

## Education and Travellers

Education is recognised as a fundamental right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Irish State has obligations to promote and protect equal access and treatment in education. Yet, the educational outcomes for Traveller children remain low.



- **13% of Travellers complete secondary education in comparison with 92% of the general population** - According to Economic & Social Research Institute (ESRI), Growing Up in Ireland Study 2012, Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
- **7 out of 10 Traveller children (67.3%) live in families where the mother has either no formal education or primary education only** - According to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2014) State of the Nation's Children 2014 report.
- **Less than 1% of Travellers go on to third level education** – Census 2016

### NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL

For many Travellers the school experience remains a negative one. While segregated education has been largely done away with (one Traveller-only primary school remains) Traveller children continue to have negative experiences at school:

- Bullying
- Low expectations from school personnel
- Discrimination
- Isolation and marginalization

### CUTS TO EDUCATION SUPPORTS

During austerity the Government cut supports to Travellers in education by 86.6 per cent. School liaison workers for Travellers were done away with as were Senior Traveller Training Centres and transport supports for Travellers. There has been no re-investment in Traveller education since.

Traveller organisations lobbied extensively for the end of segregated Traveller education. However, it has always been clear that specific targeted supports are required to support Traveller participation in mainstream education on equal terms with the majority population.

### PARTICIPATION AT 3RD LEVEL

There has been a slight improvement in the numbers of Travellers attending Higher Education. According to Census 2016, 167 Irish Travellers held a third level qualification in 2016, compared to 89 in 2011. University access programmes that include Travellers are becoming more widespread.

### TRAVELLER ATTITUDES TO EDUCATION

Part of the negative stereotyping of Travellers is the belief Travellers are not interested in education. This is not true and according to the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010 the majority of Traveller parents value education and see it as being important for their children's future. This is also reflected in the number of Travellers who return to education as adults.

The Department of Education and child welfare agencies need to build expertise and best practice approaches to include and support minorities in education.

Of serious concern is the absence of Travellers from the recently published Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019. The plan contains only one Traveller specific action which focuses on increasing Traveller participation at third level.