



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Solas

Further Education and Training Strategy

2020 – 2024

Submission by: Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

May 28, 2019.

Introduction

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre welcome the opportunity to contribute our submission to Solas to support your work in defining the strategic direction of Further Education and Training up to the year 2024.

If you require any further information in regard to this submission, please contact: Martin Collins, email: martin.collins@pavee.ie.

Supporting Job Creation

Please share your thoughts on Supporting Job Creation

Solas notes that the current socio-economic context of low levels of unemployment will influence the orientation of the forthcoming FET strategy, in particular the planning of provision on the basis of 'in employment' rather than 'for employment'. A qualifying note is given, that this reorientation of focus will not lose sight of "the need to provide activation provision for those who remain outside of the labour market". While we welcome this qualifier, nonetheless, at the concluding point of the first Solas FET Strategy 2016-2019, the employment and education equality gap between members of the Traveller and Roma communities and the majority population, has not reduced, despite the economic upturn. While available employment services are effective in supporting access to the labour market for the majority population, they are proving ineffective in addressing Traveller and Roma employment needs and recent labour market interventions to address unemployment during and after the recession had little or no impact in achieving positive outcomes for members of the Traveller and Roma communities.

It is vital, therefore, that the new orientation in focus for the forthcoming FET strategy does not obscure the situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in regard to their ability to access and participate in further education and training and to have good outcomes from this participation, in terms of pathways to higher education and/or employment.

The significant employment gap between the Traveller and Roma communities and the majority population remains entrenched. Some key data in this regard are as follows:

- Census 2016 data indicate that the unemployment rate for Travellers is 80.2 per cent compared with 12.9 per cent for the general population. These data also indicate that the labour force participation rate among Irish Travellers is 57 per cent compared with 61.4 per cent for non-Travellers.¹
- Census 2016 data indicate that almost 1 in 8 (11.3 per cent) of Travellers were unable to work due to a disability, nearly three times the equivalent rate for the general population (4.3 per cent).
- A 2017 ESRI report on discrimination in Ireland found 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".² 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.³
- Available data on the situation for Roma indicate that approximately 17 per cent are in employment. In addition, 79 per cent of Roma respondents said they had experienced discrimination in seeking employment.⁴

¹ Census 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Central Statistics Office.

² 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.

³ Watson et al (2017) op cit. page 86.

⁴ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018). Roma in Ireland: a National Needs Assessment.

- There is an entrenched education equality gap between Traveller children and their settled peers. Census 2016 data indicate that: 13 per cent of Traveller women are educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69 per cent of the general population; and 57 per cent of Traveller men are educated to at most Primary level, compared to 13.6 per cent of the general population.⁵

Please provide suggested actions that you feel are required in this area

1. In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty, Solas must assess the relevant key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma and develop and report on targeted cross-departmental measures to reduce the education and employment gaps between Travellers and Roma and the majority population. Some of the key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, relevant to the role of FET in job creation and requiring identified actions in this field, are:

- the high levels of discrimination experienced by Traveller and Roma job seekers,
- the disproportionately high levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities, compared with the majority population,
- the poor educational outcomes for Travellers and Roma, in comparison to the majority population,
- the disproportionately high levels of disability for working age Travellers, compared with their settled counterparts,
- the impact of regulatory barriers preventing many Roma from accessing employment-related payments and services, in particular the Habitual Residence Condition,
- the lack of attention to the identity, situation, and experience of Travellers and Roma, in the planning, design and delivery of FET provision, and
- the absence of an ethnic identifier in Solas data collection systems.

2. Apprenticeships and training should be tailored to respond to, and take advantage of the potential in the cultural practices, of an economic nature, evident in the Roma and Traveller community, including self-employment initiatives. For example, apprenticeships and training in the equine industry need to be developed to build on Traveller interest in, and engagement with horse ownership and breeding.

3. Solas need to establish steps to ensure an adequate balance of investment between an 'in employment' and a 'for employment' focus, across the FET strategy implementation, to secure good outcomes for groups, such as Traveller and Roma, that are particularly vulnerable to employment-related discrimination and social exclusion. Such actions should be given priority, particularly in the current context of almost full employment across the economy.

4. Solas need to introduce an ethnic identifier across its monitoring and evaluation systems in order to gather data on Traveller and Roma access to, participation in, and outcomes from FET provision.

Learning Pathways

Please share your thoughts on Learning Pathways

Further education and training pathways are vital for members of the Traveller and Roma communities. For early school leavers, for example, the educational transition pathway for many Travellers is via programmes such as Youthreach. The lack of data collection across FET provision, on the basis of learners' ethnicity, however, leaves a significant gap in terms of evidence-based planning and policy development at national level.

The Census data offer some evidence in this regard. According to the 2016 Census, of the Travellers aged 15 years and over who have finished their education (13,331 persons), 5 per cent, had completed some form of post-second-level education: 2 per cent (157 women, 118 men) had completed undefined technical/vocational programmes; 1.3

⁵ Central Statistics Office, 'Profile 8 - Irish Travellers Ethnicity and Religion – Census 2016 Results' (Press Statement) (2017).

percent (101 women, 67 men) hold advanced/higher certificates/completed apprenticeships; and another 1.3 percent (105 women and 62 men) hold a degree or professional qualification. 10 percent of women and 10 percent of men registered as still in education. Most were in the younger age groups, and women strongly outnumbered men at all levels.

The Census does not capture disaggregated data regarding Roma (as a distinct minority ethnic group) however, the National Roma Needs Assessment (2018) found that in 9.5 per cent (n=84) of Roma households there was someone attending a training course.

In the absence of robust data it is not possible to track access, participation, and learning outcomes for Travellers and Roma, across FET learning pathways. Anecdotal evidence, however, on Travellers experiences on FET programmes, and outcomes such as certification, seem to be of varied quality, and routes onwards to advanced further education or higher education are unclear.⁶

Please provide suggested actions that you feel are required in this area

1. In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty, Solas must assess the relevant key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma and respond to these by providing the necessary supports and education provision to ensure that learning pathways for Travellers and Roma can be enhanced to a point that is in line with the majority population and with an accommodation for the identity, situation, and experience of these communities. Some of the key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, relevant to the theme of learning pathways, and requiring identified actions in this field, are:

- discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma in accessing, participating in, and remaining in FET provision,
- the significant reliance of members of the Traveller and Roma communities on particular forms of FET provision as a key means to access education and employment,
- the lack of attention to the identity, situation, and experience of Travellers and Roma, in current FET provision and progression pathways,
- the low level of good quality outcomes for Travellers accessing FET provision.

2. Career guidance models should be developed that are specifically targeted at Travellers and Roma, given their distance from the labour market, with access to specific learning pathways that include positive action measures to address their particular needs and to achieve an acceleration in their learning pathways.

3. There is a need for data systems across FET provision, to collect data on access, participation and outcomes for Traveller and Roma learners, and such systems need to accurately track their pathways within FET provision and from FET to HE provision. The data gathered then need to be analysed with a view to further evolving the strategy and its implementation in a manner that can secure outcomes for Traveller and Roma learners.

Active Inclusion

Please share your thoughts on Active Inclusion

The situation and experience of Travellers and Roma in regard to education and employment, is one of significant inequality of access, participation, and outcome, when compared to that of the majority population. Some key statistics in this regard:

⁶ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Center, Submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, March 2019

- 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.
- Census 2016 data indicate that: 13.3 per cent of Traveller women are educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69 per cent of the general population; and 57 per cent of Traveller men are educated to at most primary level, compared to 14 per cent of the general population.⁷
- The National Roma Needs Assessment, conducted in 2018, found that almost 40 percent of adults have never been to school (this was particularly marked for women with 41 percent of women having never been to school, while 22 per cent of men had never been to school).
- For Roma learners, low levels of literacy, combined with the challenge of learning English, present a compounding barrier for these learners to overcome if they are to actively participate in, and obtain good outcomes from further education and training.

The S42 public sector equality and human rights duty requires all public bodies to assess the key equality and human rights issues for service beneficiaries and employees, across all of their functions. There is a further legal requirement, in the duty, to publicly report on these assessments and the actions taken by the organisation to address issues identified. At present, there appears to be a lack of consistency in regard to the application of the duty by agencies funded by Solas. For example, an examination of the strategic plans of Education and Training Boards highlights that some ETBs are explicitly noting their strategic objectives in regard to the duty, while other ETBs are silent on any planned work in this regard.

Please provide suggested actions that you feel are required in this area

1. In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty, Solas must assess the relevant key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma and respond to these by providing the necessary supports and education provision to ensure that learning pathways for Travellers and Roma can be enhanced in line with the majority population and with an accommodation for the identity, situation, and experience of these communities. Some of the key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, relevant to the theme of active inclusion, and requiring identified actions in this field, are:

- poor educational outcomes for Traveller children in comparison to the settled population,
- the impact of discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma in the education system,
- the poor educational outcomes for Roma girls, in comparison to Roma boys,
- intersectional issues that result in compounding barriers for some Roma and Travellers, including: childcare responsibilities; language and literacy issues; disability; the impact of regulatory barriers preventing many Roma from accessing employment-related payments and services, in particular the Habitual Residence Condition

2. The Solas FET strategy should include an explicit reference to the public sector equality and human rights duty and the action Solas will be undertaking in this regard to: implement the duty; and ensure that all bodies funded by Solas will also address their statutory obligations under the duty.

3. An equality and human rights infrastructure is required for providers of FET to ensure that cultural diversity is appropriately accommodated in policy and provision, and that equality outcomes are secured for Roma and

⁷ Central Statistics Office, 'Profile 8 - Irish Travellers Ethnicity and Religion – Census 2016 Results' (Press Statement) (2017).

Travellers across FET provision. This organisational equality and human rights infrastructure would enable a planned and systematic approach to implementing the public sector equality and human rights duty and would include:

- equality and human rights organisational policy that establishes the standard to be achieved in this regard,
- identifying responsibility for driving and ensuring a focus on equality and human rights within the organisation,
- training provision to ensure staff competency in relation to diversity and cultural diversity in particular,
- equality and human rights impact assessment of organisational programmes and procedures for their delivery to ensure the equality and human rights issues identified for the sector are being addressed,
- consultation processes with those experiencing inequality and human rights issues, including Roma and Traveller organisations,
- equality and human rights data, in particular an ethnic identifier, to gather data on Traveller and Roma participation and outcomes in FET, with steps to analyse and respond to the data and the evidence it provides.

All FET providers funded by Solas should be required and supported under the strategy to implement such an infrastructure to a high standard.

4. Solas could usefully develop and pilot a peer model of FET support for Travellers and Roma, based on the successful Traveller Primary Health Care Project developed by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. This would involve training Traveller and Roma FET support workers whose role would be to serve as a bridge between members of the Traveller and Roma communities and their representative organisations, and FET providers, with a view to: identifying and addressing the specific FET needs of these communities; informing FET providers about cultural diversity and community needs; informing members of the Traveller and Roma communities about FET provision; and working collaboratively with FET providers and Traveller and Roma organisations to promote access to FET provision and remove barriers.

5. Specific measures are required by FET providers to address the diversity of needs within the Traveller and Roma communities, such as:

- targeted measures to attract Roma women into FET, to address the lower levels of educational outcomes for Roma women in comparison to Roma men,
- the design and delivery of ESOL provision needs to take account of the particular barriers for Roma, in accessing FET, in relation to low levels of literacy compounded with limited proficiency in the English language,
- measures to attract and retain mature learners from the Travellers and Roma, in recognition that, for many Travellers and Roma, their life commitments strongly influence the age at which they can engage in further and higher education (for example, marriage and child-rearing are engaged in at a younger age than in the majority population, therefore having access to FET as mature students is extremely important for them).

6. The incorporation of an ethnic identifier (in line with the Census question) across FET provision is required to gather data on Travellers and Roma access and participation in FET and their learner pathways.

7. A suite of targeted measures should be developed to accelerate Traveller and Roma pathways to the labour market, in addition to enhancing participation in, and outcomes from general FET provision that is designed and delivered in a culturally competent manner to respond to cultural diversity. These targeted measures should address specific needs of Roma and Travellers as well as serving as a form of positive action. They should be designed to secure a fit with general provision so that Travellers and Roma can move between targeted and general

provision as their needs require. Such measures need to be accompanied by adaptations in general provision to take account of cultural diversity and to ensure Traveller and Roma can access general provision and are not segregation solely into targeted provision.

Lifelong Learning and Workforce Upskilling

Please share your thoughts on Lifelong Learning & Workforce Upskilling

The significant gap that exists, between the Traveller and Roma communities and the majority population, in regard to education, training and employment, participation and outcomes, underscore the importance of effective policies in relation to recognition of prior learning (RPL). The validation of knowledge, skills and competencies, acquired through non-formal and informal learning, holds significant potential in enhancing FET learning pathways for employability and mobility for Traveller and Roma.⁸ However, the potential of RPL for marginalised communities has not been harnessed.

Awareness about RPL is low among groups that are distanced from the formal education and FET systems. In addition, RPL in Ireland is very much tied to the national framework of qualifications, requiring a higher onus on learners to evidence prior formal, non-formal and informal learning. A 2010 report that included a comparison of approaches to lifelong learning in a number of EU countries, found that the thrust of the approach in Ireland was towards skills for employability, in other jurisdictions, by comparison, there was a more balanced focus on skills for employment as well as learning to promote social inclusion and active citizenship.⁹

Participation in community development and community-based education programmes provide important sources of learning for disadvantaged communities that experience exclusion from the formal education system. RPL from these sources is vital for enabling members of the Traveller and Roma communities to gain formal qualifications and access to FET. Current exemplars, in this regard, include Pavee Point's primary health care program, which, from its has built on the existing knowledge within the Traveller and Roma communities to promote health and wellbeing. The Galway Traveller Movement's 'Empowering Traveller Women Entrepreneurs Project' which is designed to assist Traveller women to develop and/or expand enterprises for themselves, is another exemplar.

The Department of Education and Skills under the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy (NTRIS) 2017-2020, commits to "develop a national policy on recognition of prior learning by 2018, which will benefit Travellers and Roma as well as other target groups identified in the National Access Plan" and to "develop an accessible and inclusive model of RPL in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations to support the accreditation and employment of Travellers and Roma." In the October 2018 NTRIS progress report, however, it was noted that the Department of Education and Skills and the QQI had yet to make any progress on this action.

Please provide suggested actions that you feel are required in this area

1. In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty, Solas must assess the relevant key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma and respond to these by providing the necessary supports and education provision to ensure that learning pathways for Travellers and Roma can be enhanced in line with the majority population and with an accommodation for the identity, situation, and experience of these communities. Some of the key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, relevant to the theme of Lifelong Learning, are:

- Travellers and Roma attainment in formal education is significantly lower than the majority population, therefore, measurements of prior learning that focus on non-formal and informal settings are vital to these communities,

⁸ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (2014) "National informal and non-formal learning validation systems Overview of the system in Ireland and some perspectives and recommendations from Traveller women and Traveller groups."

⁹ Hourigan, N. & Campbell, M. (2010) The TEACH Report: Traveller Education and Adults: Crisis, Challenge and Change. National Association of Travellers Centres, Co. Roscommon, Ireland.

- participation in community development and community-based education programmes provide important sources of learning for Travellers and Roma,

2. The recommendations in the NTRIS to “develop a national policy on recognition of prior learning by 2018, which will benefit Travellers and Roma as well as other target groups identified in the National Access Plan” and to “develop an accessible and inclusive model of RPL in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations to support the accreditation and employment of Travellers and Roma.” must be progressed without any further delay.

New Models of Delivery

Please share your thoughts on New Models of Delivery

At present there are no nationally collected data on the ethnic background of Irish apprentices. It is not possible, therefore, to establish how many Traveller and Roma are currently engaging in such provision. In this regard, the recent Solas Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship (2018) noted that “The participation of members of the Irish Traveller community in apprenticeship was also discussed, however there were no examples cited by review participants of apprentices with a Traveller background.” The Review also notes that “commitments in the 2017-2020 *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* were noted, and a proposal that additional practical steps would be taken to promote and open up apprenticeship opportunities for members of the Traveller community.”

We welcome this proposed action and recommend that in the design of these “practical steps” Solas would ensure this planning work take cognisance of the EU [10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion](#). We also welcome the proposal to “incorporate the national Census questions on disability and ethnicity into apprentice registration as a means of gathering more robust data on participation.” Such data is essential for evidence-based planning and service delivery.

A recent publication by Aontas, the national adult learning organisation, identifies a number of issues regarding the design and delivery of apprenticeships that have relevance for Traveller and Roma participation: the gendered nature of provision, evidenced in the orientation of apprenticeships towards, and the take up of apprenticeships overwhelmingly by men; and the increasing perception among trainees and potential trainees that there is an increasing academic focus and requirement regarding taking up apprenticeships and that they are increasingly becoming more closely aligned to higher education.¹⁰

The National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy contains a commitment to ensure “improved opportunities for Traveller and Roma to engage in culturally appropriate apprenticeships, training and lifelong learning.” The FET could usefully set out an objective in regard to the measures envisaged in this regard.

Please provide suggested actions that you feel are required in this area

1. In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty, Solas must assess the relevant key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma and respond to these by providing the necessary supports and education provision to ensure that learning pathways for Travellers and Roma can be enhanced in line with the majority population and with an accommodation for the identity, situation, and experience of these communities. Some of the key equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, relevant to the theme of new models of delivery, and requiring identified actions in this field, are:

- the lack of culturally appropriate apprenticeships available to members of the Traveller and Roma communities,
- levels of discrimination as a key barrier to Travellers and Roma accessing apprenticeships and traineeships,
- the absence of an ethnic identifier in quality assurance systems and structures

2. The FET strategy could usefully set out the measures it intends to pursue to develop opportunities for Travellers and Roma to engage in culturally appropriate apprenticeships, training and lifelong learning and in FET provision to develop opportunities for employment, including self-employment within their traditional economic activities.

¹⁰ Apprenticeships / Pre-Apprenticeships, and Community Education, Aontas 18/12/18

3. Quality Assurance needs to be understood and addressed in a manner that includes equality, non-discrimination, and accommodating cultural diversity as key dimensions to be measured and monitored. The development of an equality and human rights infrastructure across FET provision would support such a planned and systematic approach.

4. Solas proposals for “new models of delivery that include pre-apprenticeship which prepares future apprentices by equipping them with skills and work experience providing a foundation to build an apprenticeship” could usefully include a focus on addressing the specific barriers for Traveller and Roma to ensure their progression to apprenticeships and employment.

5. The commitment in the 2017-2020 *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion* that “additional practical steps would be taken to promote and open up apprenticeship opportunities for members of the Traveller community” is welcome. We recommend that this work would be undertaken in consultation with Travellers and Roma and their representative organisations and in alignment with the EU [10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion](#).

Overall Comments

The significant gap between the educational outcomes of members of the Traveller and Roma communities, compared with the majority population, remain entrenched. The Census data, together with data from the National Roma needs Assessment 2018, presented in this submission, attest to this significant gap. In addition, Census data regarding the Traveller community’s reliance on accessible, quality FET provision, as a means of increasing their participation in HE and employment, further attests to the need for the forthcoming FET strategy to specifically name Travellers and Roma as a target group.

In addition to the recommendations throughout this submission, the two key overarching measures that would be of significant benefit for the forthcoming strategy are:

- The incorporation of an ethnic identifier (in line with the Census question) across FET provision, to gather data on Travellers and Roma access and participation in FET and their learner pathways.
- The implementation of the S42 public sector equality and human rights duty in Solas and across its funded agencies.
- Mainstream in the Strategy measures to accommodate culturally appropriate approaches to apprenticeship, training, and lifelong learning for minority ethnic groups including Travellers and Roma.