



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

Mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, as President of Ireland, I would like to take the opportunity of congratulating the Irish Travelling Community on their recognition as an indigenous ethnic minority. I want to congratulate in particular all the organisations from the travelling community who have been involved in advocacy for this recognition for such a long time.

This proud moment of recognition is the culmination of many years of committed and dedicated campaigning for the acknowledgment of Travellers' distinct identity within the fabric of Irish society.

Your work in bringing a better understanding of authentic Traveller culture to the world, increasing tolerance and understanding of your heritage and customs, and advancing the rights and welfare of Irish Travellers has contributed profoundly to Ireland's journey towards becoming a truly democratic society.

This recognition is a small but greatly significant step on that long journey. Many obstacles still need to be overcome if we are to ensure the full and meaningful participation of all citizens in Irish society. I am aware of the significant challenges that the Travelling Community still face and I realise that we are awaiting adequate responses on issues of health care, education, employment, housing, services and de facto marginalisation.

However, as we celebrate the milestone that the recognition of Traveller ethnicity represents, we can take inspiration from the small but significant achievements obtained to date. So today, let us celebrate the solidarity being shown for your work, as well as the successes and achievements of so many members of the Traveller community.

These are signs of hope for the future – a future where Travellers and Traveller culture enjoy their rightful place at the heart of Irish society.

Beir beannacht,

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

1 March 2017



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