

Introduction

The National Traveller and Roma groups involved in the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) consultation group, in collaboration with local organisations, led the community and family consultations for the TRES. Six associated events were independently facilitated by Values Lab, who also authored this report. It is published here on behalf of the consultation group by Pavee Point, in the same way that the parallel NTRIS consultation report was published by ITM.

The Consultation Group wishes to express its sincere gratitude to colleagues at Values Lab for their time and expertise, and especially to the Traveller and Roma groups and individuals who participated. Many travelled considerable distances to contribute, sharing their lived experiences of the education system at all levels. Their voices were invaluable to the development of the TRES and continue to serve as vital reference points for its implementation.

The Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) 2024–2030 is Ireland’s first national framework aimed at addressing educational inequalities faced by Traveller and Roma communities. Launched in July 2024 by the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhance educational outcomes across all levels - from early childhood to higher education.





Report on the outcome of the local consultation process with Traveller and Roma communities and families, to inform the development of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy.

Niall Crowley & Rachel Mullen

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1. Introduction

This report sets out the findings from six consultation events: four with the Traveller community (in Dublin, Portlaoise, Tuam and Cork) and two with the Roma community (in Longford and Dublin), to inform the forthcoming Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES). The consultation events were organised over the months of March and April 2024.

The consultation events were designed on the basis of, and informed by, a consultation framework report, prepared by Values Lab. This report sets out: the policy context for Traveller and Roma education; an evidence-based assessment of equality and human rights issues facing Travellers and Roma, relevant to the field of education, which aligns with public bodies statutory obligations under the public sector equality and human rights duty¹; and the list of actions for the field of education that emerged from the consultations with Travellers and Roma on the successor strategy to the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS), undertaken in late 2023, which had included a focus on education.

The consultation framework report was discussed and agreed with the TRES Consultation Group, which comprises Pavee Point Traveller and Roma centre, the National Traveller Women's Forum, the Irish Traveller Movement, Exchange House Ireland, Involve, Minceirs Whiden, and Cairde.

Members of the TRES Consultation Group shared responsibility for organising the venues for and attendance at the six consultation events. The events were well attended and participative, with common themes emerging.

2. Ambition for the TRES: Values Statement

Shared values, across the various targeted strategies for Travellers and Roma, can usefully shape and inform a coherent vision to be pursued, and a common commitment to these strategies and their implementation and impact, across relevant government departments and agencies. Such an approach reflects Government commitment to a set of values to 'inform the design, implementation and monitoring of policy and programmes'²

A values statement to frame the TRES and benchmark its ambition was developed through the consultation events. This values statement takes as its starting point the values recommended for the successor strategy to the NTRIS, as part of the NTRIS consultations with Travellers and Roma. Attendees at the NTRIS consultations recommended that these values would also frame the TRES.

The values statement is based on the four core values: dignity, inclusion, social justice and participation. A statement of outcome for each value was developed through the six consultation events, to capture the implication of each of these four values for the change to be achieved by the TRES. The four statements of outcome, therefore, could usefully serve as benchmarks of ambition for the TRES.

¹ [Section 42](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

² [Values and Principles: Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector](#) (2022), Government of Ireland. Page 4.

A starting point for this ambition, emphasised in the consultation, is that the TRES would be transformative, driving structural, systemic and cultural change in the education system and within individual education providers.

Dignity: is about manifested respect for and valuing of each individual on the basis of their shared human worth. It involves: equal and fair treatment; interactions that are free from all forms of racism, discrimination and harassment; and access to justice in all instances of racism, discrimination and harassment.

Statement of outcome: The TRES would advance: a recognition of and elimination of the individual and institutional racism and discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma in the education system, with accountability for and an effective response to any racism and discrimination experienced; and Traveller and Roma children experiencing schools and early education centres as welcoming, safe, trauma informed, and caring places that they can have trust in, and where they can have a sense of belonging, be their true selves and achieve their full potential.

Inclusion: is about recognition of and valuing of the diversity of communities and within communities (intersectionality). It involves adapting for the diversity of identities and languages, and for how communities chose to live out their identity.

Statement of outcome: The TRES would advance: visibility, understanding and celebration of the culture, history, language and traditions of Travellers and of Roma, alongside other cultures, in the school environment; inclusion of and adaptation for the culture, history, language and traditions of Travellers and of Roma across the full curriculum and in teaching practice; and schools and early education centres taking responsibility for ensuring cultural competence in their provision.

Social Justice: is about equality of outcome, and equality in accessing political, social, economic, and cultural rights. It involves a dual strategy of mainstreaming and targeting of resources, to ensure equality of access and outcomes in key policy areas such as, employment, income, education, accommodation, health, and culture.

Statement of outcome: The TRES would advance: systemic change within the education system to achieve equal access, participation and outcomes for Traveller and Roma students; adequate and appropriate targeted supports for Traveller and Roma students, to secure transitions through early years education, primary and post-primary education, further and higher education, and training and/or employment; resourcing and enabling Traveller and Roma organisations to make their appropriate contribution to such outcomes; and the employment of Travellers and Roma in education settings.

Participation: is about participative democracy and empowering communities to be organised and influential. It involves: people being listened to; meaningful consultation, co-design, and processes for communities to participate as partners in decision-making; and effective systems of accountability from decision-makers.

Statement of outcome: The TRES would advance: Traveller and Roma parents being informed and supported to engage with the education system, and having a meaningful and effective say in the decision-making structures of schools and early education centres; decision-making structures providing a welcoming and respectful environment for Travellers and Roma; education providers outreaching to and

engaging with the Traveller and Roma communities and their organisations, such that their voices are heard and acted on; and education providers engaging with Traveller and Roma parents in a manner that is trauma informed and with an understanding of the lived experience of Travellers and Roma.

3. Assessment of Issues and Actions to Address Issues



The format, of ‘assess and address’, in this section, reflects the statutory requirements of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty). The Duty requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights, for their employees, service users and policy beneficiaries, in implementing all of their functions. In giving effect to this Duty, public bodies are required to: undertake an assessment of the equality and human rights issues, for the identified groups for the Duty, relevant to their function areas; take action to address these issues; and report annually on progress in this regard.

Three strands were explored in each consultation event:

- **Strand 1. The Education Establishment:**
The approach of the school/early education centre to enabling belonging and inclusion of Travellers and Roma, through a focus on ensuring a visibility and respect for their culture, history, language and traditions, and on addressing individual and institutional racism and discrimination.
- **Strand 2. Access, Participation, & Outcomes:**
Identification and provision of the specific resources, initiatives, and programmes required to improve Traveller and Roma access to, participation in and outcomes from education, at all levels.
- **Strand 3. Community Engagement:**
The engagement of the Department of Education and individual education providers with Traveller and Roma stakeholders (parents, the wider Traveller and Roma communities, and Traveller and Roma organisations) to improve the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in education.

Assess: for each of the three strands, the equality and human rights issues facing Travellers and Roma, of relevance to that strand, are first identified. The assessment of the issues was initially developed from a literature review of relevant research (see Appendix for source

material) and from the work undertaken by Values Lab to inform the consultations for a successor strategy to the NTRIS. The assessment was further informed and evolved through the six local consultation events for the TRES.

Address: actions required to address the equality and human rights issues identified, under each strand, are established. The consultations for a successor strategy to the NTRIS provided a starting point for identifying the actions required in the field of education, and these actions were further refined and evolved through the six local consultation events for the TRES.

The equality and human rights issues and the actions to address these, for each strand, are set out in sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 below.

In regard to the design and implementation of the TRES and its actions, participants attending the consultations stressed that the TRES should establish the following three imperatives, to:

- implement a dual approach, involving both targeted and mainstream initiatives and programmes, to address the significant educational inequality gap between Travellers and Roma and the general population. In this:
 - targeted initiatives are required as enablers for equality of access, participation, and outcomes in mainstream education provision;
 - targeted initiatives must be complementary to and not a substitute for mainstream education and education initiatives; and
 - mainstream initiatives are required to drive the systemic change within mainstream education to ensure it recognises and accommodates cultural diversity, addresses racism and discrimination at individual and institutional levels, and is inclusive of Travellers and Roma.
- provide and ensure that targeted measures:
 - do not segregate or 'other' Travellers and Roma, particularly in relation to those targeted measures provided within the mainstream education setting;
 - respect individual choice as to whether to be involved or not;
 - do not impose demands on Travellers or Roma to 'out' themselves;
 - involve a Traveller and Roma and Traveller and Roma organisation input into their design and delivery;
 - are trauma informed, taking account of historical legacies and current experiences of exclusion; and
 - are tracked and reviewed, with the use of an ethnic identifier, to ensure that outcomes are meeting the targets set and that the measures continue to be necessary rather than becoming institutionalised.
- involve Traveller and Roma organisations as key stakeholders in making the education system work for both communities, and to do so in a manner that:
 - does not impose a responsibility on Traveller and Roma organisations to address systemic barriers in the education system and failures in the approach and practice of education providers; and
 - does not absolve education providers and the education system of responsibility to take the action required within general mainstream provision for an inclusive and appropriate provision of education.

3.1 Strand 1. The Education Establishment

3.1.1 Assess

Key equality and human rights issues facing Travellers and Roma in the field of education, relevant to strand 1.:

- Invisibility of, and a lack of recognition and value placed on Traveller and Roma culture, history language and traditions, including:
 - failure to recognise and affirm cultural diversity to ensure the inclusion of Traveller and Roma students, along with a lack of visibility for Traveller and Roma culture, history, language and traditions in educational curricula and teaching practice;
 - intercultural approaches, where they are delivered, often fail to address issues of racism, particularly institutional racism, and can fail to acknowledge the particular experience of Travellers and Roma of racism;
 - a lack of provision and support for the diversity of languages among Roma and for Roma with limited English; and
 - the dominance of settled cultural norms in education settings/provision and an underlying ethos of assimilation experienced by Travellers.
- Lack of capacity and expertise of education providers. Specific issues identified in this regard are:
 - a lack of understanding of and failure to recognise and adequately address individual and institutional racism as experienced by Travellers and by Roma, in the school community and in education provision;
 - a lack of understanding of cultural diversity and of skills to respond appropriately to and adapt for cultural diversity of both Travellers and Roma;
 - a lack of understanding of the diversity of the Roma community in terms of nationality, language, and culture;
 - a lack of understanding of the living conditions of Travellers and of Roma and the wider social determinants for education, such as, poverty and living conditions;
 - skills for trauma informed approaches under developed or under utilized in school settings; and
 - a lack of professional training for principals and teachers on culturally competent and anti-racist practice.
- Discrimination against Traveller and Roma students by education providers (for example, use and overuse of reduced timetables, students being prevented from fully participating in or being removed from certain classes, forms of segregation in the school setting, schools use of catchment area or sibling policies to exclude, and school rules such as uniform or dress requirements that do not take account of elements such as cultural diversity);
- Schools anti-bullying procedures failing to capture and address the specificity of racist bullying on the basis of being a Traveller or being Roma;
- Lack of accountability from schools and early learning providers in relation to issues of inequality and human rights abuses.
- Negative experience in education settings, including:
 - identity-based bullying and racism, in particular at the individual level, from other students (identified as a particular issue at second-level) and from teachers;
 - lack of accountability on the part of education providers, for negative treatment towards Traveller and Roma, and inadequate reporting systems to such experiences;
 - Travellers and Roma feeling compelled to hide their ethnic identity in school, to avoid negative treatment;
 - Traveller and Roma children feeling isolated and excluded in the school environment;

- teachers having low expectations of Traveller and Roma children, stereotyping Travellers and Roma, in particular girls, and making assumptions about the motivations of Traveller and Roma students, e.g. that they will leave school early;
- Traveller and Roma parents being taken advantage of in how decisions are made in relation to their children, with permission being secured without parents being adequately and appropriately informed of their options and the implications of their choices, such as in regard to agreeing to have their child placed on a reduced timetable;
- blaming by school staff of Travellers and of Roma for their situation of disadvantage; and
- Roma children being punished for speaking in their own language, while in school.
- Lack of adequate and appropriate education provision on issues of racism, including regarding the experiences of Travellers and of Roma.
- Internalised oppression, which negatively impacts on Traveller and Roma students' confidence, including in regard to their own expectations and ambitions in regard to education.
- Lack of Traveller and Roma educator role models employed within the education system.
- Absence of ethnic identifiers in key data sets, to accurately measure situation and experience of Travellers and Roma and to enable effective policymaking and implementation, and a lack of transparency in regard to making statistics available, for example, in regard to which students are being put on reduced timetables.

3.1.2 Address

The following actions were identified as a **priority** for immediate progress under the TRES, in regard to Strand 1.:

- Acknowledge individual and institutional racism and discrimination against Travellers and Roma as a reality at school and early education centre level and develop an anti-racism and anti-discrimination prerogative for education providers, to ensure schools and early education centres are safe spaces for Traveller and Roma students, involving:
 - a review of the policies, procedures, regulations and practices of education providers in order to prevent and address direct and indirect discrimination; and
 - the development and implementation of policies and procedures to prevent and address racism at the individual and institutional levels, and systems of reporting and accountability to ensure incidents of racism are dealt with effectively, fairly and promptly by education providers.
- Develop, support and implement a curriculum, across subject areas and at all levels of education, that embeds a focus on anti-racism and on the culture, history, language and traditions of the Traveller community and of the Roma community, including:
 - ensuring an exam question in state examinations on the culture, history, language and traditions of Travellers and of Roma;
 - enacting, creating the conditions for and adequately resourcing the full and effective implementation of the Traveller Culture and History in Education Act, and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment guidelines on this theme;
 - identifying and responding to different ways of learning that might pertain in the Traveller and Roma communities;
 - developing a range of materials to support and inform this curriculum; and
 - engaging with the expertise of the Traveller and Roma communities in developing and delivering on this curriculum.

- Develop and implement a standard for cultural competency and anti-racism in schools and early education centres, with systems of effective accountability for the implementation of this standard, which would include a focus on:
 - creating a welcoming school and early education centre environment that aims to ensure Traveller and Roma feel a sense of inclusion and belonging;
 - the culture, values and ethos of the school and early education centre;
 - school and early education centre policies and procedures, codes of behaviour and complaints systems to meet this standard and address any failure to do so;
 - staff training; and
 - celebration of cultural diversity, including creative initiatives in the schools and early education centres to celebrate and inform about Traveller and Roma culture, history, language and traditions.
- Develop the role and capacity of the inspectorate to include a focus on issues of anti-racism and cultural competence, and standards set in this regard, with a capacity to hold education providers to account on their performance and practice in this regard, including:
 - a participatory approach by the inspectorate in engaging with Travellers and Roma children and parents and with Traveller and Roma organisations;
 - transparency in ensuring access to the reports from and work of the inspectorate; and
 - implementing a national recording system for complaints of racist or discriminatory treatment experienced by Travellers and by Roma in schools and early education centres.
- Develop and provide mandatory training, as accredited modules in teacher training colleges and in in-service continued professional development training, to develop relevant skills and knowledge of principals, teachers, and other school staff, in relation to:
 - responding to cultural diversity, and the culture, history, language and traditions of Travellers and Roma;
 - understanding racism, stereotyping and discrimination as experienced by Travellers and by Roma, and how to respond to these issues; and
 - trauma informed provision and the living circumstances and context for Travellers and for Roma.
- Develop a programme to promote and support Traveller and Roma employment in the education sector, as teachers, as peer-led workers, liaison workers, Special Needs Assistants and other staff roles, including:
 - creating specific pathways into such employment as needed, including apprenticeships;
 - ensuring employment conditions to underpin treatment with respect and dignity and in a manner that respects their culture and identity; and
 - supporting them to sustain and progress their careers in this field.
- Expand coverage of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to apply to schools, and support and ensure its implementation, making use of the issues identified in this report to develop a shared assessment of equality and human rights issues, as required under the Assess step in the 2014 Act.

- Gather and analyse ethnic data from education establishments to track Traveller and Roma access, participation and outcomes, and provide guidance and support for the effective use of an ethnic identifier by education establishments.

Further, the following **actions** were noted as important to be advanced under the TRES, in regard to Strand 1.:

- Resource, sustain, and expand the Yellow Flag Programme to be implemented in an ongoing manner across all schools.
- Provide career guidance supports for Traveller and Roma students, that is informed of the diverse pathways and supports open to them and that is responsive to their culture and identity.
- Ensure schools and early education centres take steps to ensure:
 - Traveller and Roma students are listened to and given support to be themselves;
 - positive reinforcement is provided for Traveller and Roma students;
 - high and positive expectations are held of Traveller and Roma girls and boys;
 - Traveller and Roma students are not given up on, are enabled to meet their individual aspirations; and
 - resources are available to provide additional supports that might be needed in individual cases.
- Ensure adequate resourcing for and implementation of the Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying 2023-2027.
- Address the use of reduced timetables and subject exemptions for Travellers and for Roma in an appropriate manner, keeping any such instances under ongoing review for their necessity.
- Develop and make available independent systems for reporting and investigating unequal treatment by school and early education centre staff.
- Recognise language diversity and address needs that arise from this within educational establishments, with translation and interpretation services for Roma children and parents, and with adequate and appropriate English language learning opportunities for Roma students within mainstream settings.
- Review and expand the curriculum options on offer to ensure an adequate response to the needs and aspirations of the Roma, with:
 - culturally appropriate opportunities for Roma students to build on traditions of music, dance and singing in curricular and extracurricular provision; and
 - options to pursue native language at second-level as an examination topic.
- Provide an adequate response to the diversity of nationalities within the Roma community and the practical implications of this diversity.
- Provide adequate and appropriate support for Travellers experiencing bereavement.

3.2 Strand 2. Access, Participation & Outcomes

3.2.1 Assess

Key equality and human rights issues facing Travellers and Roma in the field of education, relevant to strand 2.:



- Educational disadvantage and poor education outcomes for Travellers and Roma, and lack of accountability from schools in regard to poor outcomes for Traveller and Roma students.
- Systemic failures to adapt for Traveller and Roma culture and identity, particularly in relation to how people learn and in relation to the nature of the choices and options that need to be on offer for education provision to be relevant and accessible.
- Poverty and adverse living conditions present barriers for Traveller and Roma children's full participation in education, including, for Roma, the specific impact of the Habitual Residence Condition and the manner of its application, often leaving Roma parents without access to social protection supports.
- Lack of financial resources to meet the costs associated with education and school attendance.
- Barriers to accessing funding streams available to support participation, in particular early childcare supports.
- Low levels of functional literacy for Travellers and Roma, in comparison to their non-Traveller, non-Roma peers.
- Low levels of participation in early education provision, lack of places available, and false assumptions that Travellers and Roma do not want to take up such provision.
- Lack of places available in schools, lack of places in schools adjacent to where Travellers and Roma live, and school selection systems excluding Travellers and Roma. Particular barriers to securing a school place experienced by Roma children arriving in the country at an advanced age, and experiences of some local schools telling Roma parents that they have no places left, yet refusing to give them a letter (which they are entitled to) confirming this, to use to get a place in another school.
- Specific barriers and lack of supports facing recently arrived Roma young people and children, in particular those in the 16 to 18 years old group.
- Early school leaving, often due to negative experiences in education, or being drawn away from education to get employment to bring an income into a financially struggling household, and lack of provision for those who leave school early.
- Transitions are problematic, including due to impact of discrimination and racism, and educational disadvantage, from primary to second-level, from junior cycle to senior cycle, and from school on to further and higher education, training, apprenticeships and/or employment;
- Nomadic Travellers not being catered for, and Travellers and Roma in homeless accommodation missing out on school places due to being moved to other locations.
- Lack of access to school transport and of access to, and unaffordability of, other transport.
- Digital exclusion and constraints affecting student participation and parental engagement.
- Failure to ensure and support Traveller and Roma students and parents, in an appropriate manner, to have knowledge and understanding of the education system, including: course and funding support options available; pathways / educational requirements of careers students might like to pursue.
- Access barriers for Travellers and Roma, due to literacy issues and lack of information provision and support, as well as language barriers for Roma, in responding to the administrative requirements for access to early education centres, and primary and post-primary schools;
- Lack of an intersectional approach, in particular failure to address the needs of Traveller and Roma children with disabilities, including lack of access to early assessment, intervention and additional supports, and negative impacts of mental health with lack of necessary supports.
- The lack of disaggregated data, by ethnicity, resulting in no data to track specific outcomes, for Travellers and Roma, from resource allocation in the education system.

3.2.2 Address

The following actions were identified as a **priority** for progress under the TRES, in regard to Strand 2.:

- Identify Travellers and Roma in all mainstream educational policies and strategies, as a target group with specific needs arising from: their culture and identity; their language diversity; their disadvantaged situation; and the inter-generational negative experiences in formal education and the trauma resultant from this.
- Establish adequate and ring-fenced funding systems for resources to follow the Traveller child and Roma child from early years through each level of education. Ensure all schools have resources to provide extra supports for Traveller and Roma students, as in Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools (DEIS) schools.
- Develop, support and adequately fund in a sustained manner, peer-led education programmes delivered by Traveller organisations and Roma organisations (or by local community organisations where there is no Traveller or Roma organisation) to take a community development approach to:
 - give voice to and advocate for Traveller and Roma perspectives;
 - act as a bridge between Travellers and Roma and schools;
 - contribute to more effective access, participation and transitions;
 - support parental trust in the education system and involvement in engaging with their children's education;
 - promote good practice;
 - coordinate and link in with other stakeholders in the education field; and
 - monitor and inform education provision in schools, with a focus on national strategy and standards.

The peer workers employed to deliver on this work would be adequately supported and trained to fulfil their roles, with progression opportunities available to further a career in the education field. Schools should be required to engage with these peer workers, with training provided to enable an appropriate engagement.

- Develop standards for and put in place significant and increased targeted resources to incentivise and support Traveller inclusion in mainstream education, including:
 - in-school initiatives to support Traveller and Roma retention, including such as tutorial supports, and school completion programme supports;
 - initiatives from an early stage at each level to enable transitions between the different levels of education and from education to employment, including career guidance supports and taster initiatives;
 - action to expand and enable Traveller and Roma participation in after-school provision, homework supports, provision through the 'Iscoil' model, and supports through local youth projects;
 - schemes to alleviate costs and address financial barriers for Traveller and Roma families (such as, a free book scheme at second level, bursaries to access digital devices and to access tuition supports); and
 - incentives to improve school retention for age groups found to be at risk of early school leaving.

Ensure these targeted measures are tracked and monitored for impact and ongoing relevance.

- Develop systems for innovation within the education system and to identify good practice and provide for and resource its wider application across the education system, including:
 - learning from the evaluation of the Supporting Travellers and Roma (STAR) programme;
 - learning from education initiatives by Traveller organisations and Roma organisations;
 - good practice developed by individual education establishments;
 - learning from relevant educational initiatives in the EU; and
 - undertaking research to establish practice that is working within school and early education settings.
- Develop a programme of culturally appropriate information provision and support to ensure Traveller and Roma parents and students are fully and appropriately informed of and enabled to access the range of educational options, pathways and supports available to them, including such as the development of:
 - guideline booklet(s) on the education system, addressing options and procedures, and in appropriate languages for Roma;
 - modules and associated resources for Traveller and Roma children and parents to increase their awareness about: the right to education, the supports available to fulfil this right, and the pathways within which choices can be made; and
 - peer support groups.

Further, the following **actions** were noted as important to be advanced under the TRES, in regard to Strand 2.:

- Take steps to encourage and ensure Traveller and Roma access to early years provision and associated funding schemes, and ensure that action and resources to address wider educational disadvantage through early education provision, includes appropriate targeting of Travellers and Roma.
- Provide additional resources to the School Completion Programme and build capacity within this to adequately and appropriately respond to Travellers and Roma.
- Make provision for Travellers and Roma whom the education system has failed and who are now outside of the education system without adequate and appropriate opportunities to re-enter and progress within the education system:
 - establishing and supporting access to pathways to education, apprenticeships, internships and employment, including within the Traveller economy for Travellers; and
 - undertaking baseline studies on early school leaving to establish an accurate understanding of causes and to inform a more planned response.
- Develop initiatives to address digital exclusion for Travellers and Roma, to enable their full participation in education, building on good practice developed in such as in Cairde's Roma Education Programme, and including initiatives to:
 - ensure provision of appropriate devices;
 - secure broadband coverage;
 - ensure appropriate spaces for Travellers and Roma in poor living conditions to engage digitally; and
 - engagement with parents in relation to schools requirements to engage online (such as to inform of student absences), and in regard to issues of digital safety.

- Ensure Home School Liaison posts are adequately resourced so that their caseload allows for appropriate time and support to follow each child.
- Provide specific supports for Travellers and Roma to access work experience and for Traveller to take up the opportunities of Transition Year.
- Review barriers to Roma enrolment in schools and develop an initiative similar to the Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) model for Ukrainian refugees.
- Take steps to address the specific needs that result from Traveller nomadism.
- Take steps to ensure inclusion for Traveller and Roma children experiencing homelessness.
- Take steps to ensure access for Traveller and Roma students to school transport, and to free travel passes for their children to attend school as needed. Pilot an initiative for schools to have a scheme for the provision of bicycles for disadvantaged students.
- Advance, support and ensure an intersectional approach is taken in education establishments to ensure an adequate and culturally appropriate response to the specific needs of Traveller and Roma:
 - girls and boys, including equal expectations of and provision for Traveller and Roma girls and boys, including ensuring marriage is not a barrier to participation.
 - LGBTQI+ children;
 - children with mental health difficulties; and
 - disabled children, including those with intellectual and/or learning difficulties, including ensuring access and reasonable accommodation for disabled children, access to necessary supports, and access to National Educational Psychological Service and relevant assessments, with assessments reviewed for cultural bias.
- Review and address barriers to education for Roma presented by Habitual Residence Condition as it is currently implemented.
- Convene an inquiry into the institutionalised abuse of Travellers in the education system and the failures to make adequate and appropriate provision and ensure a public acknowledgement of this issue as a form of restorative justice.

3.3 Strand 3. Community Engagement



3.3.1 Assess

Key equality and human rights issues facing Travellers Roma in the field of education, relevant strand 3.:

- Inter-generational legacy and current negative experiences of education, resulting in fears and trauma for the Traveller and Roma communities, with Traveller and Roma parents having had their confidence undermined to be able to engage effectively with the school community on behalf of their children, and lacking access to the knowledge to be able to support their children's education.
- Inadequate and inappropriate communication and engagement with Traveller and Roma parents, by education providers, that fails to appreciate their particular experience of and history with the education system. Traveller and Roma parents feel that educators look down on them and that their children are considered "less than" by educators, and are often skipped-over, and excluded, with issues of stereotyping in the relationships.
- Barriers of literacy, numeracy and lack of knowledge about and understanding of the education system and lack of supports for Traveller and Roma parents to overcome these barriers.
- Power imbalance in parent-teacher meetings, and lack of real engagement. Lack of supports, including advocacy supports, for Traveller and Roma parents in engaging with schools and early education centres.
- Lack of Traveller and Roma representation on school structures and lack of meaningful participation in decision-making processes at this level and within the wider education system. Lack of welcoming environment for, meaningful engagement in, and outcomes from Traveller and Roma participation in school structures.
- Inadequate outreach and lack of positive engagement by schools and early education centres to engage with Traveller and Roma parents, the Traveller community and Roma community, and Traveller and Roma organisations.
- Language barriers, lack of, and inadequacy of language interpretation supports, and, for some Roma parents, literacy issues in their mother language, and digital exclusion, present barriers to supporting their children with their education, including engaging with teachers, home school liaison officers, and the wider school community.
- Lack of respect, from schools, for the capacity and potential contribution of Traveller and Roma organisations and Traveller and Roma peer education workers, and a lack of understanding and valuing of community development practice.
- Lack of openness in schools, and defensiveness by schools when Traveller parents and Roma parents and Traveller and Roma organisations raise concerns and issues.
- Schools placing responsibility on Traveller and Roma organisations to resolve problems that are created by schools and by the education system. When schools approach Traveller organisations for support regarding Traveller education, they often frame Travellers as a 'problem' to be addressed, rather than examining what they might need to do differently in regard to their systems and practice.
- Failure by Education Welfare Officers to engage adequately with Traveller organisations.

3.3.2 Address

The following actions were identified as a **priority** for progress under the TRES, in regard to Strand 3.:

- Recognition and meaningful engagement by the Department of Education with Traveller organisations and Roma organisations, as an 'education partner', along with the patron, parent and trade union bodies, that brings a key expertise and lived experience to the decision-making table. Invest adequate and sustained resources in, address the barriers of power imbalances for, and accord roles to these organisations to engage in monitoring and informing education provision for Travellers and Roma.
- Develop new and innovative models at local level for coordination and cooperation in relation to education, led by and with oversight from the Department of Education and

involving education providers, those playing roles in the education system, and Traveller organisations, and ensuring the conditions are created for effective and meaningful Traveller participation in these.

- Develop initiatives to:
 - build Traveller and Roma parents trust in and positive relationships with the education system;
 - empower Traveller and Roma parents to engage with and challenge schools and early education centres;
 - ensure education providers develop effective outreach to and engagement with the Traveller community and the Roma community, including to engage parents in school events and initiatives; and
 - doing so in a manner that is trauma informed and informed by an understanding of cultural diversity and anti-racism.
- Enable and support Traveller and Roma parents to participate effectively in school structures (including school management boards, parents' committees or associations and relevant Education and Training Board structures) and take steps, including mandatory requirements, to ensure these structures are safe, welcoming, inclusive, and worthwhile spaces for Traveller and Roma parents to participate, with supports for their effective participation as needed, including through Traveller and Roma peer-led programmes.
- Take steps to ensure that Traveller and Roma children have a voice that is heard and listened to within the schools and early education centres, and within education policy debates.
- Take steps to secure an adequate and appropriate outreach from schools to the Traveller community and Roma community and to local Traveller and Roma organisations, identifying staff as link workers and to engage in such outreach and resourcing such staff with additional hours to take responsibility for proactive advocacy for and engagement with the Traveller community and Roma community and their organisations.

Further, the following **actions** were noted as important to be advanced under the TRES, in regard to Strand 3.:

- Ensure accessible communication between the school and Traveller parents and Roma parents, taking account of issues of language diversity, digital exclusion, and literacy, with support provided for Traveller and Roma parents to engage effectively on issues arising and with a direct connection facilitated between parents and teachers where their child is encountering problems.
- Develop initiatives to ensure that education providers build their capacity and knowledge to engage appropriately and supportively with Traveller parents and the Traveller community and Roma parents and the Roma community.
- Develop and support local networking of Traveller organisations and Roma organisations and those working with the education system at local level, in Meitheal-type spaces to address issues being experienced by the Traveller community and the Roma community.

4. Strategy Implementation

The consultation events emphasised a concern for ensuring an effective implementation of the TRES. In discussion on strategy implementation, the consultations for the successor strategy to the NTRIS again provided starting points for actions to drive policy implementation, and these starting points were further refined, evolved and expanded through the six local consultation events.

The actions identified, in the six consultation events, to drive implementation of the TRES relate to the three distinct phases of: strategy development, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring.

4.1 Strategy development

- The TRES should contain a manageable number of actions, with capacity to achieve change. Actions must be specific, measurable, with milestone targets and measurable indicators, with clarity as to the language holding an imperative to implement ('will' rather than 'should'). Establish a small number of 'guiding star' targets and ensure adequate data collection to track and monitor these.
- The six-year TRES should be accompanied by three, two-year implementation plans, each containing actions, with milestone targets and measurable indicators for each action, that combine towards the incremental delivery of the full range of proposed actions across the lifetime of the strategy.
- Implementation plans should be prepared by schools to drive implementation of the TRES through actions at the school level. This implementation plan could be a focus in school planning and whole school evaluation processes.
- Provide for clear allocation of responsibility for implementation of the TRES from the school principal level to Departmental level, with accountability mechanisms established for this. For each action there should be an identified lead role responsible for its implementation.
- Embed and implement the public sector equality and human rights duty in the preparation and implementation of the TRES.
- Ensure adequate feedback to Travellers and Roma in relation to the response to this consultation process.
- Ensure an effective and appropriate communication strategy for awareness and understanding of the TRES within the Traveller and Roma communities.

4.2 Strategy implementation

- Ensure adequate and ring-fenced resources are committed to, made available and deployed for all actions.
- Develop and support drivers for implementation of the TRES at local level, with the formation of local coalitions of interest involving Traveller and Roma organisations and local community organisations working with Roma as central actors, alongside committed school and education personnel, with the composition and functioning of these reflecting local contexts, and with a mandate from the Department of Education.
- Secure transparency and accountability from schools in relation to implementation of the TRES through school implementation plans, including:

- inclusion of a focus on this implementation in whole school evaluations, school planning, and in the interventions and reports of the inspectorate.
- annual reporting on progress made on addressing equality and human rights issues, as required under the public sector equality and human rights duty.

4.3 Strategy monitoring

- Ensure political oversight with allocation of responsibility for Traveller and Roma education and the TRES to a junior minister, and with progress reports submitted to and discussed by the relevant Oireachtas committees.
- Establish a national TRES oversight structure, with Traveller and Roma organisations and other relevant education stakeholders, to advise on, monitor and oversee implementation of TRES.
- Implement an independent ongoing process evaluation of the TRES with regular reports, and including a full mid-term evaluation of the progress made.
- The Department should prepare and publish annual progress reports, and ensure these are adequately and appropriately communicated within the Traveller and Roma communities.
- Establish mechanisms for reflection on challenges and issues emerging through this evaluation and from the annual progress reports, and ensure flexibility in the TRES to respond to these.
- A data strategy to be in place and effectively implemented to track progress. Use an ethnic identifier, and disaggregate data across ethnicity, gender and age, to track progress on the strategy and to track Traveller and Roma experience and outcomes across education provision and initiatives at all levels.
- Undertake regular surveys of Traveller and Roma students and parents to track perceptions of and experiences with the education system.
- Ensure reporting on implementation of TRES to the NTRIS structures, and through these to the relevant EU structures having oversight of national Traveller and Roma strategies.



Appendix: Source Documents for the Assess Step

The following source documents were reviewed to inform the assessment of equality and human rights issues facing Travellers and facing Roma

- Central Statistics Office (2017). [Census 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion](#).
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (2023). [Survey on People in Ireland's Attitude Towards Diversity](#).
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (April 2020) [Statistical Spotlight #4: Young Travellers in Ireland \(with some data on Roma\)](#). Government of Ireland.
- Department of Education (May 2023). [Pupils from the Traveller Community 2016-2020](#).
- Dupont, M. (2022). [A Study into the Effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Procedures on Traveller and Roma Pupils' Experiences in the School System](#). Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre.
- European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers (2022) [Civil society monitoring report: Lessons learnt from implementation of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021, and recommendations for the post-2022 strategy in Ireland](#), prepared by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre.
- European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers (2018) [Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Ireland: assessing progress in four key policy areas of the strategy](#), prepared by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020). [Roma and Travellers in Six Countries](#).
- Government of Ireland (April 2020). Young Travellers in Ireland, including some data on young Roma. [Statistical Spotlight #4](#). Prepared by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (October 2019). [Ireland and the Convention on Racial Discrimination, Submission](#) to the United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination on Ireland's Combined Fifth to Ninth Periodic Report, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.
- Joint Committee on key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community (Nov. 2021) [Key Issues Affecting the Traveller community: Final Report of the Joint Committee on key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community](#). Houses of the Oireachtas.
- McGinnity, F., Grotti, R., Kenny, O., and Russell, H. (2017) [Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules](#). ESRI and IHREC.
- Mullen, R., Kelly, B., and Crowley, N., (2021). [Mincéir Misl'er a Tom Tober – Travellers in the Mainstream Labour Market: Situation, Experience and Identity](#). St Stephens Green Trust, Dublin.
- Murray, C. and O'Reilly, T. (2021). [Traveller Pride in Early Childhood Education and Care](#). Ireland's Education Yearbook.
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2019) [Traveller culture and history in the curriculum: a curriculum audit](#).
- O'Mahony, J. (2017). [Behaviour and Attitudes: Traveller Community National Survey](#). Prepared for the National Data Steering Group and the Community Foundation for Ireland.

- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Department of Justice and Equality (2018). [Roma in Ireland: A national needs assessment](#).
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (forthcoming 2024). Travellers and Roma in Education: current provision and engagement.
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and The National Traveller Women's forum (May 2020). [The Implications of COVID-19 for Traveller and Roma Transfer to and Progression Within Higher Education](#). Report from a National Forum
- Quinlan, M., (2021). [Out of the Shadows: Traveller and Roma Education](#), Voices from the Community. Department of Education.
- SOAR (2021). [The Traveller Graduate Network: a formative evaluation of a new initiative to support Travellers in education](#). SOAR. HEA.
- Watson D., Kenny O., & McGinnity F. (2017). [A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland](#), ESRI.