



Submission to Department of the Environment, Climate,
and Communications

Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development
Goals

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Introduction

Pavee Point welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Government's Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As minority ethnic groups, Travellers and Roma are among the most marginalised and excluded individuals in Ireland. They experience stark health inequalities, poor accommodation conditions, poverty, low educational attainment and literacy levels, high levels of unemployment and intersectional forms of discrimination and racism.¹

1. What are you/your organisation/your sector doing to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Pavee Point, as a member of Coalition 2030, is committed to supporting Ireland to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Pavee Point works from a community development perspective and promotes the realisation of human rights and equality for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. This focus on human rights extends to all of those included in the SDGs, with a particular focus on poverty, education, and health & wellbeing. An area we are paying increasing attention to is climate action. In 2022, Pavee Point developed its own climate action plan in consultation with Community Work Ireland. This plan contains actions at three levels to tackle environmental degradation from a climate justice perspective; at an organisational level, a community level, and a national level. This plan aims to address the disproportionate impact of climate change, while also building awareness of the relevance of climate action to Traveller and Roma communities.

2. What would you/your organisation suggest Ireland do to further increase SDG implementation?

There is an urgent need to improve the availability of data on the SDG's progress. The State has previously committed to developing a system of ethnic data collection across state departments and agencies, and Pavee Point welcomes the announcement to develop a National Equality Data Strategy.² However, there is currently very little statistically reliable data on the situation of Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The urgency to develop and implement ethnic data collection is particularly pertinent following the COVID-19 pandemic as we seek to understand the impact this has on fulfilling the SDGs, especially for ethnic minority groups.

3. What could Ireland improve on?

- a. No Poverty (Goal 1): The State's application of the European Directive 2004/38 through the Habitual Residence Condition policy has a discriminatory impact on the ability of many Roma to access social protection even after having lived in the country for several years. This excludes many Roma children from receiving Child Benefit, a universal payment for all children in the State. Furthermore, the discrimination that Traveller and Roma communities face impacts on their employment opportunities and their access to quality housing as a result, with a 2021 report finding that 39% of Travellers are effectively homeless.³

¹ [All Ireland Traveller Health Study \(2010\)](#)

² [Minister O'Gorman announces the development of a National Equality Data Strategy](#)

³ [The Traveller Community & Homelessness \(2021\)](#)

- b. Good health & Wellbeing (Goal 3): Pavee Point welcomes the recent publication of the National Traveller Health Action Plan to tackle Traveller health inequalities. However, the State must ensure a whole-of-government approach is taken to implement these actions. As the health status of Traveller and Roma communities cannot improve without adopting a social determinants of health perspective.
 - c. Quality Education (Goal 4): The development of a National Traveller Education Strategy, a Programme for Government commitment made in 2020, remains an urgent and outstanding priority. The State has indicated that a consultation process for its development will be initiated by the end of this year – however, Pavee Point remains concerned about the potential of this being further postponed.
 - d. Climate Action (Goal 13): The State must ensure that the voices of ethnic minority communities, including Travellers and Roma, are included in climate actions. Pavee Point is aware of the escalating issue of energy poverty in Ireland, and its disproportionate impact on the Traveller and Roma communities. Energy costs are now +34% higher than December 2016.⁴ Fuel poverty is a common issue among Travellers, as the community is dependent on traditional sources of fuel, such as turf or wood, to heat their homes. Other common and inefficient heat sources are gas cylinders and electric heaters. A 2019 report by Traveller MABS revealed that all Traveller clients of the service were in fuel poverty with the average percentage of household disposable income taken up by fuel costs amounting to 21%. This is double the 10% measure for fuel poverty.⁵ Broadly, the Government's current policies and structures make it difficult for Travellers and Roma to switch to using low-emission alternatives, whether that is in respect to fuels or transport. For example, Traveller-specific accommodation is typically located outside of city centres, near high-speed national roads where there is a lack of public transport links, as well as walking and cycling infrastructure.⁶ This significantly reduces or eliminates the opportunities for these communities to choose active travel, which further entrenches their existing health inequalities.
4. Have you any ideas you would like to share on how Ireland can Build Back Better while Leaving No One Behind?
- a. Empower Civil Society: Political leadership from the top is vital, however, so is the resourcing and partnership with local actors on the SDGs. Communities need to be true partners in the achievement of the SDGs, particularly ethnic minority communities like Travellers and Roma, who are most affected by the failure to fulfill the goals.
 - b. Collection of Disaggregated Data: As stated above, this needs to be prioritised across Government departments to monitor the implementation of the SDGs and the outcomes for Travellers and Roma.
 - c. Mainstream & Targeted Initiatives: These should be developed in consultation with Travellers and Roma to mitigate carbon emissions, facilitate active lifestyle

⁴ [Call for New Energy Poverty Strategy](#)

⁵ [Traveller MABS Energy Poverty Report \(2019\)](#)

⁶ [Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019 – 2024 | Dublin City Council](#)

choices, and provide appropriate infrastructure. For example, a targeted initiative could be the introduction of a SEAI retrofitting grant/scheme for Travellers living in trailers to avail of.