economy; children and youth; health; gender equality; anti-discrimination and equality; accommodation; Traveller and Roma communities; and public services. The steering group to drive implementation of the NTRIS comprises: ten government departments; five state agencies; and eleven NGOs. The strategy is ambitious and holds significant potential to improve the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

The NTRIS Steering Group, chaired by the Minister of State for Equality, Immigration, and Integration, was established by the Department of Justice and Equality in April 2015. With a mandate to monitor the implementation and progress of NTRIS, including fostering inter-Departmental and cross-sectoral working,⁶ the Steering Group includes officials from relevant government departments, as well as Traveller and Roma civil society organisations.

It has recently been agreed that the NTRIS Steering Group would establish a cross-working group to look at the gender specific actions in NTRIS and Traveller and Roma-specific actions in the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2017-2020).

The publication of the NTRIS is welcomed, however, there are a number of factors which will require attention if the potential of the Strategy, to improve the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in Ireland, is to be sufficiently realised. Key issues in this regard are:

- Resourcing of the Strategy: 1 million EUR was allocated for the implementation of the Strategy in 2017 (800,000 EUR for Traveller initiatives and 200,000 EUR for Roma initiatives). In 2017, the Steering Group was informed that no further monies would be available from the Department of Justice and Equality in 2018, and that the strategy would be implemented from existing funding allocations from other

² Travellers were formally recognised as a distinct minority ethnic group in Ireland, in 2017. This followed over thirty years of campaigning for this formal recognition.

³ Census 2016 enumerated 30,987 Travellers living in Ireland. This remains lower than the figure of 36,244 from the All Ireland Health Study; see Kelleher et al., *Our Geels All Ireland Traveller Health Study* (Dublin: University College Dublin and Department of Health and Children, 2010).

⁴ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality (2018). *Roma in Ireland – A National Needs Assessment*, 42.

The National Needs Assessment of Roma is based on interviews with 108 Roma respondents, who gave information on a further 491 household members; semi-structured interviews and focus groups throughout the country. This includes migrants and second and third generation Roma, many of whom are Irish citizens.

⁵ [Department of Justice and Equality, National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2017 – 2021.](#)

⁶ *Ibid.* 19.

relevant Departments. Although in 2018 Dormant Accounts Funding⁷ has become available to progress NTRIS action, however we note that this funding is 'once-off' and is not sustainable long-term.

- Strong leadership: the NTRIS Steering Group currently meets four times per annum, which is considered too infrequent to ensure momentum for the implementation of the Strategy. In addition, there is a need for increased administrative supports to the Steering Group, to ensure cross-departmental implementation of the Strategy.
- Strategy monitoring framework: the Strategy lacks a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework: critically, there is a need for a comprehensive set of outcome indicators to track progress.⁸
- Time-specific implementation: the absence of key implementation target dates against the majority of actions is of concern. The timeframe for the majority of actions is cited as "ongoing". In the most recent progress report on NTRIS, just 4 actions have specific implementation dates noted. A further 12 actions are cited as "completed", 13 actions have yet to commence and no progress information is given for 35 actions.⁹

The first RCM cycle report submitted outlines policy and legislative frameworks of relevance that are not the direct focus for this report, and it is not proposed to address these further in this document.¹⁰ However, one key driver identified that offers potential to advance improved outcomes for Travellers and Roma in accessing public services such as health, housing, education is the public-sector equality and human rights duty, introduced in 2014.¹¹ This duty places a statutory obligation on public bodies to: prohibit discrimination against, promote equality for, and protect the rights of, groups protected under equality legislation. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has an important role to play to ensure that public bodies discharge on their obligations under the Duty. It is important to note that to-date, there is little evidence that this legislative driver is being pushed to realise its potential in generating the traction required for greater equality of outcome in the delivery of key public services.

This monitoring report is based on data from the most up-to-date sources available, including: Census 2016; research reports conducted by the ESRI, based on in-depth analysis of data from the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) and 2011 Census, the QNHS, and SILC. The report draws on data provided by Government Departments, relating to the four thematic areas.

Research focusing on the specific experience, identity and situation of Roma and Travellers was sourced, including: the 2017 National Needs Assessment of Roma in Ireland; a 2018 research report by the ESRI: Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland; the 2017 Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland report; the Behaviour and Attitudes Survey among

⁷ The Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF) was established by legislation and enables unclaimed funds from accounts in credit institutions in Ireland to be used to support (1) the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged; (2) the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged.

⁸ Indicators have been identified in some instances; however, these were not developed in consultation with Traveller and Roma members of the Steering Group. Where indicators are identified, they are sporadic and not outcome-focused.

⁹ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. Progress Report (October 2018).

¹⁰ European Commission. Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Ireland: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy. Prepared by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (March 2018),

¹¹ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, S42.

Travellers 2017; as well as Government data sets focusing on outputs and outcomes for Travellers in areas such as education, health, housing and accommodation.

Focus Group consultations for this report were held with representatives of the Eastern Regional Traveller Health Network,¹² the National Traveller Health Network¹³ and Roma participants in the development of local National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy forums in Co. Kildare.¹⁴ In addition, data was provided by other NGO and statutory experts across the relevant thematic areas. We would like to acknowledge and thank the Traveller, Roma and other experts for their contributions to this report.

¹² This is a regional forum for the nine Traveller Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects in the Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow region. This regional forum represents approximately 26 per cent of the total national Traveller population.

¹³ This is a national forum for the twenty-five Traveller Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects in the country.

¹⁴ Organised as part of the development of a local Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy; groups were diverse in terms of age and gender.

EMPLOYMENT

The persistent employment gap between Travellers and Roma and the general population attests to the lack of progress in increasing access to employment and related supports for Travellers and Roma.

Data from Census 2016 indicates that there were 10,653 Travellers in the labour force in 2016. Of these, 8,541 were unemployed and 2,112 were employed: giving an unemployment rate of 80.2 per cent compared with 12.9 per cent for the general population.¹⁵ The data indicates that the labour force participation rate among Irish Travellers was 57 per cent compared with 61.4 per cent for non-Travellers. Regarding women's participation: 972 were at work while 2,938 were looking after the home, representing 30.4 per cent of Traveller women aged 15 or over. Almost 1 in 8 (11.3 per cent) of Travellers indicated they were unable to work due to a disability, nearly three times the equivalent rate for the general population (4.3 per cent). Available data on the situation for Roma indicates that approximately 16.7 per cent are in employment. 40 per cent indicated, however, that they have never been to school and expressed a desire to access adult educational training and education opportunities.¹⁶ Access to such opportunities, however, was impeded by a range of barriers, including: lack of information and support; language barriers; homelessness; and problems with social welfare.¹⁷

Without concerted efforts to address the poor educational outcomes experienced by Travellers, in tandem with targeted employment-related training and services, Travellers will continue to experience lower outcomes than the majority population in regard to accessing and participating in vocational training and employment. Low levels of educational attainment are, however, not the only factor that needs to be addressed through targeted measures. Discrimination also plays a significant role in regard to the employment gap between Travellers and the majority population. The data indicate that after taking educational attainment into account, Travellers are still nine times more likely than the settled population to experience unemployment, due to the role played by "prejudice and discrimination".¹⁸ The report concludes that given this context, reliance on mainstream employment measures to address this issue for the Traveller community is unlikely to be sufficient.¹⁹

For many Roma, access to state funded employment-related services and supports can be severely curtailed due to the impact of implementation of European Directive 2004/38 on the freedom of movement and residence and the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC).²⁰

In regard to the area of employment, the critical issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

¹⁵ [Census 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Central Statistics Office.](#)

¹⁶ [Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality \(2018\). Roma in Ireland: a National Needs Assessment.](#)

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

¹⁸ [Watson, D. Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. \(January 2017\). A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. 71: Research Series Number 56, 15.](#) The Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 86.

²⁰ European Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC is transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015 SI 548/2015. Establishing a right to reside in the State is necessary for a range of social supports, including social housing. A person must meet the habitual residence condition in order to access non-contributory benefits, including child benefit, job seekers allowance and access to many employment and training supports and access to women's refuges. A person cannot be deemed to be habitually resident unless it can be established that they have a right to reside in the State.

- national employment strategies are insufficiently targeted to address persistently high levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities,
- there is a need to review the impact of regulatory barriers preventing many Roma from accessing employment-related payments and services, and
- there is a need for cross-government action: between the Departments of: Education and Skills; the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation; and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, to address the persistently low levels of educational attainment of Traveller children and young people, in tandem with any targeted measures to increase access to vocational training and employment.

Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

While available employment services are effective in supporting access to the labour market for the majority population, they are ineffective in addressing Traveller and Roma employment needs. Consultations for this report indicate that recent labour market interventions to address unemployment during and after the recession had little or no impact in achieving positive outcomes for Travellers or Roma, and that employment services do not take account of the identity, situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in their delivery of these services and related supports. These services have a 'one-size-fits all' approach, which is insufficient to address the specific needs of Travellers and Roma, given the significant levels of unemployment in these communities.

Aside from the employment and training-related actions in the NTRIS, there is no national Traveller and Roma-specific training or employment strategy. The main Government strategy regarding access to the labour market and participation in employment is the Pathways to Work 2016-2020 strategy.²¹ Pathways to Work has the specific goal of reducing the amount of people on the live (unemployment) register, however, it does not identify any measures that specifically target Travellers, which are required due to: the significantly low levels of educational attainment for Travellers; and the significant over-representation of Travellers in the unemployment figures in comparison to the general population. The Pathways to Work strategy is complemented by the annual Action Plans for Jobs. The Action Plan for Jobs 2018 contains a specific section on removing barriers to participation, affording some focus on women, lone parents, and people with disabilities. There are no references, however, to Travellers and Roma and removing barriers to employment for these communities.²²

Targeted, cross-Government measures (involving the Departments of: Education and Skills; Business Enterprise and Innovation; and Employment Affairs and Social Protection) are required to address the underpinning factors that account for the employment gap between Travellers and the settled population. Educational disadvantage in the Traveller community is a key factor in this regard, given the strong link between Travellers experience of educational disadvantage and their significant under-representation in employment.

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) 2017-2021, contains 13 specific actions under the theme of employment. These actions are aimed at: increasing employment, training and apprenticeships opportunities for Travellers and Roma (4 actions); targeting positive public service recruitment to train and employ Travellers and Roma in public services (1 action); supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment

²¹ [Pathways To Work 2016-2020](#). Government of Ireland (2016)

²² [Action Plan for Jobs 2018](#). Government of Ireland.

opportunities for Traveller and Roma (4 actions); making links and progression routes between education, training, and employment (4 actions).

In addition, the strategy contains a further 4 actions, that relate to access to employment, under the themes of gender (1 action), education (2 actions), and children and youth (1 action). An employment sub-Committee of the NTRIS has been established and met for the first time in September 2018. A number of these actions, if implemented, hold much potential to improve equality outcomes for Travellers and Roma in the areas of vocational education and training, and employment. In particular, targeted measures to: increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training services; provide tailored supports for the long-term unemployed; and targeting Travellers and Roma to undertake internships in the civil and public service.

The October 2018 NTRIS progress report indicates that of these 17 actions: 14 are cited as being "on track"; 1 is cited as "completed"; and there is no information on the status of the remaining 2 actions. Of the 14 actions deemed to be "on track", detail on the actual progress made is only discernible for 6 actions. For example:

- action 27, to develop proposals for internships for Travellers and Roma in government departments and public sector organisations, is deemed to be 'on track', however, the October 2018 progress report notes that the relevant departments are only at a stage of negotiating how to "move to the stage where agreement will be achieved on how to make this happen."
- action 34, requires the Department of Education and Skills to develop a national policy on recognition of prior learning by 2018. While this action is deemed to be 'on track'. However, the October 2018 progress report notes that the Department of Education and Skills is "currently considering" the development of this policy.
- action 36: commits the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to ensuring that Travellers and Roma under the age of 25 who register as unemployed claimants of Jobseekers' payments will receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of registering, in line with commitments under the Youth Guarantee. This action is deemed to be 'on track' and the evidence provided for this, in the October 2018 progress report, refers to Ireland's 2018 country report to the European Commission on progress with implementing the Youth Guarantee. However, Ireland's 2018 report on the Youth Guarantee does not refer to, or provide any information on progress in regard to Travellers and Roma.²³

The sole action cited as completed, relates to the Department of Social Protection committing to "develop targeted initiatives to increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training services". The information provided on the completion of this action, however, appears to indicate that this action is still to be achieved, the report noting "in order to inform developments on this action, the Department has begun collating statistical information (to the extent that this is available) on current levels of participation by the Traveller and Roma communities in activation programmes".²⁴

The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is a national programme to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in local communities.²⁵ Pavee Point succeeded in getting Travellers and Roma named as target groups under SICAP and

²³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=YGcountryfiches&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=22&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0>

²⁴ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. October 2018 progress report.

²⁵ the SICAP is managed by local authorities through Local Community Development Committees.

an ethnic identifier included in the monitoring framework. However, the evidence reflects that programme implementers are working with low numbers of Travellers and Roma.²⁶

Under SICAP, the goal 2 thematic area relates to supporting people to access and remain in employment. During the period January to May 2018, SICAP programme implementers recorded that they have provided direct supports under this goal, to 246 Travellers and 42 Roma.²⁷ SICAP overall figures are not yet available to determine what percentage this represents of their overall totals but it is likely the Traveller and Roma supports represent less than 2 per cent of their overall client base.²⁸

Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

The NTRIS contains seventeen actions under the theme of anti-discrimination and equality: none is specifically focused on employment-related discrimination. NTRIS actions under the theme of employment, however, hold potential to address training and employment-related discrimination, if properly implemented. Action 24, for example, committing the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to “promote the availability of existing employment and training services to Roma and Travellers and to...provide tailored supports for (Traveller and Roma) long-term unemployed and for young people to build their confidence and prepare them for the workplace”. In its October 2018 progress report, this action is deemed to be ‘on-track’. The update notes that the Department is “currently considering and/or working on a number of proposals to promote the availability of existing employment and training services to the Traveller and Roma communities”, but gives no indication of work in regard to the development of “tailored supports” which is the most critical area of this action. There is no specified time frame indicated regarding the completion of this action, rather it is deemed to be ‘on-going’.

The 2017 figures from the Workplace Relations Commission,²⁹ indicate that in total 671 individual complaints of discrimination were made under the Employment Equality Acts 1999-2015: of those complaints, the protected ground of membership of the Traveller Community, was only cited 7 times.³⁰ Given the significant over-representation of Travellers as complainants under the Equal Status legislation (prohibiting discrimination in accessing goods and services) the very low number of complaints under the Employment Equality Acts is a reflection of the low numbers of Travellers in employment. In this regard, a 2017 report: “Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland”, examined work-related discrimination. The report notes “there were not enough Travellers in the workplace to estimate an effect (of discrimination) for this group”.³¹

²⁶ in 2016, for example, only 8 per cent of local community groups were working with Travellers and Travellers represented less than 3 per cent of the overall SICAP caseload.

²⁷ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021. October 2018 progress report.

²⁸ In their end of programme report (2015-2017) covering the three years of the first SICAP, Roma and Travellers were the target groups with the smallest representation: averaging 2 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively, of the Programme target groups across the three years of the first SICAP. See Pg. 29: <https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2018/09/SICAP-End-of-programme-report-2015-2017.pdf>

²⁹ The independent statutory body that adjudicates on employment related complaints, including issues that were the responsibility of the former Equality Tribunal.

³⁰ [Workplace Relations Commission annual Report \(2017\), 23.](#)

³¹ McGinnity, F. Grotti, R., Kenny, O., and Russell, H. (2017) “Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland?: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules”, 33. ESRI and the Irish Human rights and Equality Commission, Dublin.

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010, however, cites discrimination, as well as other factors: low educational attainment and lack of role models, as key barriers to employment for Travellers.³²

A consultation with Roma, living in County Kildare, highlighted their experience of discrimination in attempting to access employment. Roma attending the consultation noted that while they often had positive phone interviews with prospective employers, once they met with them in person, the offer of employment was rescinded. As a consequence, Roma participants noted having difficulty securing the most 'basic' of jobs, such as cleaning, and that as well as feeling compelled to hide their Roma identity, in some cases when their identity was found out, they were let go from the job.³³

Addressing barriers and disincentives of employment

Access to state funded employment-related services and supports can be severely curtailed for Roma due to the impact of implementation of the European Directive 2004/38 on the freedom of movement and residence and the HRC. Failure to meet HRC criteria means that many Roma are then not entitled to: some employment and training supports (such as Community Employment Schemes); Job Seekers Allowance; or child benefit.³⁴ In our consultation for this report, the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE),³⁵ noted that following the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection absorbing responsibility for the national Employment Service, it is more difficult for people to access employment services unless they in receipt of a social welfare payment and in particular a Jobseeker's payment. There have been repeated calls, from NGOs and human rights bodies at regional and international level, for a review of the impact of the HRC requirements, particularly in regard to Travellers and Roma. However, the NTRIS does not contain any action in regard to conducting such a review.

In the National Roma Needs Assessment, 48 per cent of respondents who had applied for social protection were unsuccessful. In this context, 17.6 per cent of adults reported begging as their source of income and 14 per cent reported having no income.³⁶

Traveller women also face barriers where they are not in receipt of a social welfare payment in their own right. Unless some flexibility is negotiated with their local Intreo³⁷ office, Traveller women may not be eligible to access certain employment services.

³² [Kelleher et al. \(2010\). All Ireland Traveller Health Study Our Geels](#). School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, University College Dublin.

³³ Consultation with Roma, Athy County Kildare, on behalf of the County Kildare LEADER Partnership, 13 October 2018.

³⁴ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit.

³⁵ The INOU, established in 1987, is a national NGO advocating on behalf of people who are unemployed. www.inou.ie

³⁶ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit. 78.

³⁷ Intreo is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports.

HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Access to housing continues to feature as a central challenge facing the Traveller and Roma communities and is intrinsically linked to ensuring Traveller and Roma experience good outcomes in regard to their physical and mental health, and their ability to access and participate in education, training and employment.

The unprecedented nature of the worsening housing and homeless crisis in Ireland³⁸ presents the starkest backdrop to the housing situation for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The Traveller and Roma communities, already significantly marginalised in terms of access to adequate housing and related supports, as well as high levels of experienced discrimination in access to housing, have become increasingly marginal in the current policy focus and political debate on the housing and homeless crisis. The shocking figures in regard to the number of families who are now homeless,³⁹ a number which shows no signs of diminishing, has become the main focus of political and media debate. In addition, the continuing rise of rents in the private rented sector, in tandem with a significant shortage of private rental accommodation in urban areas, has also focused the debate on the increasing vulnerability of larger swathes of the population to becoming homeless. A 2017 Behaviour and Attitudes survey with Travellers found that 62 per cent of Traveller respondents believed the situation in relation to accommodation was worse than five years ago.⁴⁰

Census 2016 data indicate:

- a 12 per cent increase in the numbers of Travellers living in temporary accommodation since Census 2011;
- that Travellers are seven times more likely than the general population, to be living in over-crowded dwellings,
- that Travellers comprised 9 per cent of those who were homeless on census night.⁴¹

A report issued by the ESRI in 2018, notes that while Travellers represent less than 1 per cent of the Irish population they constitute up 9 per cent of the homeless population.⁴²

According to annual figures produced by the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government, the number of Traveller families living on the side of the road increased from 536 in 2016, to 585 in 2017.⁴³ These families are living in conditions of serious hardship, with no access to running water, sanitation or electricity.

These data also indicate that 1,115 (10 per cent of all Traveller families) were 'sharing housing' an increase from 963 in 2016.⁴⁴ Census data confirms that Traveller families are

³⁸ In October 2018 the Dail (Irish Parliament) passed a motion to declare the current housing and homeless crisis a national emergency.

³⁹ In July 2014 13 families entered into homelessness in the Dublin region: the corresponding figure for July 2018 was 113. In July 2014 there were 344 homeless families in the state, the corresponding figure in 2018 was 1,778. Source: Focus Ireland : <https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/latest-figures-homelessness-ireland/>

⁴⁰ [Traveller Community National Survey \(July 2017\)](#). Prepared by: Behaviour & Attitudes for: The National Traveller Data Steering Group and the Community Foundation of Ireland.

⁴¹ Census 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion. Central Statistics Office. Dublin.

⁴² [Grotti, R. Russell, H. Fahey, E. and Maitre, B \(June 2018\). Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland.](#) the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the Economic and Social Research Institute, 62.

⁴³ 2017 Annual Estimate of Accommodation of Travellers in all categories of Accommodation. Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

disproportionately represented in the segment of the population living in overcrowded conditions, finding that “nearly two in five Irish Traveller households (39.1%) had more persons than rooms compared with less than six per cent of all households.”⁴⁵

The National Needs Assessment of Roma in Ireland found that 20 per cent of Roma were living in extreme poverty, in sub-standard accommodation, often without basic amenities (12.4 per cent did not have a kitchen, 9.6 per cent did not have a cooker, and 13.5 per cent did not have a fridge).⁴⁶ 44 per cent of the Roma respondents for the needs assessment, said they were living in overcrowded conditions. Akin to the situation for Travellers, the percentage of Roma living in overcrowded conditions is significantly greater than the comparative figure for the general population (less than 6 per cent). Roma living in overcrowded conditions reported having problems with rats, damp and sewerage problems. Living in unsafe and overcrowded accommodation generates a serious concern for safety and child welfare.

In regard to the area of accommodation, the critical issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

- the continued failure of local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities to provide adequate and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers,⁴⁷
- the significant levels of over-crowding and sub-standard accommodation experienced by Travellers and Roma,
- the significant over-representation of Travellers and Roma in the homeless population,
- the high levels of experienced discrimination against Travellers and Roma in accessing accommodation, particularly in the private rental sector, and
- the absence of any actions in the NTRIS relating to addressing the housing and accommodation needs of Roma.

The latter two issues above are discussed in more detail below.

Improving access to secure and affordable housing

Government measures to deliver adequate and culturally-specific housing to Travellers are failing. The 2016 Government action plan to address the housing and homeless crisis,⁴⁸ contains just one specific action relating to the Traveller community: a recommended review of local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) funding and expenditure for Traveller-specific accommodation since 2000.⁴⁹ This review was conducted and published in 2017. The headline findings are: the significant levels of under-spend in

⁴⁵ CSO (2016) Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8itseah/>

⁴⁶ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit.

⁴⁷ In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities (based in local authorities) have a statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. However, the lack of political will and the lack of incentives or sanctions in the legislation have resulted in local authorities failing to provide adequate accommodation for Travellers and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) and Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACC) are purely advisory bodies with no mandate to compel local authorities to comply with their obligations.

⁴⁸ (2016) [Rebuilding Ireland: Action plan on Housing and Homelessness](#). Government of Ireland

⁴⁹ The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 obliges housing authorities (based in local authorities) to assess the accommodation needs of Travellers and to prepare, adopt, and implement Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their geographical areas.

the Traveller-specific accommodation budgets of local authorities; and the consequent failure of local authorities to meet their targets in this area, year on year. The Review indicates that the level of local authority under spend is such, that between 2000 and 2017, expenditure fell from €135.2m, to €20.8m.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that between 2000 and 2004 local authorities achieved 90 per cent of their targeted provision regarding Traveller-specific accommodation, however, for the period 2014 to 2018, they had achieved only 39 per cent of their targeted provision by the end of 2016.⁵¹ A recent meeting of the Oireachtas Committee on Housing was informed that in the last year, nine local authorities (in Counties: Laois, Mayo, Monaghan, Westmeath, Longford, Wexford, Kildare, Galway and South Dublin County Council) had not drawn down any funds for Traveller accommodation, in the previous year.⁵² These figures are brought into sharp relief considering that Travellers are exceptionally reliant on local authority and other social housing: Census 2011 figures indicate that 49 per cent of Travellers live in local authority or other social housing.⁵³

The commitment in the NTRIS to an independent review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 is of utmost importance in the context of these data from local authorities, which would seem to indicate that this governing legislation is not fit for purpose.⁵⁴ It is to be welcomed that an independent review of the 1998 Act is currently underway, with the Minister of State for Housing announcing, in September 2018, that he expects this review to be completed within six months.⁵⁵

The newly launched National Land Development Agency aims to oversee the building of 150,000 homes on State owned land over the next twenty years.⁵⁶ Currently the aim is for a minimalist 10 per cent of this housing to be social housing. Given the failure of local authorities to deliver Traveller specific-accommodation, even when ring-fenced funding has been allocated, as noted above, it is unlikely that Traveller accommodation will figure strongly in these output. Particularly in a context of high levels of objections to housing Travellers from local residents and elected representatives.⁵⁷

The NTRIS contains 6 specific actions on housing and accommodation regarding the Traveller community. None of these actions refer to the Roma community: a significant gap in the strategy that must be addressed. Of the 6 housing actions in the Strategy, the

⁵⁰ [RSM PACEC Ltd. \(2017\). Review of Funding for Traveller-Specific Accommodation and the Implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes](#). 31. Housing Agency, 53-54 Mount Street Upper, Dublin 2.

⁵¹ RSM PACEC Ltd. (2017) op cit.

See also, a recent Parliamentary question on this matter: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2018-07-03/575/?highlight%5B0%5D=kilkenny>

⁵² <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2018/1106/1009076-travellers-housing-committee/>

⁵³ 2011 figures indicate 49 per cent of Travellers live in local authority or other social housing: from: Watson, D. et al (January 2017) op cit.

⁵⁴ CEDAW has expressed concern that the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act has not been revised to sanction local authorities who fail to meet their obligations: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ireland' (2017) CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7, para 48.

⁵⁵ Lorna Siggins Irish Times (September 12, 2018). English seeks solutions to Traveller accommodation crisis. Online edition, accessed October 8, 2018: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/english-seeks-solutions-to-traveller-accommodation-crisis-1.3627257>

⁵⁶ This Government agency has an immediate focus on managing the State's own lands to develop new homes, and regenerate under-utilised sites.

⁵⁷ See recent media coverage for example: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/council-rejects-attempt-to-keep-south-dublin-site-for-travellers-1.3656383>

most recent progress report indicates that 2 are deemed to be on track and no information is provided on the status of the remaining 4.⁵⁸

Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to access and maintain housing

Social welfare assistance (Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rent Supplement) is available to Travellers who meet the necessary criteria. However, this scheme relies heavily on the private sector accommodation, with the state making payments on behalf of individuals directly to the landlord. This creates significant barriers for Travellers accessing private rented accommodation, given the evidence regarding private landlords negative perceptions of renting to members of the Traveller community. A 2014 survey of 400 landlords found that, when asked about tenants that they would not rent to, 82 per cent indicated that they would not rent to members of the Traveller community.⁵⁹

The number of Traveller households renting from a private landlord fell by 19 per cent between 2011 and 2016.⁶⁰ While this drop can be partly explained by the increase in rents payable during that period, anecdotal evidence suggests that the current housing crisis having tipped the market in favour of landlords, has led to increased levels of discrimination against Travellers when landlords are choosing from available tenants. A 2018 report on discrimination and inequality in housing in Ireland, which draws from national data sets, would appear to support this anecdotal evidence. The report found that Travellers experience the highest levels of discrimination in accessing housing (from among seven protected grounds in equality legislation) and are nine times more likely than other White Irish respondents to experience discrimination in access to housing.⁶¹

People who get accommodation under the HAP scheme⁶² are immediately removed from the social housing list.⁶³ Given the volatility of the rental market, coupled with Travellers reporting high levels of discrimination from landlords, Travellers given notice to quit from HAP-assisted housing, could find themselves both out of the rental market and off social housing lists. This makes this housing option particularly precarious for Travellers.

For Roma without financial means, many are excluded from social housing and homeless accommodation and welfare housing supports due to regulatory restrictions, in particular

⁵⁸ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021), progress report October 2018.

⁵⁹ [DKM Consultants and Red C \(October 2014\). Private Rented Sector Survey Findings: Tenants, Landlords & Estate Agents](#). Prepared for the Prepared for The Housing Agency/ PRTB.

⁶⁰ According to Census 2016 figures 1,835 Traveller households were renting from a private landlord in 2016. The corresponding figure was 2,257 in 2011.

⁶¹ Grotti et al. (2018) op cit. The seven protected grounds examined were: gender; age; nationality/race/ethnicity; family status; disability; religion; and membership of the Traveller community.

⁶² The Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) is a form of social housing support whereby local authorities can provide housing assistance for households who qualify for social housing support, such as Rent Supplement. To qualify for HAP, a household must be qualified for social housing support by their local authority, which means the household must qualify to go on the local authority housing waiting list.

Under HAP, local authorities will make a monthly payment to a landlord, on a HAP tenant's behalf. The HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority. This 'rent contribution' is based on the household income.

⁶³ Local authorities (or *housing authorities*) are the main providers of social housing for people who cannot afford to buy their own homes. Local authority housing allocation is managed by each local authority in alignment with Social Housing Assessment Regulations. Housing is allocated according to eligibility and need and a person can only apply for housing in one local authority region. Rents are based on the household's ability to pay.

the HRC and interpretation by local authorities of the Departmental Circular 41/2012.⁶⁴ Roma also face high levels of discrimination in attempting to access both social housing and private rented accommodation. The Roma needs assessment found that the highest rates of discrimination experienced by Roma were in regard to accessing accommodation (93 per cent): 66.3 per cent of the respondents reported feeling discriminated against by a landlord or local authority.⁶⁵

Fight against discrimination, residential segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in housing

Travellers continue to experience high levels of discrimination in accessing private rented accommodation and social housing. The 2017 Behaviour and Attitudes survey of Travellers found that 25 per cent said they had experienced discrimination by a housing authority in the previous twelve months. In addition, 16 per cent said they had experienced discrimination, in the previous twelve months, from other residents where they were living.⁶⁶

It is difficult to ascertain how many discrimination complaints made by Travellers, under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, relate to accessing housing. A 2018 report prepared by the Oireachtas (Parliament) research library, notes that "the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) estimates that in 2017 there were 15 cases under the Equal Status Act which cited both membership of the Traveller community and accommodation".⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that this information was obtained through email correspondence between the researcher and the WRC, something that serves to further illustrate the lack of available, robust disaggregated data on discrimination against Travellers and Roma.

The Review of Funding for Traveller-Specific Accommodation, 2017, highlighted that housing planning procedures are magnifying, rather than eliminating, systemic racism in the provision of housing. The review notes that objections from local residents from the majority population, and consequent political pressure exerted by their elected representatives, can delay the planning process, sometimes for years. This is having a direct impact on the achievement of local authority targets.⁶⁸

Trespass legislation continues to have a negative and discriminatory impact on Travellers. The first cycle report submitted, outlines the specific issues in regard to forced evictions and the legislative and regulatory instruments that have, in effect, criminalised the practice of nomadism, an important aspect of the ethnic identity of the Traveller community.⁶⁹ In 2016 the European Social Committee of Social Rights found Ireland to be in breach of Article 16 of the European Social Charter on the grounds that there are insufficient sites, that sites are sub-standard and there are inadequate safeguards for Travellers threatened with evictions.⁷⁰

A further concern is an apparent policy approach to under-deliver on Traveller-specific accommodation (that is properly serviced halting sites and group housing) and to over-

⁶⁴ housing.gov.ie/housing-412012-access-social-housing-supports-non-irish

⁶⁵ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit, 52.

⁶⁶ Traveller Community National Survey (July 2017). Op cit, 87.

⁶⁷ [Visser, A. \(October 2018\) Spotlight: Traveller Accommodation: The challenges of implementation. Oireachtas Library & Research Service.](#)

⁶⁸ RSM PACEC Ltd. (2017). Op cit, 10.

⁶⁹ European Commission. Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Ireland: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy. Prepared by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (March 2018), 16 and 17.

⁷⁰ ERRC v Ireland (Complaint no. 100/2013).

deliver on less culturally-focused options such as standard housing.⁷¹ Twenty-three years ago, it was recommended that 3,100 new units of both Traveller specific and standard housing were required by the year 2000.⁷² Up to 2017, only 982 of the proposed 2,200 Traveller specific accommodation has been delivered, while four times the target for housing was delivered in the same period. In tandem with this, living conditions on many Traveller halting sites, where 982 Traveller families live, are often well below standard. Some are termed 'basic service sites' where people may only have access to one cold-water tap, a portaloo (mobile toilet) and no proper access to washing facilities. These sites are often without access to play areas for children and illegal dumping can often be an issue, as can other environmental concerns raising health and safety issues.

Traveller representative organisations continue to raise Traveller and Roma accommodation and housing concerns through: accommodation workers, Primary Healthcare Workers, or Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCs). The latter are tasked with overseeing the development of Traveller Accommodation Programmes and mitigating adverse accommodation issues, however, these Committees have no power to enforce compliance. In addition, they do not meet regularly and they sometimes do not have Traveller representatives. In reality, therefore, complaints are dealt with on a one-to-one basis and contingent on individual staff within local authorities.

⁷¹ RSM PACEC Ltd. (2017)

⁷² [Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community 1995](#). Department of Equality and Law Reform.

IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

Travellers and Roma continue to experience unacceptably poor health outcomes in comparison to the majority population. The All Ireland Traveller Health Study, of 2011, found that: life expectancy for Traveller men is 15.1 years, and for Traveller women 11.5 years, less than that of their counterparts in the majority population; the infant mortality rate in the Traveller community is over three times that of the majority population (14 per 1,000 live births, compared to 3.9 per cent); and the suicide rate among male Travellers is six times higher than their counterparts in the majority population and accounts for a staggering 11 per cent of all Traveller deaths.⁷³

Responding to the National Roma Needs Assessment, 51.3 per cent of Roma reported more than 14 days of the previous month when their mental health was not good; and 33.3 per cent said that their daily activities had been interrupted by mental health difficulties in all of the preceding 30 days.⁷⁴ Comparably, in the All Ireland Traveller Health Study⁷⁵ 11.9 per cent of Traveller respondents reported that their daily activities had been interrupted by mental health difficulties in all of the preceding 30 days. The analysis shows that Travellers experience discrimination and bereavement, which negatively influence their mental health. This study shows that Travellers experience discrimination and bereavement, which negatively influence their mental health.

High levels of discrimination continue to underscore the experiences of Travellers and Roma attempting to access healthcare services. Current data indicate that 70.5 per cent of Roma report experiencing discrimination in accessing health services, with women more likely than men to report feeling discriminated against.⁷⁶ Over 40 per cent of Travellers reported that they were not always treated with dignity and respect when accessing health services and 66.7 per cent of service providers believe that Travellers experience discrimination in their use of health services. Only 41 per cent of Travellers had complete trust in health professionals compared to 82 per cent of the national population.⁷⁷

Roma without financial means continue to be denied access to medical and healthcare benefits, such as a medical card, due to the restrictions of statutory regulatory conditions.⁷⁸ The Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) continues to pose a barrier to many Roma seeking to access state welfare and health related benefits as well as certain statutory funded services such as domestic violence refuges. The impact of these regulatory barriers was noted in the findings of the National Roma Needs Assessment with 39 per cent of respondents reporting that they do not have a medical card.⁷⁹

Action 73 in the NTRIS commits the Health Service Executive (HSE) to development of "a detailed action plan, based on the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, to address the specific health needs of Travellers, using a social determinants approach." As a precursor to development of this National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) a discussion paper, setting out a draft framework for the NTHAP, was developed by the HSE Social Inclusion Unit and circulated for discussion at four regional consultative meetings

⁷³ Kelleher et al. (2010). Op cit.

⁷⁴ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit, 96.

⁷⁵ McGorrian, C., Hamid, N.A., Fitzpatrick, P., Daly, L., Malone, K.M. and Kelleher, C., 2013. Frequent mental distress (FMD) in Irish Travellers: discrimination and bereavement negatively influence mental health in the All Ireland Traveller Health Study. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 50(4), pp.559-578.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 53.

⁷⁷ Kelleher et al. (2010) op cit.

⁷⁸ If a person does not have any income [that is no official "means" proven by an employment or social welfare record] they cannot be means tested for a medical card.

⁷⁹ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018) op cit, 97.

with stakeholders (conducted in June 2018). The proposed framework to drive implementation of the NTHAP will include the establishment of a new agency: the Planning Advisory body for Traveller Health (PATH).

In regard to the addressing the health needs of Travellers and Roma, the critical issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

- The forthcoming National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) must be approved by Government and ring-fenced funding allocated to ensure its implementation,
- The proposed institutional mechanism to drive the implementation of the NTHAP, the Planning Advisory body for Traveller Health (PATH), needs to be established as a matter of priority, with dedicated staff and operating under the joint remit of the Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE).
- There is need for a dedicated Department of Health and HSE lead, at senior level, with specific responsibility for Traveller and Roma health. This is particularly necessary given the current situation whereby the responsibility for Traveller and Roma health, at national level, resides with the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, rather than being more centralised within the HSE and Department of Health. It is also the case that a dedicated lead exists (within the HSE Social Inclusion Unit) for homelessness and addiction.
- Adequate resourcing to Traveller and Roma representative organisations is needed to provide targeted, culturally appropriate health promotion, prevention and care services to improve health outcomes for Travellers and Roma. Specific attention is needed in the areas of: mental health, suicide prevention, child and maternal health and sexual and reproductive health services.

Ensuring equal access to public health care services

The capacity of Roma individuals and families to access primary care services continues to be significantly curtailed due to the afore-mentioned limitations imposed by statutory regulations governing access to medical and health care benefits. A recommendation in the NTRIS, that the HSE would review the legislative and policy restrictions preventing Roma with no income from accessing a medical card, has not yet commenced.⁸⁰

There is a lack of impetus in regard to other key policy and service development drivers being pursued or funded. Key issues in this regard are as follows:

- the principal statutory structure to develop and drive measures to improve Traveller health outcomes (the Traveller Health Advisory Committee) has not been convened since 2012, despite commitments by the current Minister for Health to re-establish the forum in the first quarter of 2018; and
- despite the clear evidence of major health inequalities in the Traveller community⁸¹ since 2008, no additional development funding has been allocated to Traveller health-including in the most recent budget.

In May 2018, the Health Service Executive (HSE) published the outcome of four regional consultations to support the development of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP).⁸² This report notes widespread concern that the NTHAP must be allocated

⁸⁰ National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2017-2021. Progress Report October 2018.

⁸¹ See for example, Kelleher et al. (2010). Op cit.

⁸² National Traveller Health Action Plan: Summary Report of Regional Consultative Meetings. (May 2018). Prepared for the HSE National Social Inclusion Office.

sufficient resources to ensure its implementation and that responsibility for the implementation of the Plan should be more mainstreamed within the Health Service Executive.⁸³ Currently, Traveller health remains compartmentalised within the National Social Inclusion Office, under the aegis of the Primary Care Directorate of the HSE. This office also has responsibility for a range of other priority areas including: homelessness; drugs and alcohol; refugees; migrants; LGBTQI; and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Many of these areas are greater political priorities; or have a dedicated HSE senior level manager with responsibility. Each has been allocated an increase in budget, this has not been the case in regard to Traveller health.⁸⁴

The outcome of the NTHAP consultation also stressed the importance of a cross-government approach to addressing health inequalities for Travellers. A key issue in this regard, is the significant overlap between poor Traveller health outcomes and discrimination in regard to the provision of housing and education. Without such a joined-up approach by government to addressing these key social determinants of health, Travellers and Roma will continue to experience significantly poorer health outcomes in comparison to the rest of the population.

The NTRIS contains 35 actions under the theme of 'health'. These include a range of both targeted measures and measures aimed to improving equality outcomes in regard to the provision of universal healthcare services. Of these 35 actions, six actions are cited as completed and seven have yet to commence. Of the remaining 22, there are no expected dates for implementation noted (9 of these actions are cited as being "on-going").

While we welcome the progress being made under the key action 73, development of the NTHAP, there is a concern at the lack of progress regarding the implementation of a number of other key health actions in the NTRIS. The October 2018 progress report on the NTRIS indicates the following in this regard:

- Action 74: commits the Department of Health and the HSE to "review the existing arrangements for engagement between them and Traveller representative organisations with a view to agreeing improvements to the current arrangements". There is no committed date for implementation of this action in the NTRIS. To-date, the process of engagement has been through the National Traveller Health Advisory Committee, which has been in abeyance since October 2012, and the HSE National Traveller Health Advisory Forum, which has limited power.⁸⁵
- Action 69: commits the HSE to review the legislative and policy restrictions that impact on the provision of medical cards for Roma with no income. This action has yet to be commenced and no information is provided on the delay.
- Action 77: commits the HSE, in conjunction with the Education authorities and local Traveller organisations, to examine how primary healthcare programme workers can access and receive accreditation for their work so as to improve employment prospects for members of the Traveller and Roma communities who are employed on these programmes. This action has not yet commenced and no information is provided on the delay.

Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

There is clear evidence of institutional discrimination against Travellers in the health care sector. This is evidenced in the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study which documented

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 7.

⁸⁵ The NTHAF advises the National Social Inclusion Steering Group (HSE).

134 excess Traveller deaths per year.⁸⁶ Travellers die from the same causes of death as the general population (cancer; cardio vascular and respiratory disease) but in greater numbers, at all ages. Culturally appropriate, inclusive, healthcare services, are vital to ensure Travellers and Roma feel confident to access the healthcare they require. This includes appropriate mental health services

The National Roma Needs Assessment notes: the importance of interpreters to overcome language barriers; the importance of building trust with Roma to empower them to access services; and the need for trained Roma healthcare workers to advocate for Roma to access healthcare.⁸⁷ Culturally-specific healthcare programmes and initiatives are underdeveloped in regard to the Roma community. There is a small cluster of statutory funded Roma-specific health programmes such as: the Roma Health Project operated by the HSE in the South East of Ireland;⁸⁸ and some provision of free GP services (mostly funded by the HSE).⁸⁹ The limited number and geographical availability of such services, however, is not sufficient to address the health needs of the Roma community as suggested by the Commission in its 2016⁹⁰ assessment of NTRIS:

"A mainstreamed approach is sufficient when outcomes are identical for all components of the target groups; when evidence shows a clear gap between the situation of Roma and Travellers versus the rest of society (e.g. regarding their health and housing situation), policies should be adjusted and specific measures should also be developed." (European Commission Assessment of Ireland, June 2016)

As the Commission notes, targeted initiatives like this are necessary given the significant health inequality gap that exists between Travellers and Roma and the majority population and in order to ensure access to mainstream services. Such targeted approaches, however, should complement the availability of accessibly mainstream healthcare services to ensure positive outcomes for Travellers and Roma as a particularly vulnerable group.

A model of providing culturally appropriate healthcare supports is in place in relation to the Traveller community. There are currently over 25 dedicated Traveller Primary Health Care Projects throughout the country and up to 11 million EUR has been allocated to these initiatives. These have been largely supported by Traveller organisations at local and national levels and have been successful initiatives.⁹¹ However, this infrastructure is under strain, as there has been no additional funding or new developments for these projects since 2008. In fact, throughout Austerity there were annual cuts to these services.

There is a need to properly resource the Traveller Primary Health Care Projects (PHCPs) and to replicate this service for the Roma community. Such an approach would not only improve Roma access to healthcare, it would also foster and develop the leadership of Roma in delivering primary healthcare supports in their own community. Targeted measures such as PHCPs has demonstrated to be an effective approach in bridging the gap between a community experiencing high health inequalities and a health service

⁸⁶ Kelleher et al (2010) op cit.

⁸⁷ There are approximately 200 Traveller Healthcare Workers involved in the Traveler Healthcare Programme

⁸⁸ This service is delivered by the Health Service Executive Social Inclusion South East Community Healthcare and operates in Counties Wexford and Waterford.

⁸⁹ For example, Tallaght Roma Integration Project (TRIP), the Capuchin Centre and Crosscare in Dublin, and the Low Threshold Clinic in Limerick

⁹⁰ COM (2016) 424, 27 June 2016

⁹¹ The Traveller primary health care model has been recognised by the World Health Organisation and the European Commission as a model of good practice.

unable to reach and engage that community effectively in health service provision. This approach has also been proven internationally as an effective method of engaging and including ethnic minorities in health service provision.

There are welcome recommendations in the NTRIS in regard to the provision of culturally appropriate health services, such as a commitment by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to provide 10,000 EUR per year in educational bursaries, for ten Travellers/ Roma to be trained as social workers. However, other commitments in the NTRIS to support the development of culturally appropriate health services have yet to be commenced, such as: the provision of cultural awareness and anti-racism training for health professionals; and establishing pathways to employment in the health sector and support existing HSE employees.

Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma

The lack of ethnic equality monitoring, across all primary and acute health settings, to monitor equality of access, participation, and outcomes for Travellers and Roma, means a continued dearth of available data in regard to the specific needs of these communities and the responses to these needs generally, and in regard to specific groups within the Traveller and Roma communities (women, men, people with disabilities, children and young people, older people, and LGBTQ people).

The National Roma Needs Assessment indicates particular concerns relating to Roma women's lack of access to maternity-related healthcare and in regard to the vulnerability of Roma infants and children. Specifically, it was found that: 24 per cent of Roma women respondents had not accessed health services while pregnant (their first contact being when they were due to give birth); service providers noted multiple examples of children up to the age of thirteen who had never been seen a GP in Ireland⁹²; service providers identified new born babies living in houses with no heat, food or basic supplies; 37 per cent of Roma respondents reported that they did not have adequate supplies for the baby after birth.⁹³

The regional consultations for the forthcoming National Traveller Health Action Plan highlighted priorities including the need to address the health needs of specific groups of Travellers: mothers (perinatal and infant health, breast feeding); children and young people; Travellers with disabilities; older Travellers; and Travellers in prison. It also highlighted specific health concerns: infant mortality; substance misuse; domestic violence; sexual and reproductive health; and chronic conditions.⁹⁴

Data from Census 2016 indicate that Travellers continue to have higher rates of disability than the general population with almost 1 in 5 Travellers (19.2 per cent) categorised as having a disability in 2016, up from 17.5 per cent in 2011.⁹⁵

In addition to the 35 specific health actions in the NTRIS, there are also 7 specific actions relating to addressing the incidence of gender-based violence against Roma and Traveller women. There are no expected implementation dates noted for these actions (5 of the actions are cited as being "on-going"). In the latest progress report to the NTRIS, 4 actions are cited as being "on track" and no information is given in regard to the remaining 3

⁹² Regrettably, there is no collection of ethnic data in primary healthcare. Maternity services (maternal and new born) are starting to do this, but they have yet to publish such data and it is unclear if they plan to do so.

⁹³ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit, 98.

⁹⁴ National Traveller Health Action Plan: Summary Report of Regional Consultative Meetings. (May 2018) Op cit, 6,8,11,15 and 18.

⁹⁵ Census of Population 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Ethnicity, and Religion. CSO

actions.⁹⁶ The NTRIS also contains an important action (under the theme of “children and youth”) committing the Department of Health and HSE to “develop programmes to address mental health issues among children and youths in the Traveller and Roma communities”. In the October 2018 NTRIS progress report, no information is provided as to the status of this action and whether it has commenced.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2017-2021. Progress Report October 2018.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

EDUCATION

The entrenched education equality gap, between Traveller children and their settled peers, persists. Census 2016 data indicate that: 13.3 per cent of Traveller women are educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69.1 per cent of the general population; and 57.2 per cent of Traveller men are educated to at most Primary level, compared to 13.6 per cent of the general population.⁹⁸

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study found that Travellers do not achieve a full primary school education in sufficient numbers and that the relevance and appropriateness of the education system deserves scrutiny.⁹⁹

The situation regarding the Roma community indicates that in over 70 per cent of households children attend primary and post-primary school.¹⁰⁰ However, significant challenges to their participation in education were identified, with poverty and poor living conditions acting as significant barriers to children's educational attainment. In 25 per cent of households, it was reported that children have gone to school hungry and 57.5 per cent of families could not afford books and school uniforms. Inadequate English language and literacy supports, as well as parents' own experiences of discrimination in accessing education were identified as barriers to Roma children achieving good educational outcomes.¹⁰¹

In regard to the area of education, the critical issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

- the Traveller Education Strategy needs to be comprehensively reviewed, with the involvement of Traveller and Roma stakeholders,
- Traveller-specific Primary level educational supports, cut between 2008 and 2012, must be reinstated to assist in addressing the persistently low levels of educational attainment for Travellers, and
- there is a need for a targeted approach to improving Traveller education outcomes, with annual updated Action Plans for Education that include time-bound measures developed in consultation with Traveller and Roma.

Improving access to quality preschool education and care

Access to quality early childhood education can provide an essential educational foundation for Traveller and Roma children. Early childhood education prepares children for formal schooling and can identify children who might have additional learning needs and ensure they are linked to the necessary supports. For Roma children, access to early childhood education supports has the further positive impact of supporting English language development to enable their integration at primary-level education. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is a universal childcare programme with the stated objective of providing children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school.¹⁰² Ethnic data is not currently collected by the ECCE scheme

⁹⁸ [Central Statistics Office, 'Profile 8 - Irish Travellers Ethnicity and Religion – Census 2016 Results' \(Press Statement\) \(2017\).](#)

⁹⁹ [Kelleher et al \(2010\) op cit.](#)

¹⁰⁰ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Op cit.¹¹⁰.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 115.

¹⁰² Since September 2018 all children within the relevant age bracket are entitled to 76 weeks of the scheme (2 full academic years). The ECCE programme is provided for 3 hours per day, 5 days per week over 38 weeks per year (corresponding to the school academic year).

and therefore Traveller and Roma children's access, participation and outcomes in relation to the ECCE scheme remains unclear.

Action 12 of the NTRIS commits the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla (the Child and Family Agency, which operates within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) to promote the Early Childcare and Education (ECCE) pre-school scheme, in order to facilitate access for every Traveller and Roma child to free pre-school. This action is aimed to be completed in 2018. In the October 2018 progress report on the NTRIS, it is unclear what, if any progress has been made on this action. The report notes that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs "will monitor Traveller and Roma participation in the ECCE pre-school scheme on an on-going basis, to inform policy on inclusion. DCYA have been exploring the potential for gathering data on ECCE for the Traveller and Roma group."

Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

The 2017 ESRI report, *A Social Portrait of Irish Travellers*, noted that "The depth of educational disadvantage experienced by Travellers means that specific, targeted additional supports will be required in order for them to participate in mainstream education on equal terms."¹⁰³ Such supports were being provided within the main education system, however, the majority of primary-level educational supports that had been in place for Travellers were withdrawn following the austerity budget of 2011 and have not been reinstated. Between 2008 and 2012, State funding to Traveller-specific educational supports was reduced by 86.6 per cent.¹⁰⁴ This compares to an overall reduction in government spending, during the same period, of 4.3 per cent.¹⁰⁵ Specific supports for Traveller students, namely the Visiting Teacher Service and Resource Teachers for Travellers were withdrawn as part of government's austerity measures. The negative impact of these decisions on educational outcomes for Travellers was flagged in the 2015 review of the school completion programme.¹⁰⁶ In this report, one school Principal noted the following regarding the negative impact of these cuts: *"We would've seen that the Traveller pupils were starting to achieve, transfer well and be retained within the secondary school system. Now we see that since the Visiting Teacher for Traveller Service is gone, those children are going."*¹⁰⁷

The Primary Online Database (POD) has replaced the National School Annual Census as the definitive source of statistics on pupils in primary schools (since the 2016/2017 academic year). Figures from POD, for the 2016/17 academic year, indicate that 7,980 Travellers were enrolled at primary level. This is slightly lower than the data collected in previous years via the National School Annual Census. In the 2015/2016 Census there were 8,000 Traveller pupils in mainstream schools.¹⁰⁸ There is no publicly available disaggregated data on secondary school level intake. In addition, it appears that data protection concerns are being cited in regard to the lack of disaggregated data on the basis

¹⁰³ Watson, D. Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. (January 2017). Op cit, 76.

¹⁰⁴ [Harvey, B \(2013\): Travelling with Austerity: Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services. Dublin: Pavee Point.](#)

¹⁰⁵ Harvey, B (2013). Op cit.

¹⁰⁶ [Smyth, E., Banks, J., Whelan, A., Darmody, M., and McCoy, S. Review of the School Completion Programme \(October 2015\).](#) Research number 44: Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 13.

¹⁰⁸ Primary school online data report 2016-17, page 5, accessed October 11, 2018: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/POD-Interesting-Facts-First-Look-at-Data-from-POD-2016-2017.pdf>

of ethnicity, intake at secondary level, despite the fact that no such concerns are a barrier in terms of the availability of POD disaggregated data for primary level schools.

A Traveller Education Strategy was published in 2006¹⁰⁹ in tandem with the establishment of a National Traveller Education Advisory and Consultative Forum to advise on the implementation of the Strategy.¹¹⁰ The Consultative Forum has not met since 2016 and, despite calls from Traveller organisations for the Forum to be reconvened, the Department of Education and Skills formally disbanded the National Traveller Education Advisory Consultative Forum in favour of a NTRIS working group established to advance a specific NTRIS action (17) in December 2017, despite much of the Traveller Education Strategy remaining to be implemented. A National Traveller Education Advisory group needs to be established in the Department of Education and Skills to prioritise, give oversight, and secure accountability for the education needs of Traveller and Roma.

Under the NTRIS, the Department of Education and Skills is tasked with undertaking a review of the Traveller Education Strategy, to be completed in 2017. This review has yet to be undertaken, however, and in its recent update on progress to the NTRIS Steering Committee, the Department of Education and Skills advised that, "the vast majority of the recommendations (in the Education Strategy) have either been implemented, are currently being implemented, are no longer viable or have been overtaken by current events."¹¹¹ This assertion that the vast majority of the recommendations in the Strategy have been implemented is not convincing and is not credible given that NTRIS was only published in June 2017.

Support of secondary and higher education particularly for professions with high labour market demand

Detailed analysis of census 2011 data indicates that there is a significant difference between the age at which formal education ceases for Traveller children in comparison to the majority population. The data indicate that 91 per cent of Travellers over the age of 25 had left school at age 16 or younger, compared to 25 per cent of the corresponding cohort from the majority population.¹¹²

Further education and training programmes (provided through Youthreach and Community Education and Training Centres)¹¹³ are particularly targeted to educationally disadvantaged young people, including early school leavers, and therefore, are important providers of education and vocational training for Traveller and Roma young people. It is not possible, however, to ascertain educational and training outcomes for Travellers and Roma from further education and training provision, as the data are not publicly available. This represents a significant gap in information to adequately develop policy in this area of educational provision.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ [Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy \(2006\)](#). Department of Education and Skills.

¹¹⁰ This forum is chaired by the Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Education and Skills.

¹¹¹ National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020: implementation progress report October 2018.

¹¹² Watson, D. Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. (January 2017). Op cit,29.

¹¹³ Further education and training provision is funded through regional Education and Training Boards, which operate under the remit of the statutory agency Solas (a state agency under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills).

¹¹⁴ The only available data regarding outcomes for Travellers accessing vocational education and training centres come from a 2007 report (WRC Social and Economic Consultants(2007). [Measure Study of Early School Leavers – Youthreach and Travellers measure 11b of ERHDOP Implemented by the Department of Education and Science](#). The Equality Authority, Dublin.). At this time, separate Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) existed in tandem to Youthreach centres (these STTCs have since been phased out). The data

Action 10, of the NTRIS commits the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, to “develop proactive, early intervention education welfare supports to promote and support Traveller and Roma attendance, participation and engagement with the education system and retention to the Leaving Certificate or equivalent.” The target completion date for the action is 2010.

Furthermore, the Department of Education and Skills Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 contains only one action in relation to Travellers, that is to, “increase the number of Travellers in Higher Education: 80 from a current figure 35 by 2019” (p. 28). Given the lack of retention of Travellers beyond junior certificate level, for example, among Traveller females, just 13.3 per cent were educated to upper secondary level or above, compared with almost 7 in 10 (69.1 per cent) of the general population. Nearly 6 in 10 male Travellers (57.2 per cent) were educated to primary level at most, compared with just 13.6 per cent of the general population. The target for leaving certificate as outlined in Action 10 in NTRIS and the HEA target for third level participation presents clear challenges particularly in the absence of dedicated Traveller education workers in Traveller organisations and the 86 per cent funding cuts to Traveller specific supports imposed during austerity.¹¹⁵

Educational outcomes, at higher level, for Travellers continue to be extremely low. Census 2016 indicates that 167 Irish Travellers held a third level qualification (an increase of just 78 from Census 2011).¹¹⁶ An analysis of 2011 Census data indicates that only 1 per cent of Travellers have a third level degree compared to 30 per cent of the majority population.¹¹⁷

Figures from the Higher Education Authority (HEA),¹¹⁸ indicate that just 0.1 per cent of new entrants to third level institutions are Travellers.¹¹⁹ Travellers are a named target group in the HEA National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, with a target set to increase the number of Traveller new entrants to third-level education from 35 to 80.¹²⁰ The midway progress review of the Plan, however, indicates that there has been a disappointingly small increase in the number of Traveller new entrants, from 35 to 41. The target implementation date for the Plan has been revised from 2019 to 2021.

There are three funded Path Programmes to support implementation of the HEA Plan. The Path measures are, however, not sufficiently targeted to ensure a concerted effort to increase Traveller participation in higher education. There is a lack of clarity regarding the HEA’s approach to targeting Travellers and Roma participation and a lack of engagement between the HEA and Traveller organisations. There is a need for advisory groups inclusive of community and target group representation, to inform Path Programmes.

for this report indicates that 9.8 per cent of Travellers accessing STECs went on to employment, while the corresponding figure for the majority populating accessing Youthreach, was 27.7 per cent. (page 45)

¹¹⁵ Harvey, B., 2013. “Travelling with austerity”: impacts of cuts on Travellers, Traveller projects and services.

¹¹⁶ Central Statistics Office, ‘Profile 8 - Irish Travellers Ethnicity and Religion – Census 2016 Results’ (Press Statement) (2017) op cit.

¹¹⁷ Watson, D. Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. (January 2017). Op cit, 30.

¹¹⁸ The HEA has statutory responsibility for the governance and regulation of higher education institutes and the higher education system.

¹¹⁹ [National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019](#). Higher Education Authority and Department of Education and Skills, Dublin.

¹²⁰ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019. Op cit.

Fight against discrimination, segregation and other forms of antigypsyism in education

On foot of the State's formal acknowledgement of Traveller ethnicity, the Oireachtas (Parliament) will shortly enact legislation to add Traveller culture and history to the school curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. This is a welcome development, which holds potential to support a valuing of Traveller identity among the majority population.

Discrimination in regarding to Traveller children accessing education, remains a concern. A large number of schools give priority in school admissions to children or relatives of past pupils this is known as the 'past-pupil criterion'. This can pose a significant barrier for Traveller students as was illustrated in the case of *Stokes Vs CBS High School Clonmel*.¹²¹

The public-sector equality and human rights duty could also hold significant potential to reduce discrimination against, and drive equality of outcome for Travellers and Roma in the area of education. There is, however, some legal ambiguity as to whether the Duty applies to primary and second level schools. An important subsection of the relevant legislation, allows for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, in consultation with the Minister, to recommend that "any other person, body, organisation or group financed wholly or partly out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas" that ought, in the public interest be prescribed as being subject to the Duty.¹²² The Equality and Rights Alliance in its 2015 publication on the Duty recommended that the IHREC would, as a matter of urgency, invoke this clause to ensure that key public bodies, which should come within the scope of the duty, but where ambiguity exists in this regard, are prescribed as public bodies for the purposes of the duty as quickly as possible.¹²³ To-date however, this ambiguity in regard to primary and secondary level schools remains.

There has been some progress also in regard to the issue of segregated learning for Traveller children. One of two segregated schools (St. Thomas's (secondary level) in Clonshaugh) is due to close in June 2019. St. Kieran's (primary level) Traveller only school in Bray,¹²⁴ County Wicklow, has not, regrettably, indicated a planned closure date. The Department of Education and Skills continues to fund both schools through the allocation of the capitation grant and the payment of teaching staff's wages, despite objections by Traveller organisations.

The practice of reduced timetables (reduced school hours) being applied to Traveller students is continuing to be reported by local Traveller organisations.¹²⁵ The consultations for this report indicate that this practice is becoming more widespread. There is a need to conduct research into this worrying practice on the use of limited timetables to ensure it is not disproportionately applied to Traveller students, and that where it is being applied, that it is being done so in the best interest of the child.¹²⁶

¹²¹ *Stokes -v- Christian Brothers High School Clonmel & anor*: [2015] IESC 13, 184/2012. Available at: <http://courts.ie/Judgments.nsf/597645521f07ac9a80256ef30048ca52/A09897A48211897980257DF6005A3C31?opendocument>

¹²² Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Interpretation: 'public body': Section (h)

¹²³ [Mullen, R. \(2015\). A New Public Human Rights and Equality Duty](#). The Equality and Rights Alliance, Dublin.

¹²⁴ See Department of Education and Skills Inspection Report (2012): <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/report19599A.pdf>

¹²⁵ see also: Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Ireland Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy. Prepared by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (June 2018). 18.

¹²⁶ Minceirs Whiden Traveller only forum will be carrying out a survey in relation to reduced hours in 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employment

- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to develop a specific national training and employment plan for Travellers and Roma with clear actions, targets, budgets lines, timelines and an oversight mechanism to ensure its implementation.
- Mainstream national training and employment strategies including the Pathways to Work strategy need to include targeted measures to address persistently high levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities; 'identified positions' for Traveller and Roma employment in the civil and public service should be introduced.
- Adopt special measures to ensure Traveller and Roma women can access affordable childcare; retain secondary benefits while participating in training; and given their health inequalities can retain medical cards for a set period of time after entering employment.

Housing

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to establish a statutory Traveller Agency with powers to approve and enforce local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes underpinned by a monitoring and evaluation framework with associated sanctions, ensuring full expenditure of funds allocated for Traveller specific accommodation.
- Complete overhaul (rather than 'review') of the 1998 Housing (Traveller accommodation) Act and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 should be scrapped with immediate effect.
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government should introduce and fund a national programme for caravan loans/grants for Traveller families to purchase good quality mobile homes.
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to identify actions to address Roma housing and accommodation needs in Ireland's National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy with effect from 2019. The Local Government Management Agency to commission and publish research into the barriers preventing Roma from accessing quality housing and homelessness services in Ireland with a specific focus on the application of Departmental Circular 41/2012.

Health

- The Department of Health and Children and Health Service Executive commit to implementing the forthcoming National Traveller Health Action Plan including the recommendation from the regional consultations to establish a Planning Advisory Body for Traveller Health with dedicated staff and budgets to drive its' delivery and implementation.
- The Traveller specific health infrastructure, including Traveller Health Units and Traveller Primary Health Care Projects, should be protected and receive increased resources for their expansion and development.
- All Travellers and Roma should be entitled to medical cards given their health status and needs.

Education

- Department of Education and Skills to develop an Action Plan for Traveller and Roma Education in collaboration Traveller and Roma organisations; a National Traveller and Roma Education Advisory group to be established in the Department of Education and Skills to prioritise, give oversight, and secure accountability for the education needs of Traveller and Roma.
- The Equity of Access Plan for Higher Education, Path one funding for diversification of the teacher profile, should have specific targets for Travellers and Roma.
- The Department of Education and Skills School Inspectorate should undertake an audit of the application of 'limited/reduced timetables' on Traveller children and publish its report. The Inspectorate should also identify a mechanism to capture the use of 'limited/reduced timetables' when carrying out school inspections. The Department of Education and Skills should issue a circular to schools advising that 'limited/reduced timetables' can only be used in very limited and time bound circumstances. It should also publish disaggregated data on the basis of ethnicity in secondary schools (PPOD) to monitor participation and outcomes of Traveller and Roma students.
- The Department of Education and Skills should provide funding to independent Traveller organisations to advocate for Traveller education needs and addressing of educational inequalities.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ This funding would support a number of initiatives, including: empowering Traveller and Roma parents to access and engage with the education system through the coordination of a Traveller Parent Special Interest Group; the delivery of an Education Awareness Parent programme to Traveller parents; and the Education Advocacy Network; piloting new initiatives to respond to Traveller and Roma educational exclusion.

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