

# ***Roma Educational Needs in Ireland***

## ***Context and Challenges***

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*June 2005*

*City of Dublin VEC  
in association with Pavee Point Travellers Centre  
and the Roma Support Group*



Published by  
City of Dublin VEC

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Editorial Assistance: Liz O'Sullivan  
Tanya Ward

Design by Metaphor  
Photography by Derek Speirs

# Contents

List of Boxes	4
List of Tables	4
Foreword	5
Definitions: Terms referring to people	6
Definitions of Key Terms	7
Glossary of Terms	8
Executive Summary	9
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
1.1 The International Context	13
1.2 The Irish Context	13
1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research	14
1.4 Methodology	14
1.5 Fieldwork	14
1.6 Quantitative Data	15
1.7 Research Area	15
1.8 Identifying Consultation Topics	15
1.9 Data Collection and Analysis	16
1.10 Report Structure	16
<b>Chapter 2: Profile of the Roma</b>	
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 International Profile of the Roma	19
2.3 The Roma Community in Ireland	28
2.4 Summary of Key Points	34
<b>Chapter 3: Education for Roma</b>	
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 Irish Education and the Roma Community	37
3.3 Service Providers and Local Roma Population Initiatives	44
3.4 International Education Programmes and Policies for Roma	48
3.5 Summary of Key Points	56
<b>Chapter 4: Emerging themes from the fieldwork</b>	
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 Culture	59
4.3 Barriers	62
4.4 Supports	66
4.5 Provision	68
4.6 Research with Roma Children	69
4.7 Summary of Key Points	71
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	
5.1 Final Conclusion	75
5.2 Recommendations	77



## Appendices

Appendix A	Advisory Committee	82
Appendix B	Roma Support Group	83
Appendix C	Focus Group Topics and Questions	84
Appendix D	Life History Interviews	85
Appendix E	Drawing Interviews with Roma children	86
Appendix F	Crosscare Survey	87
Appendix G	Consultation Questions with Service Providers	89
Appendix H	Individuals and Organisations who contributed to the report	90
Appendix I	Agencies, Organisations and Programmes for Roma	94
Appendix J	Travellers and Formal Education in Ireland	95
Appendix K	International Reports	96
Appendix L	Programmes for Roma	98
Appendix M	Data Collection from the Report	100
Appendix N	Profile of the Participants in the Report	102

## List of Boxes

Box 1:	Language Groups in the Roma community	25
Box 2:	Equal Opportunities for Romany Children through School Development Programmes	53
Box 3:	Intercultural Education Project	54
Box 4:	Premsyl Pitter School	55

## List of Tables

Table 1:	Statistical Profile of the Roma community: Issues and Challenges	20
Table 2:	Profile of Roma in Ireland	33
Table 3:	Intercultural Policy and Practice Development in Ireland	38
Table 4:	Guiding Principles of Roma Education Policy: Recommendation No. R (2000) 4	51

## References

## Foreword

In 2003 a proposal was made from the City of Dublin VEC, Pavee Point Travellers Centre and the Roma Support Group under the Education Equality Initiative to undertake research into the education needs of Roma men, women and children. Funding was approved in 2004 and this report outlines the findings of that research.

The report aims were to profile the Roma community in Ireland, indicate current provision and issues effecting access and participation identify models of good practice internationally and devise recommendations for future provision.

Very many people and organisations assisted in the research process and a full list is included in the Appendices. We would like to acknowledge particularly the special debt owed to the men, women and children from the Roma Community who participated in the research fieldwork. Also, we are very grateful to Leanbh who provided supervised access to Roma children for the focus groups, and Crosscare who gave us access to their survey of primary schools in the Dublin Archdiocese. We also wish to particularly thank Louise Lesovitch who researched and wrote the report for her dedication and untiring interest in the subject.

We hope this report will contribute to an understanding of the issues and barriers which affect Roma access, participation and attainment within Irish educational structures and will assist us in developing approaches to engaging Roma people fully in education and training provision.

**Jacinta Stewart**

Chief Executive Officer

City of Dublin VEC



## Definitions: Terms Referring to People

### Roma

Roma refers to the international Roma community, which is made up of diverse groups throughout the world. As a minority ethnic group, the Roma do not have an exclusive nation or homeland but share a common ancestry of origin, history and culture. The term 'Roma' is the plural of Rom, which means an adult member, man or people. Romni refers to female members of Roma groups and the wider Roma community. Gypsy<sup>1</sup> is a pejorative term originating from a popular misconception that the Roma came from Egypt. Originating from northwest India, the Roma Diaspora began in the eleventh century. Today there is an estimated global population of 10–12 million Roma living in Europe, Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas (North, Central and South), Australia and New Zealand. Estimates suggest that 8–10 million Roma live in Europe. The Roma population in Ireland is estimated to be 2,500–3,000.<sup>2</sup>

Despite a traditional nomadic culture, today many Roma groups are settled, particularly in the former Eastern European countries where sedentary living was enforced under communist rule. However, there are still Roma who are peripatetic nomads, that is they travel in order to practice their trades and skills where they can. Roma groups and the wider Roma community have survived banishment, slavery, genocide, sterilisation programmes, segregation practices and assimilation policies.

### The Traveller Community

Travellers are an indigenous minority, documented as being part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers have a long shared history and value system, which makes them a distinct group. They have their own language, customs and traditions.<sup>3</sup>

### Ethnic Minority

The term 'ethnic minority' indicates minority groups, communities and/or societies who share a distinct cultural heritage which, is distinct from the majority society. While recognising diversity the term should not be used to segregate on the basis of difference or because a group or community is statistically smaller than the majority society.

### Majority Population/Societies

The use of 'majority' in the context of this report refers to members of the non-Roma community. Majority society or societies reflect dominant and mainstream policies and practices for example in education, health and employment.

- 
- 1 This report uses the term Roma although the term 'Gypsy' appears when international research programmes, documents and policies on the community are referred to. However, as a term 'Gypsy' is considered derogatory by many members of the Roma community because of negative and stereotypical associations with the term.
  - 2 Estimate supplied by the Roma Support Group and Pavee Point Travellers Centre.
  - 3 Source: Pavee Point Travellers Centre at [http://www.paveepoint.ie/pav\\_culture\\_a.html](http://www.paveepoint.ie/pav_culture_a.html)

# Definition of Key Terms

## Interculturalism

The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) defines interculturalism as the:

[A]cceptance not only of the principles of equality of rights, values and abilities but also the development of policies to promote interaction, collaboration and exchange with people of different cultures, ethnicity or religion living in the same territory.

Furthermore interculturalism is an approach that sees difference as something positive that can enrich a society and recognises racism as an issue that needs to be tackled in order to create a more inclusive society. The concept of interculturalism has replaced earlier concepts of assimilation and multiculturalism.<sup>4</sup>

## Racism

Racism is based on the belief that human groups are made up of 'races'<sup>5</sup>, some of whom are superior or inferior because of their skin colour, ethnicity, culture, and/or nationality. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1969, defines racial discrimination as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.<sup>6</sup>

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4 NCCRI (2001) *Guidelines On Anti-Racism And Intercultural Training NCCRI: Dublin*, pp 6.

5 The author of this report agrees with *The National Action Plan Against Racism* that: 'All human beings belong to the same species'. Therefore the plural of the term race should not exist however, 'the term 'race' continues to be applied in a legal context at international and national levels', The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2005-2008): Dublin, pp 38.

6 Article 1.



## **Glossary of Terms**

### **AEO**

Adult Education Officer

### **AONTAS**

The Irish National Association of Adult Education

### **CDVEC**

City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee

### **CROSSCARE**

The Social Care Agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin

### **COE**

Council of Europe

### **CWO**

Community Welfare Officer

### **DALC**

Dublin Adult Learning Centre

### **DES**

The Department of Education and Science

### **FÁS**

The National Training and Employment Authority

### **ISPCC**

The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

### **IVEA**

Irish Vocational Education Association

### **NALA**

National Adult Literacy Agency

### **NCCRI**

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

### **NGO**

Non-government organisation

### **OSCE**

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

### **VEC**

Vocational Education Committee

# Executive Summary

## The Report

It is without doubt the case that Roma men, women and children would benefit from targeted educational interventions and supports. A number of interventions documented in the current report attest to this. Yet this fact must be set within the context of one of the chief findings of this report: Provision for the Roma community will not be achieved without considerable attention to cultural and social factors. This finding is collaborated by international work in the field. An OSCE report concludes:

**Unfortunately, countless programmes for Roma have been destined to fail because they were developed without Roma participation, and correspondingly, with scant awareness of the specific culture and needs of the intended beneficiaries.<sup>7</sup>**

## Context and Objectives of the Research

This research arose from previous Irish research, which highlighted the need to pay specific attention to the educational needs of the Roma community. Funded by the Education Equality Initiative of the Department of Education and Science, the research set out to:

1. Profile the Roma
2. Indicate current provision for the target group and identify participation issues
3. Devise recommendations for the design and delivery of future provision for this target group

## Profile of the Roma

There is a dearth of official statistics pertaining to the Roma. As an ethnic minority, the Roma are not recorded and/or under recorded on official statistical collations including national census counts. As a result, figures for Roma groups and the wider Roma community are predominately based on estimates. This difficulty in obtaining reasonably accurate figures or estimates for the population is compounded by the fact that many Roma do not reveal their ethnicity because of a well-founded fear of persecution. Notwithstanding this, the most widely given estimate for the global population is 10–12 million. The population of the Roma in Ireland is similarly based on estimates. The most widely given estimate are 2,500 to 3,000 with the majority originating from Romania. Anecdotal evidence gathered in research for this report would seem to indicate that this figure is in all probability higher.

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<sup>7</sup> Van der Stoep, M. (2000) *OSCE Report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*, OSCE: The Hague, pp 8.



## Research Methodology

Focusing on primary, post-primary and adult education, the research findings are drawn from consultation with Roma adults in Dublin through focus group discussions and life history interviews. Drawing interviews were used with Roma children, also living in Dublin. Irish service providers were consulted through semi-structured interviews. International research and education policy assisted in creating a context to understand/to identify the barriers, which continue to affect Roma access, participation and attainment in education.

The report recommendations are drawn from the research findings, as well as an examination of Irish education policy and practice.

## Key Findings of the Report

The research found the barriers to Roma adult participation in education (primarily, language and literacy development) include:

- Stress of the asylum process and an inability to plan for the future
- Mother-tongue non-literacy as well as non-literacy in other languages
- Limited and/or no English language skills development
- Traditional gender roles
- Cultural attitudes to mixing in non-Roma sectors and fears of losing Roma culture
- Limited and/or negative experiences in formal education provision

The barriers to Roma children's participation and achievement/attainment in education include:

- Lack of family support for school
- Parental inability to help with schoolwork
- Traditional gender roles
- Difficulties eliciting accurate information on children's previous school experiences and/or enrolment
- Peer group relations in schools
- Literacy and familiarity with a formal learning environment

## Conclusion of the Report

In conclusion, the report emphasises the importance of the extended, intergenerational family-group learning environment in Roma culture. It draws attention for the need to:

- Establish/build a link between the home and education institutions for adults and children
- Understand traditional social and cultural roles maintained by the majority of Roma families in Ireland
- Provide programmes for Roma men, which have specific work-related outcomes
- Provide programmes for Roma women, which reflect childcare responsibilities and socialisation roles
- Implement a family learning approach to language and literacy development for Roma adults and children

The issues and barriers, which affect Roma access, participation and attainment in education, are long-standing, complex and multi-faceted. Successful provision for Roma is achievable if cultural and social factors as well as historical experiences are taken into consideration. Innovative and inclusive education services, projects and programmes for Roma adults and children are emerging throughout Europe and Ireland. This report highlights the need to build on this work and promote better understanding of a diverse community known as the Roma.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The International Context

**1.1.1.** International research and emerging models of best practice provide an important context to locate this report, which focuses on the educational needs of Roma living in Ireland today. In February 2005, the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion’ (2005–2015) was officially launched.<sup>8</sup> Four priority areas for the Decade have been established: education, employment, health and housing. The need to address the educational needs of the Roma community has also been identified by the Council of Europe, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and Save the Children.<sup>9</sup> These bodies emphasise the complexity of meeting the education needs of the Roma and that the development of educational policy and practice requires identification of interconnected barriers for Roma adults and children. Issues relating to racism, discrimination and poverty must also be addressed. Meeting the educational needs of the Roma community cannot be addressed without acknowledging Roma culture, history and exclusion by majority societies. Fundamentally, international research draws attention to the importance of the extended, intergenerational family unit within Roma groups and the wider Roma community.

### 1.2 The Irish Context

**1.2.1** The Irish context for carrying out research with a specific focus on the educational needs of the Roma community follows recommendations in three Irish research reports.<sup>10</sup> These reports highlight the need to address barriers, which affect participation and access in Irish formal education provision for Roma children and adults living in Ireland today. The term ‘majority society/societies’ is used throughout this report. It refers to the non-Roma majority community, which is responsible for the delivery of formal education provision.

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8 The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) was launched in Sofia, Bulgaria in February 2005. Eight European countries have adopted the initiative (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and the Slovak Republic). For further details see the website of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) at url website <http://eumc.int/eumc/index.php> Date last accessed: 16/03/2005

9 International reports referred to:  
Council of Europe (2000) *Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsies in Europe*;  
Van der Stoep, M. High Commissioner on National Minorities Report (2000) *Report on the situation of Roma in the OSCE Area*; Save the Children (2001) *Denied a future? The right to education of Roma/Gypsy & Traveller children in Europe*.

10 Murphy, P. (2001) *Roma in Ireland: An Initial Needs Analysis*, Roma Support Group in Ireland and Pavee Point: Dublin; Geurin, P. (2001) *Refugee and Asylum Seekers in County Monaghan: Population Profile Needs & Analysis*, County Monaghan Partnership/ The Office of Community and Enterprise: Monaghan County Council; Ward, T. (2002) *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs*, CDVEC and County Dublin VEC: Dublin.



## 1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research

### 1.3.1 The aims of the research report are to:

- Compile a profile of Roma men, women and children/young people in Ireland based on – age, gender, mother tongue, country of origin, educational background, domestic situation, familial relationships, experience of language learning and location
- Indicate current primary, post-primary, adult and further education provision for Roma men and women, paying particular attention to – access, participation and outcomes, as well as identifying best practice
- Devise recommendations for design and delivery of educational provision for primary, post-primary and adult and further education

## 1.4 Methodology

**1.4.1** This report marks the first time fieldwork, in Ireland, has been conducted with a specific focus on the educational needs of Roma. The primary focus is on the identification of barriers affecting access and participation for Roma adults and children in Irish educational provision.

**1.4.2** Data collection was achieved through primary sources (consultation with Roma, service providers, relevant agencies and organisations) and secondary sources (policy documents, educational programmes).<sup>11</sup>

**1.4.3** All methodology employed by the researcher was qualitative. The researcher had access to a survey conducted for the report by Crosscare, a social care agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin. The survey combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. The findings are reflected in the report and have also been used by Crosscare to map the location of Roma families within the Dublin Archdiocese.

**1.4.4** An Advisory Committee with representatives from the Roma Support Group were involved and consulted in the research process.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.5 Fieldwork

**1.5.1** The focus of the fieldwork was:

- To begin to identify the educational needs of Roma in Ireland today
- To build towards an understanding of Roma communities
- To identify recommendations and guidelines for inclusive and appropriate provision for these needs

**1.5.2** The original research design plan envisaged the employment of two Roma assistant researchers. However, due to social welfare restrictions, it was not possible to employ Roma researchers.<sup>13</sup> A compromise was reached and three Roma men and one Roma woman assisted in a voluntary capacity.

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11 Appendix M

12 See Appendix A for a list of members of the Advisory Committee.

13 All the research assistant candidates are in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Rent Allowance and any additional income would have affected their income and any other welfare allowances.

**1.5.3** Members of the Roma Support Group organised and facilitated access to adults from the Roma community who participated in the focus group discussions. The researcher conducted life history interviews with Roma men and women. Semi-structured interviews and consultations were also conducted with service providers. Leanbh, a programme of the ISPCC facilitated and supervised access to Roma children.

## **1.6 Quantitative Data**

**1.6.1** There are no official statistics on the Roma community in Ireland. This presents serious challenges for service providers and educationalists in locating and addressing the needs of Roma groups in their local areas.

**1.6.2** In an attempt to obtain baseline statistics on the Roma population in Ireland, the following agencies and services were contacted:

- The Reception And Integration Agency
- The Central Statistics Office (CSO)
- Primary and secondary level education agencies
- Community Welfare Officers (CWOs)

**1.6.3** Existing reports and documentation on Roma in Ireland provided estimates on the community.

## **1.7 Research Area**

**1.7.1** Areas with the largest known populations of Roma in the Dublin region (city and county) were prioritised. Contact with service providers, agencies and organisations took place in Dublin and throughout Ireland. The researcher visited Monaghan and conducted face-to-face consultations with local service providers.

## **1.8 Identifying Consultation Topics**

**1.8.1** The consultation topics were initially established by the researcher. Based on extensive reading of international documentation on Roma, the topics chosen were linked to the aims and objectives of the research. The topics were then circulated to the Advisory Committee and subsequent changes made.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendices C-G for a list of all topics and questions.



## 1.9 Data Collection and Analysis

**1.9.1** Data collection, particularly in relation to the establishment of a comprehensive profile of Roma in Ireland today, revealed important methodological challenges. These challenges have relevance for the development of future research in this area. The main limitations relate to: difficulties of employing Roma as researchers, identifying and accessing the Roma community, and establishing official statistics on the Roma population in Ireland. A framework for the analysis of data emerging from primary and secondary fieldwork was developed using Framework analysis.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.10 Report Structure

**1.10.1 Chapter 2** provides an international outline of the historical, demographic, socio-cultural and educational background of the Roma community. The outline presents a profile in order for service providers to understand the barriers, which effect Roma adults and children's participation in formal education provision. It dispels myths associated with Roma and highlights the significant role of the intergenerational family in Roma groups and the wider Roma community for meeting education needs. A profile of Roma in Ireland establishes a distinct community, which is frequently referred to as 'Romanians' or by the pejorative term 'Gypsies'.

**1.10.2 Chapter 3** addresses education within Irish and the international context for the Roma community from a human rights and equality perspective. Education provision and programmes for the Traveller community in Ireland are referred to as they may provide an important framework for developing Roma access and participation in Irish educational structures. Although, there is no definitive model of best practice, international educational programmes and Irish initiatives for the Roma community are given.

**1.10.3 Chapter 4** presents the findings of the fieldwork conducted with Roma and non-Roma adult participants for this report. Emerging themes are categorised under four sub-headings: Culture, barriers, supports and provision. The findings from interviews conducted with Roma children are also presented.

**1.10.4 Chapter 5** outlines the conclusion and recommendations of the report in order to meet the educational needs of Roma in Ireland today.

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15 Framework analysis as developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). This form of research is often referred to as 'thematic analysis'. It was selected as a form of analysis because: 'Applied research aims to meet specific information needs and outcomes or recommendations, often within a short timescale. ... [I]t provides systematic and visible stages to the analysis, so that funders and others, can be clear about the stages by which the results have been obtained from the data'. Source: Lacey, A. and Luff, A. (2001) *Trent Focus for Research and Development in Primary Health Care: An Introduction to Qualitative Analysis*, at url website <http://www.trentfocus.org.uk/Resources/Qualitative%20Data%20Analysis.pdf> Date last accessed: 5/11/2004





# Chapter 2

## Profile of the Roma Community

### 2.1 Introduction

**2.1.1** Chapter 2 begins by presenting an international overview of the historical, demographic, socio-cultural and educational background of the Roma community. A demographic profile of Roma in Ireland is then provided from existing documentation and previous research on the community. Finally, a profile of the community is presented from the research conducted specifically for this report. The Roma community is (internationally) characterised by diversity and this has important implications for access and participation in education provision. Roma have been described as ‘a mosaic of widely differing groups’<sup>16</sup> that, share a common history, culture and tradition. Regardless of their country of origin, Roma are first and foremost Roma. Thus, Roma acts as a nationality for a global community without a geographical homeland. All Roma share an ancestry of origin but with important diverse genealogical familial structures, as well as experiences of racism and social exclusion from the non-Roma world.

### 2.2 International Profile of Roma

**2.2.1** International research highlights the barriers, which continue to affect Roma adults and children’s participation in formal education provision today. A profile of the community in formal education sectors (or ‘schooling’ as it is referred to by the Roma) reflects limited/no majority language and literacy acquisition. Disrupted school attendance for Roma children and a history of segregated school provision has resulted in low levels of formal education attainment. However, the role of the extended, intergenerational family unit in Roma groups is beginning to be recognised as an important educational link.

**2.2.2** The Roma are frequently described as living on the margins of majority societies. However, the overwhelming majority of Roma groups continue to be relegated to living outside of mainstream education provision, health services, social housing schemes, employment, etc. Traditionally, international government policy and practice has resulted in sub-standard, segregated and assimilatory education for Roma. The provision for Roma in equal education opportunities, in general, has been extremely bleak. However, Roma activists are today, contributing to the development of inclusive and equality-based policy and practices for Roma.

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16 Liegeois, J. P. (1998) *School Provision for Ethnic Minorities: The Gypsy Paradigm*, University of Hertfordshire Press: Hertfordshire, pp 49.



**2.2.3** Important issues for beginning to meet the educational needs of Roma are indicated in this short international profile, for example the role of the family as a central institution in Roma education. An understanding of Roma history, culture and tradition is fundamental. The profile begins by presenting a recurring theme in research on the Roma community: the dearth of statistics on the Roma population (for example, demography, age and gender). This presents challenges for service providers seeking to target and respond to local Roma groups' educational needs.

### Statistics

**2.2.4** There is an international dearth of official statistics for Roma populations.<sup>17</sup> Roma groups are underestimated in European state census statistics,<sup>18</sup> and or excluded because ethnicity is frequently not recorded in census enumeration or ethnicity as a term has been removed from official administration forms. Estimates for Roma are currently gathered and supplied by, for example, government bodies, non-government agencies (NGOs) and aid agencies. However, given the strong demographic growth of the Roma population and visible Roma versus non-visible<sup>19</sup> Roma, figures remain 'on the whole rather imprecise.'<sup>20</sup> There is an estimated global population of 12 million Roma today. Most Roma live in Europe (estimated 8–10 million) and make up to 5–10% of the population in Central and Eastern European countries. Roma also reside in Canada, North America, South America, North Africa and the Middle East. Following World War II and the collapse of Communism in Eastern European countries, there has been additional westward migration. The largest population of Roma in Europe today is in Romania with a population of roughly one and a half million.

In locating statistics for Roma populations, three key issues arise:

**Table 1: A statistical profile of the Roma community – Issues and Challenges:**

1. Official data collection of populations	Ethnicity is not counted or collected in all national census forms/official statistics.
2. Ethnicity	Not all Roma declare themselves as Roma to official sources because of widespread institutional discrimination and racism.
3. Mobility/Movement	Not all Roma are nomadic and large numbers of Roma are semi-sedentary.

17 The conference *Roma In An Enlarged EU*, Brussels: 22-23 April 2004 emphasises the need for accurate statistical data on the Roma community or population is critical in order to 'generate reliable data to justify policy change'. European Commission. (2004) *Roma In An Enlarged EU*, Brussels: 22-23 April 2004, Education 3.7, url website

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/pdf/pubst/romaconfapro4\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/romaconfapro4_en.pdf) Date last accessed: 12/07/2004

18 Van der Stoep, M. (2000) *OSCE Report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*, OSCE: The Hague.

19 Not all Roma are visible in the sense that the family group may be mobile and/or not dress, etc in a way that is associated by non-Roma communities as belonging to the Roma community.

20 Liegeois, J.P. (1998) *Ibid*, pp 34.

**2.2.5** In the absence of official statistics, estimates at local and national levels in Europe reflect an increasing youthful population in the Roma community. Parallels with the Traveller community are reflected in the estimate that: 'Children under sixteen represent approximately 50% of the Gypsy and Traveller population today'.<sup>21</sup>

### **Nomadic lifestyle**

**2.2.6** Today, there are Roma who are nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary. Nomadism for Roma (depending on their country of residence) operates in a different way than, for example Irish Travellers. In the Balkans and Romania, nomadic Roma have permanent winter homes and travel seasonally with winter breaks.<sup>22</sup> Nomadism and mobility is for employment purposes as well as to escape violence and persecution from majority populations (for example, the growing phenomenon of skinhead violence directed at Roma in the Czech Republic). However:

The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe no longer live the nomadic lifestyles historically associated with 'Gypsies'. The image of the Roma caravan moving from one location to another is rarely seen in the region. Most Roma now have a settled pattern of life – having developed permanent residences as a result of settlement policies during the Communist era in most Central and Eastern European nations.<sup>23</sup>

**2.2.7** The reference to Roma as nomads remains one of the myths, which continues to be associated with their lifestyle. The reality is that despite a traditional nomadic culture, today many Roma groups are settled, particularly in the former Eastern European countries where sedentary living was enforced under communist rule. However, there are still Roma who are 'peripatetic' nomads in industrial countries, that is they travel in order to practice their trades and skills where they can. The propagation of mythology about the Roma community by majority societies reveals a predominant lack of knowledge about their history and origin.

### **History of and Myth associated with Roma**

**2.2.8** The Roma Diaspora from northwest India began in the eleventh century; Roma have been living in the Western hemisphere since the fifteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The experiences of Roma throughout their history, (pre- and post-migratory) is characterised by persecution, prejudice and social exclusion from majority societies. Throughout the centuries, Roma have become synonymous with criminality, theft,

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21 Liegeois, J.P. (1998) *Ibid*, pp 92.

22 Save The Children. (2001) *Denied a future? The right to education of the Roma / Gypsy and Traveller children in Europe* pp. 317, Save The Children: London.

23 Open Society Institute. (2004) *Roma Populations in Central and Eastern Europe*, url website [http://www.osi.hu/iep/equity/roma\\_report\\_part2.pdf](http://www.osi.hu/iep/equity/roma_report_part2.pdf) Date last accessed: 20/11/2004

24 There are conflicting views regarding their departure from India, however the general date given is the 11th century although some sources give the Roma departure date from India as occurring in the 10th century. The differences in the centuries correspond to different Roma scholars, activists and organisations.



and widespread hatred. Alternatively, collective mythology and literature<sup>25</sup> have and continue to portray them as flamboyant figures, dancing and playing music around campfires. Majority societies have always and continue to devalue Roma communities throughout the world by depicting them as 'outsiders, aliens and a threat'<sup>26</sup> to social order. Roma communities have survived banishment, slavery, genocide, sterilisation programmes, segregation practices, and assimilation policies<sup>27</sup>.

**2.2.9** The Roma are frequently referred to as Gypsies by non-Roma majority societies. Although some Roma use the term Gypsy, it is generally considered incorrect (and often derogatory) for non-Roma people (known as *Gadje* or *Gazho* (plural) by Roma)<sup>28</sup> to use the word Gypsy when referring to someone from the Roma community. The Roma language is known as *Romani* or *Romanes*. 'There is no Romani word for 'gypsy'. Roma means, literally, 'people'.<sup>29</sup> The term *Roma* is the plural of Rom, which means an adult member, man or people. *Romni* refers to female members of Roma groups and the wider female Roma community.

**2.2.10** Although the origins of the many different Roma groups in the world today come from India, the Roma were traditionally thought to have come from Egypt. The word Gypsy is a corrupted form of the word Egyptian. As a term it has helped to perpetuate and promote the Gypsy myth and misunderstanding towards who the Roma are. The Gypsy in fiction, film and literature is either romanticised or represented as a pejorative figure to be distrusted and feared. As a result, little of substance or accuracy is known about Roma.<sup>30</sup> Literature with negative and/or inaccurate representations of 'Gypsies' continues to be used in mainstream education curricula and contributes to further stereotyping of Roma. There is little if any portrayal of the importance of the family within the Roma community. For the purpose of this report, the family acts as the most important link to understanding education provision and participation for the Roma community.

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25 For more information on portrayal of Roma in literature and the new European Romani Library see: Dowd, Siobhan 'On the road', *The Guardian* Newspaper 9 February 2002 and/or at url website [www.romaniwriters.com/the\\_romani\\_library.htm-28k](http://www.romaniwriters.com/the_romani_library.htm-28k)

26 'Encyclopedia: Timeline of Roma history', url website <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Timeline-of-Roma-history> Date last accessed: 17/08/2004

27 Until the mid-nineteen century, Roma were held as slaves in parts of present day Romania. Roma slavery was abolished, after five centuries, in the same year as North American slavery (1864) and today, many descendants of Roma slaves known as the Vlax Romanies live in the United States of America.

28 The term non-Roma, *Gadje* or *Gorjer* in Anglo Romani is a pejorative term.

29 Doughty, L. 'Those Gucci gypsies and other myths', *The Guardian* newspaper, 14 November, 2004. Use of lower case 'g' for 'gypsies' is used by the author of this article who is a member of the Gypsy Council.

30 Kemp, C. (2004) *Gypsy (Roma)*, url website [http://www3.baylor.edu:80/~Charles\\_Kemp/gypsy\\_health.htm](http://www3.baylor.edu:80/~Charles_Kemp/gypsy_health.htm) Date last accessed: 19/05/2004

## Family and Education

**2.2.11** Roma groups are made up intergenerational, extended families. In Roma life, 'everything revolves around the family, the basic social, economic and educative unit'.<sup>31</sup> An individual Roma household or family will usually be made up of three generations with a network of relatives living together, for example: children, parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Socialisation for Roma children and adults occurs through this extended family network. Solidarity to the Roma community and culture is instilled in all Roma children from an early age. Roma parents distinguish between 'education' and 'schooling'. Education refers to learning about Roma culture, history and traditions. Roma children receive their education through three important links:<sup>32</sup> (1) Through their grandparents, (2) through their parents and (3) through their older brothers and sisters.

**2.2.12** In turn, Roma children themselves become educators for younger brothers and sisters. Fundamental to Roma education is respect and loyalty to the Roma group and wider Roma community. Schooling refers to formal education and despite misnomers, Roma parents and other extended family members recognise the importance of participation and attainment in this educational sector.<sup>33</sup> However, poverty, distance from educational institutions, racism, discrimination, segregation and denial of Roma culture in school curriculum continue to contribute to Roma children's access and attendance within formal education provision. The barriers and experiences of Roma participation in majority education structures may explain why: 'Education within Romani family structures is deeply rooted in traditional Romani cultures, participation in formal education is not'.<sup>34</sup>

**2.2.13** The knowledge and skills Roma children learn through the extended family network help to develop and define subsequent adult roles in the Roma community. The independence and confidence instilled within this community for the Roma child is different from knowledge learning in mainstream education or schooling. The Roma family represents an internal education unit or process for Roma children. School is seen as an external institution reflecting the values of the outside and frequently alien world.<sup>35</sup> As an education unit, the Roma family ensures the socialisation, solidarity and security of all members, regardless of age or gender. The family also operates as an important economic unit.

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31 Liegeois, J-P. (1998) Ibid, pp 65.

32 Piasere, Leonardo (1985) quoted in Liegeois, J-P. (1994) Ibid, pp 66.

33 For more detailed reading see: European Roma Information Service (6–7 May 2004) 'Why D. does not like school' Paper to the *Seminar on Education of children of migrant workers* organised by the European Commission, DG Brussels, url website <http://www/erionet.org/mainEd.html> Date last accessed: 29/09/2004

34 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) Ibid, pp 67.

35 Liegeois, J-P. (1994) Ibid, pp 83.



**2.2.14** Traditionally, Roma children in the classroom have learnt only about majority (that is, non-Roma) population culture and history. A Finnish Roma participant in the Helsinki Watch survey (1999) explained that:

Our children have never learned anything about their own history, culture and customs. Instead every reference to Gypsies is bad. They hear only negative stereotypes everywhere they turn. I believe many Gypsies have learned to look at themselves in the same way. Our children should learn instead to feel pride in the rich heritage of the Gypsy people.<sup>36</sup>

Although many Roma groups maintain traditional patriarchal roles, all members of the community are valued. Mainstream education 'inclusion' or 'provision' for Roma children has been characterised by institutional racism, stereotyping and prejudice. Some non-Roma parents and other members of majority populations also contribute to the barriers Roma families experience when trying to access mainstream or formal education opportunities for their children.

**2.2.16** Understanding the importance of family (intergenerational/extended) units and the link to education are key factors for education providers targeting children and adults in their local Roma population. There are important implications for funding education projects directed at adults or children and how these projects/programmes are delivered. The family context and formal education for Roma cannot be separated as the two strands interconnect and determine how learning takes place. Acknowledging the significant role of family learning for Roma groups provides an important framework to understand the division between internal and external education. In discussing 'education' as a concept, it is important to recognise that it has a different interpretation for Roma groups. How these two strands might be drawn together in a home-school linkage<sup>37</sup> is fundamental:



**2.2.17** Roma education promotes social cohesion and stability. Roma children learn primarily through being treated as equal members within the family and societal structure of the Roma community. However, there are two important barriers, which continue to affect the Roma community's inclusion and success in formal education structures. These barriers relate specifically to language and literacy acquisition.

36 Smith, T. (1999) Recognising Difference: 'The Romani "GYPSY" Child Socialisation and Education Process' in *The Roma Education Resource Book*, Vol. 1, editors Fenyes C., McDonald C. and Meszaros A. url website <http://www.osi.hu/iep/minorities/ResBook1/ResBookAll.htm> pp 8 Date last accessed 08/07/2004

37 The importance of school/home linkages has been emphasised by the European Commission. (2004) *Roma In An Enlarged EU*, Brussels: 22-23 April 2004, Education 3.7, url website [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/pdf/pubst/romaconfapro4\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/romaconfapro4_en.pdf) Date last accessed: 12/07/2004

An example of promoting the home/school linkage in an Irish context is given on page 42 of this report in the profile of Monaghan Education Centre and Roma (3.3.2).

## Language and Literacy

**2.2.18** The most extensively spoken (and studied) Rom/Roma language is *Romani* or *Romanes*, an Indian Sanskrit-based language. Romani, with an estimated sixty dialects, has been preserved through an oral tradition; that is by family members passing on the language through oral communication.

### Box 1: The three language groups/branches within the Roma community

- The Domari in the Middle East and Eastern Europe (the Dom)
- The Lomarvren in Central Europe (the Lom)
- The Romani of Western Europe (the Rom)

**2.2.19** Although, Romani is the most widely spoken of the Roma languages,<sup>38</sup> it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that transferral from an oral language into a written form began. The need for a written standardisation of the Romani<sup>39</sup> language has been recognised by Roma and non-Roma academics, linguists and Roma leaders.<sup>40</sup> Today, a paucity of linguistic materials<sup>41</sup> is available in the Romani language although Roma scholars, linguists and activists are working towards changing this reality. Teaching Romanes in formal education institutions or schools is seen as 'one of the most effective ways to get Roma pupils in touch with Roma culture, to make them aware of their own identity and to help them become more self-confident'.<sup>42</sup> However, some Roma groups, for example the majority of Roma in Hungary, no longer speak the Romani language.<sup>43</sup>

**2.2.20** Non-literacy or semi-literacy helps the Roma preserve their ethnic identity by no or limited contact with non-Roma societies. Non-literacy for many Roma 'prevents the cultural and intellectual values of the *gadje* from infiltrating and undermining traditional Roma society, maintaining the Romani sense of dignity and need for autonomy'.<sup>44</sup> The informal employment sector provides important income

38 Hancock, I. (1995) *A Handbook of Vlax Romani*, url website

<http://www.slavica.com.linguist/hancock1995.html> Date last accessed: 15/07/2004

See also: Patrin: A Brief History of Roma at <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/history.htm> Date last accessed 10/08/2004

39 A grammar book of the Romani language has been compiled by Ian Hancock and is entitled *A Handbook of Vlax Romani*. The Romani language is taught in several university courses from Texas to Moscow.

40 At the Roma Education Seminar in Peterborough 19-21 June 1998, members reached a consensus on the need for the development of a standard alphabet, vocabulary and grammar in the Romani language.

41 Hancock, I. *Gypsy Languages*, url website <http://radoc.net:8088/RADOC-8-GYLGs.htm> Date last accessed: 12/07/2004

42 Zatreanu, M, Banica, I and Costef, A.M. *Roma Language and Culture*, url website <http://www.egale.ro/english/resource/rroma.html> Date last accessed: 16/07/2004

43 Petrova, D. (2003) *The Roma: between a myth and the future* at <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles> Date last accessed: 19/11/2004

44 The Patrin Web Journal. *Customs, Traditions and Beliefs*, url website <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/beliefs.htm> Date last accessed: 20/04/2005



opportunities for Roma adults.<sup>45</sup> However, literacy difficulties perpetuate their lack of formal employment opportunities in the increasingly highly literate and technological non-Roma (*gakikane*) world.

**2.2.21** The harsh living conditions experienced by many Roma groups are reflected by limited school achievements. Discrimination, poverty and the impact on access to education are intrinsically linked. Many Roma children have to work in order to help ensure basic necessities are met, for example the family eating and keeping a roof over its head. Participation in formal education is characterised by low/sporadic attendance and the propensity to abandon/drop out of school early remain the norm for Roma throughout the world. The 1996 report of the European Commission concluded that when compared to other populations in relation to literacy levels and school failure, 'no other population shows figures approaching those of the Gypsy and Traveller Communities'.<sup>46</sup>

### Gender and Education

**2.2.22** Roma men and women have clear roles in the family group on the collective education of children. Roma women are responsible for the education of young children and girls until they are married. The education passed on by Roma women focuses specifically on the preservation of Roma traditions and culture. For this reason their teaching roles in the family 'is of crucial importance in ensuring the survival of the group'.<sup>47</sup> As head of the family, Roma men are responsible for all decision-making, maintaining social links with other Roma families and potential employment opportunities.

**2.2.23** Majority societies frequently formulate negative stereotypes of Roma women, for example, perceiving them as submissive and domicile. Many Roma groups continue to operate within traditional patriarchal roles for men and women. Within these groups there are fears that if Roma women engage too much with formal school processes they will lose their Romani identity. With the arrival of puberty, Roma girls are 'expected to adopt a series of socially responsible behaviour' and the extended family network becomes more protective.<sup>48</sup>

**2.2.24** As the primary healthcare providers within Roma family structures, Roma women often come into contact with majority society health and education structures.<sup>49</sup> The traditional way of Roma life is important for many Roma women.

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45 For further information see the first comprehensive quantitative survey of Roma in five countries (Central and Eastern Europe): United Nations Development Programme. (2005) *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe Summary*, url website <http://www.undp.org/rbec/publications/romasummary.pdf> , Date last Accessed: 22/03/2005

46 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) *Ibid*, pp 85.

47 Liegeois, J.P. (1994) Roma, *Gypsies, Travellers*, Council of Europe, Publishing and Documentation Service: Strasbourg, pp 85.

48 Smith, T. (1999) *Ibid*, pp 5.

49 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) *Ibid* pp 123.

However, they continue to experience what has been termed as a system of ‘three-fold’ exclusion:<sup>50</sup>

1. As women
2. As members of the Roma community
3. As having little or sometimes no formal education

**2.2.25** Service providers, government organisations, support agencies, etc, viewing this way of life are often, unaware of the power of women within the Roma family structure.<sup>51</sup> Roma women may have been traditionally left out of leadership roles with Roma men but are becoming increasingly involved in having their voices heard.<sup>52</sup> As providers of the family’s direct daily needs, Roma women are generally responsible for contact with governmental administrative offices. This applies in particular to social welfare bodies.<sup>53</sup>

**2.2.26** Gender roles in Roma groups and the wider Roma community, therefore, reflect very significant differences. The role of Roma women is rarely seen by the non-Roma world as one of independence and importance for the survival of Roma culture. The development of health and education links (formal and non-formal), however, has been recognised as an important area to be addressed. The link between health and education is recognised by the fact that: ‘Health service providers need a multi-cultural approach to understand Roma groups’.<sup>54</sup>

## Health and Education

**2.2.27** Roma ghettos or settlements in urban areas are predominately/usually characterised by ‘slum-like conditions, poor or non-existent public services, and severe overcrowding’.<sup>55</sup> Many settlements are located close to rubbish dumps and/or contaminated industrial sites. Roma groups are frequently relegated to particular districts or neighbourhoods in cities, towns and villages. Frequently, the location of settlements or areas where Roma are segregated, are far from any form of public transport and education facilities/schools. In some countries (for example Romania) Roma are often excluded from public health care because they lack birth certificates,

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50 Garcia, Ramon Flecha (2004): ‘Briefing Paper on Roma’ for Center of Social and Educational Research (CREA), Spain. Website: <http://www.neskes.net/workalo/indexan.htm>

51 For further insights see Carol Silverman’s work with Roma in the Balkans at

52 The Roma Women’s Forum was held in Budapest, 2003. In February 2003, the International Roma Women’s Network was launched. With representatives from 28 countries, members of the Network addressed issues of access to education, healthcare and employment at the international Roma Women’s Forum. Currently in its implementation phase, the project ‘Roma Women Can Do It’ involves 12 countries in South East Europe. For further information see the Network Women’s Program, Open Society Institute, url website <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/romafocusareas/initiatives/women/focus> Date last accessed: 01/04/2005

53 Liegeois, J-P. (1994) Ibid, pp. 85.

54 European Commission. (2004) Ibid.

55 Van der Stoel. (2000). Ibid, pp 120.



identification and/or other official proof of registered residence.<sup>56</sup> Exclusion from health care, the substandard and isolated living conditions results in, for example: lower average life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates, low levels of formal education and high levels of poverty.

**2.2.28** As the primary health carers in the family, there is international recognition to target health education programs and health care training for Roma women. In order for the programs to be successful, the NGO *Medicins Sans Frontieres* in Romania<sup>57</sup> emphasises the recognition of two important issues for Roma women and service providers, non-proficiency in the majority language and cultural differences.

### 2.3 The Roma Community in Ireland

**2.3.1** An important aim of the fieldwork has been to establish a demographic profile of the Roma community in Ireland. A demographic profile would enable service providers to target local needs and respond with local initiatives and actions. Although Roma in Ireland and other countries retain close links to the international Roma community, it is important to emphasise that the Roma are not a homogenous group or community. Diversity in Roma groups is reflected in different attitudes and perceptions towards formal education. A demographic profile has been drawn from existing documentation on the Roma community in Ireland and fieldwork conducted specifically for this report.

#### Establishing a Demographic Profile

**2.3.2** In line with other European countries, there are no official statistics (in Ireland) relating to the Roma population (demography, accommodation, age, gender, and familial profiles). An absence of statistics on the Roma population is also reflected in relation to their legal status,<sup>58</sup> country of origin and educational levels. Currently, there are only estimates available: giving the population between 2,500 and 3,000.<sup>59</sup> The majority of Roma currently living in Ireland appear to be predominately from Romania.<sup>60</sup> Roma in Ireland also come from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, Lithuania and Poland.

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56 Van der Stoel. (2000) *Ibid*, pp 126.

57 Van der Stoel. (2000) *Ibid*, pp 126.

58 For example, it is not known what percentage of the Roma population in Ireland are currently asylum seekers, have leave to remain, refugee status, etc.

59 Roma population in Ireland is estimated to be between 2,500–3,000. As given by the Roma Support Group and Pavee Point Travellers Centre.

60 The Roma Support Group and Pavee Point Travellers Centre estimate that 90% of Roma currently living in Ireland are from Romania.

**2.3.3** Official statistics for schools and government agencies, in the Republic of Ireland are gathered and collated under nationality and not ethnicity. This is compounded by the fact that not all Roma declare their ethnicity to members of non-Roma communities. A further issue concerns a lack of information on Roma in Ireland. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many service providers, agencies and organisations, c have little or no knowledge about Roma culture, tradition and/or history. As a result, Roma are frequently known and referred to as ‘Romanians’. This has important repercussions, for example, in relation to research relating to enquiries about Adult Education classes (from the Roma community) or estimates on the number of Roma children enrolled in schools.<sup>61</sup>

### **Roma, Romanians and ‘Gypsies’**

**2.3.4** Predominately, Roma in Ireland are not referred to as Roma but either as ‘Romanians’ and more commonly as ‘Gypsies’. Regardless of the terminology used to describe Roma, the population are repeatedly confused with the Romanian population in Ireland. Although the majority of Roma currently in Ireland originate from Romania, it is important to differentiate between the two communities. This is not for the purpose of segregation but in order to recognise Roma as a distinct ethnic group without an exclusive nation or country.

**2.3.5** Since their departure from India over 1,000 years ago, a global ethnic community of Roma groups whose central and primary identity is Roma has been preserved. Roma in Ireland from Romania may initially give their nationality as Romanian (or if they are from Poland as Polish, etc). This is because of a well-founded fear of persecution and discrimination based on past experiences, once their ethnicity became known. Frequently, ethnicity is not recorded in international statistics and the Roma as a nationality is not reflected in any passport/official identity papers. However, there are distinct differences between Roma and Romanians in Ireland:

Romanians are one of the largest minorities in the Republic, growing from several hundred in the mid-1990s to some 20,000 today. Many have come as asylum seekers, accounting for one in five of some 44,000 applications since 1996. The Romanian population is largely Dublin-based and mainly Romanian Orthodox with smaller numbers of Catholics and Protestants, although there are many with no church connection. There is a Roma or gypsy community of around 2000; the two groups identify little with each other and interact even less.<sup>62</sup>

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61 Note: some teachers have, however, made efforts to download materials on Roma culture and one School Liaison Officer has recently produced a booklet on Roma. See Chapter 3 (3.3.2).of this report.

62 ICC Report Gives Orthodox Statistics – a summary of a report by the Irish Council of Churches, on the religious life of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in the Republic of Ireland is available at url website <http://www.orthodoxireland.com>



### Arrival in Ireland

**2.3.6** Roma have been travelling in Ireland since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but the poverty of Ireland in the early 1900s presented limited employment opportunities. In 1911, Roma coppersmith families<sup>63</sup> travelled from Britain and, in the 1940s, English Romany families came to live in Ireland. Pre-1990 Roma migration to Ireland largely comprised temporary, seasonal farm labour with Roma travelling from England and/or Europe.<sup>64</sup>

**2.3.7** 'Irish Gypsies' are not genetically related to Roma but 'their nomadic culture has been influenced by them'.<sup>65</sup> The language of Irish Gypsies has an influence from Romany. However, it is centrally based on Irish Gaelic lexicon and English-based grammar.

**2.3.8** In 1998, an estimated forty Roma arrived in freight containers, to the south-east Wexford port of Rosslare. By August of that year, it was reported that 250 Romanians, most of whom were Roma, had arrived in the Wexford area. However, their applications for asylum were subsequently rejected: 'the decision was one of the fastest made by the Department of Justice who were anxious to deter more Gypsies from coming to Ireland'.<sup>66</sup> A small group of Roma also arrived in Monaghan, from Eastern Romania in 1998. Unlike the Roma in Rosslare, it appears that Roma who initially came to Monaghan have since been residency. The increased arrival of Roma to Ireland has been explained because of less prejudiced views, more tolerance and an increasingly good economy.<sup>67</sup>

**2.3.9** In 2001, Roma were the first asylum seekers to be accommodated in Monaghan and were housed in a local hostel for 18 months. During this time they were joined by additional family members and after their stay in hostel accommodation, the community moved into private rented accommodation.<sup>68</sup> Most of the Roma from this period were recognised as refugees and some have since moved from Monaghan to Dundalk. Today, the majority of Roma in Monaghan appear to be living in the private rental sector although two to three Roma families are living in direct provision<sup>69</sup> (that is, in the asylum seekers' Hostel located on the peripheries of Monaghan town). Guerin (2001) established that:

In County Monaghan, the Roma community constitute the majority of refugees and asylum seekers who are eligible for adult education and training.

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63 O hAodha, M. (1998) *Roma Immigration to Ireland*, Patrin, url website <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/ireland2.htm> Date last accessed: 12/07/2004. Note: Roma referred to by O hAodha are the Kalderash Gypsy coppersmith families who travelled throughout Britain prior to extending their travel to Ireland in 1911.

64 National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism: *Traveller and Roma Community* at <http://www.nccri.com/cdsu-travellers.html> Date last accessed: 12/12/2004

65 nationmaster.com Encyclopedia: Roma and Sinti, url website <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Roma-and-Sinti> Date last accessed: 17/08/2004

66 O'hAodha, M. (1998) Ibid.

67 O'hAodha, M. (1998) Ibid.

68 Geurin, P. (2001) Ibid, pp7.

69 The researcher visited the hostel in May 2004. Further information was established via consultation with local service providers in Monaghan town.

However, the indications are that existing opportunities are not winning the support of the Roma community. And, given, their apparent low literacy levels, even training programmes that target refugees and asylum seekers as a composite groups are unlikely to prove suitable for Roma participation.<sup>70</sup>

**2.3.10** Representations and cultural understandings of Roma culture in Ireland have been mixed. One Irish media article, for example drew attention to the perpetuation and transferral of Roma 'outsider status' in Romania to an Irish context.<sup>71</sup> Media articles in Ireland (and in other countries) continue to romanticise 'Gypsy chic' and 'Gypsy fashion'. The implication is that the Roma and Gypsy in this context are separate.

### **Constructing a Demographic Profile of the Roma community in Ireland based on Fieldwork for the Report**

**2.3.11** Establishing a demographic profile of the Roma community in Ireland has been influenced by a lack of statistics on the Roma population. A profile of the community has been drawn from consultation with non-Roma and Roma participants in the research fieldwork. However, it is not possible to list the legal status of Roma in Ireland; the percentage of Roma who are asylum seekers, refugees, leave to remain, etc as these figures are not collated according to ethnicity. Taking into consideration current legislation which specifies that adult asylum seekers are only entitled to language and literacy provision, this will affect training/vocational provision for the Roma community in Ireland if the majority are asylum seekers. However, as stated it is not possible to ascertain the percentage (or an estimate) of the number of Roma in the asylum process or the number who have been granted immigration status. Literacy and language emerge as the major issues for the adult Roma population identified in this report. These needs could be met by literacy development through the module of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as well as possible links a home-family/school service model in order to respond to local population needs.

**2.3.13** Roma families in Ireland are intergenerational extended units or networks. However, the Roma familial units in Ireland are not as large or intergenerational as in the family/group's country of origin. It is not possible to provide any official statistics or a profile of Roma families in different regions due to client confidentiality in health, community and social welfare departments and a lack of ethnicity breakdown in for example, census enumerations and school registers. All statistical enumerations and collation, Roma are categorised under their country of origin, for example Romania. Thus, figures for Romanian, Czech, Polish and so forth populations in Ireland will include Roma.

Throughout the different counties, there is evidence of growing polarisation and social isolation between Roma families and local majority communities.

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70 Gerurin, P. (2001) *Ibid*, pp 30.

71 Haughey, N. (2003) 'Living by the Roma code' in *Irish Times* newspaper, Saturday, April 19, 2003.



**2.2.13** The fieldwork findings indicate the Roma community in Ireland is predominately made up of second and first generations. That is young Roma men and women with children – some of whom have been born in Ireland. Age group for this first group (or first generation) is made up of two strands:

- 1 An 'older' age group: 35 to 55 years old
- 2 A younger age group: 18 to 35 years old

**2.3.14** The majority of Roma in Ireland are from Romania, with a smaller percentage of population from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland. Regardless of country of origin, the population appears to be highly diverse and this has importance in their perceptions, value of, attitudes to and participation in formal education provision. This diversity is further reflected not only in previous formal education participation and attainment but also in levels of traditional patriarchal roles. However, one common denominator for Roma men, women and children is a history of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination associated with 'Gypsies'. Roma in Ireland are predominately associated with begging, stealing and selling the Big Issue Magazine. General attitudes and views by the general public appear largely negative and pejorative.

**2.3.15** Anecdotal evidence from service providers highlights large numbers of Roma in Ireland who have little or no fluency in English or Romanian. For such individuals, communication and comprehension appears to be in the Roma language, Romani.

Table 2 presents an outline of the Roma community in Ireland. The construction of the table has been drawn from the fieldwork conducted with Roma and non-Roma participants.

**Table 2: Profile of Roma in Ireland**

County	Profile of Roma Group(s)
<b>Dublin City and County</b>	The largest Roma population in Ireland resides in Dublin city and county. There appears to be different groups some of whom interact with the Roma Support Group based in Pavee Point Travellers Centre. Some Roma families have no contact with any support (voluntary/statutory) agency. A small number of Roma attend Orthodox Romanian church services. Roma in Dublin (city and council) live in private rented accommodation. There is a growing community in Dolphins Barn (Dublin city) with polarisation and conflict building up with the local majority community. Other areas associated with Roma groups are Swords, Tallaght, Lucan, Leixlip and Artane.
<b>Louth</b>	Roma groups reside in Dundalk and Drogheda. As with other Roma groups, there are predominant issues of non-literacy and limited/no English language skills. Diversity among the Roma population is reflected in different attitudes and participation of their children in formal education. A growing divide in some areas of Louth between Roma and local community has developed for example, arising from Roma burning rubbish at house gables. The general, local perception of Roma is negative and reflects attitudes to Travellers in the past. Other issues related to limited supervision of Roma children by adults, for example, children are playing or 'running wild' on local building sites. Most shops in Ardee have reportedly posted security at their doors because of alleged shoplifting by Roma.
<b>Monaghan</b>	Monaghan has a large Roma community, many of whom do not have contact with any support group/agency. Three Roma families are presently living in the Asylum Centre, in hostel type accommodation. Other members of the population are living in private rented accommodation around Monaghan town. There are growing issues with the Roma and majority population in relation to traditional patriarchal roles and behaviour. Other issues relate to communication barriers with service providers as the majority of Roma present themselves as having no/limited fluency in English/Romanian. This is compounded by a lack of Romani translators/interpreters.
<b>Limerick</b>	A small Roma population reside in Limerick, most of which are living in private-rented accommodation. The population is mainly from Romania with a smaller group from the Czech Republic. The Roma in Limerick are seen as 'monied'/quite well off. One family fled from skinhead persecution in Eastern Europe and remain traumatised. They do not refer to themselves as Roma (or dress in style associated with Roma).
<b>Athlone</b>	There are currently ten families living in Athlone. Appearing fragmented from the local non-Roma community, these families keep to themselves and are very isolated from the service structures of the majority population. High levels of distrust appear to perpetuate this social isolation.
<b>Kilkenny</b>	Although Roma are visible in Kilkenny, it is difficult to establish if any Roma reside in the town or immediate surrounding area. There is an emerging pattern of Roma travelling to Kilkenny town from surrounding counties and other parts of Ireland. Roma women are either dropped off by car or arrive in the town for the day by train. They are associated with selling the Big Issue and/or begging. The women are predominately young or middle-aged.



County	Profile of Roma Group(s)
<b>Carlow</b>	Carlow has an extended Roma family of interrelated members through marriage, which reside together. Communication with adult members of the family is complicated by: language difficulties and repeat offences for the women because of begging. There are concerns in relation to Roma women and prison sentences. This is reflected in Roma women as having sole responsibility for all childcare related issues. Residence is in private-rented accommodation.
<b>Sligo and Mayo</b>	There appears to be a small Roma group living in Sligo and Mayo. They are predominately known and associated with selling the Big Issue.
<b>Meath</b>	Since May 2004, the number of Roma clients residing in the Mosney Reception Centre has decreased. Most Roma families have moved out of the Centre and are now living in private-rented accommodation in the surrounding area.
<b>Donegal</b>	There does not appear to be any Roma groups/families currently residing in Donegal. However, Roma families have lived in different areas of Donegal previously.

### 2.4 Summary of Key Points

- There is a dearth of official statistics on the Roma community. The population throughout Europe continues to be largely estimated or approximated.
- Portrayal of Roma groups and the wider Roma community remains linked to stereotypical and mythological representations in for example, the media.
- The international Roma community shares a historical path of origin, traditions and cultures. However, Roma groups are not homogenous and reflect diverse perspectives towards engagement in formal education provision or schooling.
- The Roma language, Romani is transmitted as an oral language. Literacy levels in majority and second language acquisition (for example, Romanian, English etc) are extremely low for Roma groups. Non-engagement with literacy has helped to preserve Roma culture and tradition. However, limited/non-literacy development has impacted on employment opportunities (though it is important to add that these opportunities are also affected by racism and discrimination).
- The family remains the central institute for learning in the Roma community. Roma distinguish between formal education (schooling) and intergenerational knowledge transmitted through the extended family unit (education).
- The provision of formal education must be understood within the context of people's living conditions and how these impact on access to education. Many Roma experience discrimination and racism on a daily basis. Engagement with formal education remains characterised by poor attendance and outcomes.
- Roma education, that is knowledge transmitted within the family group, reflects the internal world of Roma children. The value of Roma education and the importance of the family unit could be reflected in family learning and literacy models in education provision.

- Schooling or formal education represents an external, 'outside' and often alien world. Schooling does not reflect or include references to Roma culture or promote a positive image of the community. The intergenerational family unit in Roma groups is an important link to promoting participation in schooling. Therefore a home-school linkage must be established. This will help build trust with Roma families as well as an understanding of education structures and systems in the Roma community and in the non-Roma world.
- There is an important link between health and education. This link presents an opportunity to develop health care needs within educational provision.
- In line with other European countries, there are no official statistics on the Roma community in Ireland. Estimates give the population as ranging between 2,500 and 3,000. Members of the Roma community are frequently identified as 'Romanians'. This has important effects on the collation of statistics on the population. The lack of statistics also presents challenges for service providers to target Roma groups and engage in local capacity building for the community.
- Roma migration to Ireland is not a new phenomenon. Roma first came to Ireland in the early nineteenth century. However, Roma as asylum seekers were first recorded in the 1990s. Currently, most Roma in Ireland are estimated to be from Romania. However there are also Roma from the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, Lithuania and Poland residing in Ireland.
- Roma families/groups in Ireland are intergenerational units. However, fieldwork findings for this report indicate the population is predominately comprised of first and second generations (that is children and parents).
- Roma in Ireland are made up of diverse groups with a shared pattern of ethnic belonging, that is, as members of the Roma community. This diversity is reflected in perceptions and engagement of formal education provision.
- Training programmes, which seek to include Roma participation must take into consideration limited literacy development for many members of the Roma community in Ireland.
- The diversity among Roma groups in Ireland has an impact on access and participation in Roma children's access to formal education (school). However, negative perception of the Roma community and a lack of knowledge about Roma culture, history and diversity are prevalent.



# Chapter 3

## The Irish and International context

### 3.1 Introduction

**3.1.1** Chapter 3 focuses on education within an Irish and international context. It outlines the obligations of the education sector from a legal and human rights perspective. Education provision and programmes for the Traveller community are addressed as they may provide an important framework for Roma access and participation in Irish educational structures (formal and non-formal). The section concludes with reference to international education programmes and policies for the Roma community.

**3.1.2** International research and policy provide an important framework for meeting the educational needs of Roma. As well as the development of proactive social inclusion measures for the Roma groups and the wider Roma community.

### 3.2 The Irish Education System and the Roma Community

**3.2.1** Irish law and the equality framework are briefly outlined. The development of an Irish intercultural policy is addressed. An outline of equality policy and guidelines, as well as policy development for education provision in multi-ethnic Ireland is presented. Language and Literacy provision is then referred to within the context of immigration status and English Languages of Other Speakers (ESOL) provision. The White paper on Adult Education and a subsequent Report on the language and literacy needs of asylum seekers provide an important context for the development of alternative strategies for meeting the educational needs of Roma in Ireland today. Family Learning policy and emerging strategies offer a possible way forward. Initiatives, projects and programmes by service providers in Ireland are given in order to highlight good practice.

**3.2.2** Finally, education policy for the Traveller community is referred to as it may provide a relevant and important framework to build on the development of education policy, which includes the Roma community. An outline educational provision for Travellers in Ireland is given in Appendix J.

#### Irish Law: An Equality Framework

**3.2.3** Irish law and policy on education provides for equality of opportunity and access for all individuals. All educational and training establishments have an obligation to act in accordance within the nine grounds laid out in the Equal Status Act 2000. Irrespective of immigration status or citizenship, all children (unlike adults) are entitled to participate within the Irish educational system. The Equal Status Act 2000 prohibits discrimination in relation to goods, service and education in nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community.



**3.2.4** However, there remains, as yet, no reference to equality of provision for asylum seekers. This has important implications for access and participation for adults in the education (formal, vocational, etc) sector. Adult education, as outlined in the White Paper(2000),<sup>72</sup> has a key priority: to promote an inclusive society by targeting investment toward those most at risk.<sup>73</sup> Under current legislation, asylum seekers over the age of 18 years may only access adult literacy and English language classes. This form of educational provision is provided for example, throughout the Republic of Ireland, by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Individual(s) seeking asylum after 26 July 1999, are not allowed to work or attend vocational training. Refugees may access classes directly provided by the Department of Education and Science; they are equally entitled to access all forms of education provision and training as Irish citizens/nationals.

**3.2.5** Recommendations, guidelines and initiatives in the development of an Irish intercultural education policy indicate that: intercultural policy cannot relate exclusively to the education sector but must take into account the wider context and framework of people’s lives. Key intercultural policy developments promote equality of provision, recognition of diversity and the need to combat racism.

**Table 3: Intercultural Policy and Practice Development in Ireland**

Agency/Organisation	Policy Documents	Key Points
Department of Education and Science (2000)	<i>Learning For Life: White Paper on Adult Education</i>	Diversity of population and distinct needs. Development of curricula, materials, training and inservice. Combating Racism.
National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) (2001)	<i>Guidelines on Anti-Racism and Intercultural Training</i>	Equality of rights, values and abilities. Development of policies promoting interaction, collaboration and exchange. Diversity. Combating Racism.
Department of Education and Science (2002)	<i>Information booklet for schools on ASYLUM SEEKERS</i>	Intercultural education as cross-cultural. To inform ethos of the school. Democracy and cultural pluralism. Anti-racist education

72 Department of Education and Science. (2000) *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, Government Stationary Office: Dublin.

73 Department of Education and Science. (2000) *Ibid*, pp 13.

## Equality Guidelines in Education

**3.2.6** In 2001, the Department of Education and Science with the Equality Authority launched the *Schools and the Equal Status Act*.<sup>74</sup> The document provides equality guidelines for the education sector under the framework of the Equality Status Act 2000, which requires schools not to discriminate across the nine grounds and in four specific areas:

- The admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of the student
- The access of a student to a course, facility or benefit provided by the school
- Any other term or condition of participation in the school
- The expulsion of a student or any other sanction<sup>75</sup>

However, exemptions can be applied: single-sex schools are allowed and schools 'where the objective is to provide education that promotes certain religious values'.<sup>76</sup>

## Education in a Multi-Ethnic Ireland

**3.2.7** In 2004, the Joint Education Committee on Education and Science produced *The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society*. The report outlines the issues and 'challenges of the increasing diversity of Irish society and in the development and implementation of intercultural education'.<sup>77</sup>

Recommendations refer to:

- An overall intercultural approach to education in primary, post primary and third level formal education. This approach should also extend to youth services, adult and non-formal education
- Additional training provision for teachers, in order for them to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population
- Provision for additional language support in schools
- Appointment of a National Co-ordinator to support and facilitate schools in the development and implementation of intercultural education

**3.2.8** The report advocates consultation with key stakeholders in the development of an intercultural approach to education. The stakeholders are listed as: the Department of Education and Science; education bodies; specialised and expert bodies; teacher bodies and trade unions; parent bodies and representatives from cultural and ethnic minorities. In order for benchmarking and policy development, data relating to student diversity in the Irish education system should extend beyond enrolment.

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<sup>74</sup> The document has since been updated to *Schools and the Equal Status Acts 2nd Edition*.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Education and Science/ The Equality Authority. (2004) *Schools and the Equal Status Acts 2nd Edition*, The Equality Authority: Dublin, pp. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Department of Education and Science/The Equality Authority. (2004) *Ibid*, pp 13.

<sup>77</sup> The Joint Committee on Education and Science. (2004 ) *The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society: Second Report*, url

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=2554&CatID=78> Date last accessed: 20/11/2004 pp6.



## The National Action Plan Against Racism

**3.2.9** Following the World Conference Against Racism (2001), the Irish Government engaged in the development of a, *National Action Plan Against Racism* (NPAR). Subsequent consultation took place with agencies, organisations and service providers (for example, national, regional, local, statutory and non-governmental bodies). Launched in February 2005, the NPAR<sup>78</sup> emphasises the need to 'develop reasonable and common sense measures to accommodate cultural diversity in Ireland'. Underpinned by an intercultural framework the Plan relates to five objectives which are summarised as:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Protection    | Effective protection and redress against racism   |
| 2. Inclusion     | Economic inclusion and equality of opportunity    |
| 3. Provision     | Accommodating diversity in service provision      |
| 4. Recognition   | Recognition and awareness of diversity            |
| 5. Participation | Full participation in Irish society <sup>79</sup> |

**3.2.10** Documenting different education initiatives currently being undertaken, the Plan states the Department of Education and Science will devise a National Equality and Intercultural Strategy for the education sector. Addressing racism and barriers for Roma as well as for other ethnic minority communities are important elements in the development of a National Strategy, which ultimately promotes the principles of interculturalism and equality.

## Language and Literacy Provision

**3.2.11** The White Paper on Adult Education<sup>80</sup> stresses the need to encourage the participation of asylum seekers,<sup>81</sup> refugees and immigrants in educational provision. It sets the policy context for the development of English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) provision. A survey (2002) of ESOL provision in the adult literacy service resulted in the creation of a NALA ESOL working group. Guidelines and recommendations<sup>82</sup> on key areas in educational provision have been established and relate to: outreach and promotion; provision and participation; assessment; accreditation; training and support; and equal status policy.

**3.2.12** Following the White Paper on Adult Education recommendation for research on the language and literacy needs of asylum-seekers, the report *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education*<sup>83</sup> was carried out. Findings from the research highlight the need to

78 Prepared by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. (2005) *Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan Against Racism 2005-2008*, Government Stationary Office: Dublin.

79 Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Ibid pp27.

80 Department of Education and Science. (2000) Ibid.

81 Asylum seekers are entitled to free access to adult literacy, English language and mother culture supports.

82 National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). (2002) *Summary: English for Speakers of Other Languages: Policy Guidelines and Supports for V.E.C. Adult Literacy Schemes*, NALA: Dublin.

83 Ward, T. (2002) *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs*, City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC: Dublin.

develop educational provision for asylum seekers who have little or no literacy in their mother tongue language. Although ESOL programmes and provision should be learner-centred and needs-based, the report found:

ESOL learners with literacy needs are being underrepresented in ESOL because of class availability and generally no consideration being given to literacy when planning ESOL.<sup>84</sup>

**3.2.13** Key recommendations from the report relate to the different stakeholders, that is agencies and organisations (statutory, non-statutory, community and voluntary) involved in ESOL provision and support. A specific recommendation calls on the Department of Education and Science to support the development of an assessment framework in ESOL education provision. The framework should take into account learners with limited or no literacy skills in their mother tongue and/or learning difficulties. Research is also required, the report states, into specific ESOL learner groups who experience difficulties accessing education provision (in particular, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women). With reference to targeting the Roma community in Ireland, 'alternative strategies such as outreach, together with family learning need to be explored<sup>85</sup>'. Where there are sufficient learners, the report advocates, ESOL literacy provision (once implemented) in VEC schemes could involve bilingual assistants from the Roma and other linguistic minority communities.

Key recommendations relating to ESOL provision include:<sup>86</sup>

- The need to devise a national ESOL strategy
- Development of ESOL training for teaching staff
- ESOL training for ESOL Development/Outreach Workers (to act as bilingual assistants)
- Training for Adult Education Guidance Officers with minority linguistic clients
- Equality and anti-discrimination policy
- Supporting ethnic minority communities to participate in adult education
- Literacy for ESOL provision
- Specific initiatives, actions and strategies to target Roma men and women in adult education provision

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84 T. Ward. (2002) *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs* Executive Summary, City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC: Dublin, pp 16.

85 Ward, T. (2002) *Ibid* pp 78.

86 Following publication of the report *Asylum Seekers in Education*, an ESOL conference (2003) (funded by the Further Education Section of the DES) took place in Dublin. Other major initiatives to emerge since the White Paper on Adult Education include policy documents by the Irish Vocational Education Association Working Group (IVEA). *The Provision of Educational Services in a Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Cultural Society* (2004) Second Report by: The Joint Committee on Education and Science is provides an important framework for developing provision. See References at end of this Report for details.



**3.2.14** In 2001, the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) Working Group produced policy relating to educational provision for asylum seekers, refugees and others termed as 'non-nationals'.<sup>87</sup> The Working Group established the need for 'accurate basic information' on this diverse client group in VEC schools and education centres. The recommendations,<sup>88</sup> relating specifically to education, in the report include:

- Availability of additional resources for extra English language classes
- Intercultural education as an essential element in all school curriculum and facilitation of an educational programme on diversity in Ireland today (for all schools)
- A cultural civic education should be incorporated in all programmes for the target group in order to reflect an overview of Irish life
- A significant increase made in the budget for the educational needs of this target group
- Adequate resources in Adult Education Services for asylum seekers/refugees in the VECs – in order to provide the appropriate services
- Consultation with target groups in relation to their educational needs and representation on management structures (where feasible)
- All teachers to receive in-service training on awareness of students' countries of origin

### Family Learning and Literacy

**3.2.15** Family literacy has become an internationally recognised model for helping families achieve their own life and education goals:

It involves the integration of literacy instruction for young children with the development of parents' skills and knowledge through adult education and opportunities for parents and children to work and play together.<sup>89</sup>

In an Irish context, family literacy programmes have been developed with the adult literacy service, libraries and community projects. A key document on family literacy by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) outlines developments in Ireland and the wider international context. Guidelines for setting up and running family literacy programmes are given. The document advocates that the 'family is the first and primary educator of children and the home is the child's first and primary literacy resource'.<sup>90</sup> Recommendations in the NALA report include the need for:

- A National Strategy for the development of family literacy work. The Department of Education and Science should take a lead role and the strategy should collaborate with other relevant Government Departments

87 IVEA. (2001) IVEA *Policy on Education Provision for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and other Non-nationals*, IVEA: Dublin.

88 For the full and unabridged version of the recommendations see IVEA. (2001) *Ibid* pp24.

89 The Partnership for Reading: National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). *Bringing scientific research to family literacy programs*, url website <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/family/family.html> Date last accessed 04/10/2004

90 Derbyshire, J. (2004): *Working Together: Approaches to Family Literacy*, NALA: Dublin, pp 50.

- A designated family literacy budget
- Training for school and adult literacy staff in family literacy approaches
- Research in home and school literacy developments in an Irish context<sup>91</sup>

**3.2.16** The report concludes with an emphasis on the strengths of family literacy approaches and that: 'It is vital that the strengths of this approach to education are now recognised and supported by all the education partners, to the benefit of adults, children and communities'.<sup>92</sup>

## Travellers and Education Provision in Ireland

**3.2.17** Educational provision for Travellers in Ireland<sup>93</sup> could provide a relevant and important framework to build on the development of Roma education policy and provision. The Equal Status Act 2000 defines Travellers as:

The community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland 2 (1).

**3.2.18** Currently, the Traveller community is the only minority ethnic group who are statistically visible in the Irish education system.<sup>94</sup> However, a report on education compiled by the National Focal Point of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) drew attention to the limitations of data collection in relation to minority ethnic groups. The report highlighted a number of areas of concern relating to the categorisation system in use, accessibility to existing data and a lack of data beyond enrolment figures. The lack of baseline statistics to assess Traveller and other minority ethnic groups' educational outcomes presents serious challenges, because:

(T)here is no quantifiable means of assessing the extent to which existing education strategies are benefiting Travellers or non-nationals to effectively evaluate new strategies. In short there is both an equality and an efficiency argument for collection (of) such baseline data.<sup>95</sup>

**3.2.19** Although, progress has been made in relation to Traveller participation in formal education provision, attendance and attainment levels remain central concerns. The transition from primary to secondary level education for young Travellers remains

91 See Derbyshire, J. (2004) *Ibid*, pp 79–88.

92 *Ibid*: (2004:88).

93 See Appendix J for an outline of Travellers and formal education in Ireland. For further research on Travellers and the Irish education system see Mairin Kenny *The Routes of Resistance: Travellers and Second-level Schooling* (1997).

94 With the exception of the Traveller community, the Department of Education and Science does not collect or collate data on students' ethnicity. As with other governmental departments, nationality is recorded. Members of the Roma community and the Kurdish community in Ireland are therefore 'statistically invisible from the present data collection system'. National Focal Point, Equality Authority and NCCRI. (December 2003) *Analytical Study on Education: EUMC RAXEN 3: Report on Ireland*, url website [http://www.nccri.com/pdf/Education\\_RAXEN3.pdf](http://www.nccri.com/pdf/Education_RAXEN3.pdf) Date last accessed: 10/02/2005 pp 18.

95 National Focal Point *et al.* (December 2002) *Ibid*.



characterised by low transferral rates/high drop-out rates. Pre-school education provision for Travellers is segregated and the numbers of Travellers in third level is disproportionate when compared to the majority Irish population attending at this level.

**3.2.20** Discrimination, racism and poverty dominate the lives of many Irish Traveller families. Despite state recognition for the need to reflect Traveller culture in education curriculum and in teacher training programmes, their language, customs, traditions and ethnicity continue to be subjected to negative portrayal in the media.

**3.2.21** The Report of the Task Force on the Traveller Community<sup>96</sup> delivers key principles for educational provision (at all levels) within a human rights framework. Equality of opportunity, respect for diversity and anti-discrimination are identified among such key principles. A fundamental issue involves Traveller parental participation in all decision-making relating to the educational needs of their children and for themselves. In 1998, the Department of Education and Science convened an Advisory Committee on Travellers' Education in order to develop policy and provision for a Traveller Education Strategy.

### **3.3 Service Providers and Local Roma Population Initiatives**

**3.3.1** Research fieldwork with service providers reveals innovative and inclusive services-projects-programmes with local Roma populations in Ireland. Important links with Roma groups have been built through this work, examples of which are listed below.

#### **The Monaghan Education Centre Family/School Liaison Service<sup>97</sup>**

**3.3.2** In 2004, fifty per cent of referrals to the Monaghan Education Centre Family/School Liaison Service were from the local Roma population. Interactions between the Roma and the majority community in Monaghan have been predominately characterised by polarisation. Negative media portrayal of the Roma has contributed to the social isolation of the Roma community (who also reinforce isolation from the non-Roma community). Infrequent school attendance and absenteeism of Roma children, language barriers with Roma parents and mobility patterns are areas of concern for education providers in the area. Initially, it had proved difficult to source a Romani translator in Monaghan. However, a member of the local Roma population is now assisting the Family/School Liaison Officer with translation in the Romani language. In an effort to increase knowledge and understanding of Roma in Monaghan, the Family/School Liaison Officer has:

- Compiled and distributed a booklet on Roma culture and specific issues for Roma children in mainstream education, to the eight schools assisted by the Family/School Liaison service
- Organised 'Cultural Days' in three primary schools in order to raise cultural awareness and celebrate cultural diversity

96 Task Force on the Travelling Community. (1995) *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, Government Publications: Dublin.

97 The Monaghan Education Centre, url website <http://www.metc>

- Promoted network building with the local Roma and non-Roma community and support groups in order to address emerging issues and areas of conflict

### **Dundalk Local Employment Service (DLES)<sup>98</sup>**

**3.3.3** In 2003, as a response to enquiries from Roma clients, the Dundalk Local Employment Service ran a 'Job Club' for Roma, which took place over a three-week period. As part of this initiative, a one-day 'Safepass' Course (safety and hygiene in the workplace) was arranged and organised.<sup>99</sup> A translator assisted with language communication. Time keeping and attendance emerged as areas, which need to be developed and promoted for Roma clients.

### **Pilot Training Course for Roma in Ireland (for Roma adults): FAS Asylum Seeker Unit Programme and Roma**

**3.3.4** The Pilot Training Course for Roma in Ireland ran from October 2001 to March 2002. Targeted at Roma living in the greater Dublin area, the course took place at Blanchardstown Asylum Seeker Centre and Pavee Point Travellers Centre.<sup>100</sup>

The aim of the training course was to introduce and develop existing skills among the participants in order to enable Roma adults to later engage in training and employment opportunities. Objectives included the:

- Provision of English language and numeracy tuition
- Development of communication skills
- Assistance in relation to social integration
- Development of an understanding of Roma needs

### **Horsemen Project**

**3.3.5** The 'Horsemen Project' is a European project, which is being developed and implemented with regard to meeting the vocational and educational needs of Travellers and Roma. The module or modules offered in horse care will provide qualifications for members of the Roma and Traveller community in Equine Studies as well as assisting in the development of requisite skills needed for keeping horses in today's societies.<sup>101</sup> One of the strengths of this project is the degree of consultation with both communities in order to: garner their support for the project, identify their skills in horse-care and translate these skills in order to provide employment opportunities in the equine industry. Participating partners in the project are: Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Hungary and Spain. The primary focus of the project is in vocational training and the development of one or more horse-care modules.

98 Dundalk Local Employment Service, url website [www.dundalkles.com](http://www.dundalkles.com)

99 The 'Safepass' Course was arranged and organised in collaboration with FÁS.

100 Pavee Point Travellers Centre, url website [www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)

101 Further information on the Horsemen Project and participating partners can be accessed at url website <http://www.horsemenproject.org>



### Roma Project: Tallaght Intercultural Action (County Dublin)

**3.3.6** In 2001, a 'Preparation for School' programme was developed and implemented by the Tallaght Intercultural Action group (who are based in the West Tallaght Resource Centre). The 'Preparation for School' programme was funded by the Tallaght partnership. The project involved an extended Roma family living (at that time) in a hostel in Tallaght. The aim was to prepare the children for participation and attendance in the Irish education system, that is, in school. By working with the children and their parents the project aimed to relieve anxieties about attending school in the area.

**3.3.7** The project involved two teachers meeting the group twice a week for six weeks. Play and reading activities took place with the children as well as communication with the children's parents about school in Ireland. The project reported that the programme was well received by the children and their mothers who enjoyed direct contact with the teachers. A central difficulty arose with the venue as the programme took place in the hostel where the families were living. An alternative venue was not possible, as the children's fathers would not allow the programme to take place outside the hostel. Further difficulties arose in the report that the men were a controlling presence during interaction with the children, their mothers and the teachers. Unfortunately, the outcome of the programme was not achieved (that is for the children to attend school) as the entire extended Roma family involved moved out of the hostel after the project ended.

### Leanbh<sup>102</sup>

**3.3.8** Leanbh has developed two initiatives with the Roma community in Dublin: A 'Language Support Development' programme and a 'Roma Integration Support Programme'.

**3.3.9** The 'Language Development Project' was piloted in January 2003, for Roma children. The project involved a specific support and outreach programme. The target group were Roma children who had previously been engaged in begging. Preventive group work took place with Roma parents and children. The project sought to identify the needs of the children and their parents as well as build relationships with other Roma children (and their parents) begging on Dublin streets. A day centre for Roma children was established with funding from the Pennies from Heaven Appeal. An important component of the programme was the development of literacy skills and preparation for school by using a Montessori-Steiner approach.

**3.3.10** The 'Roma Integration Support Programme' provides Roma families with assistance with school uniforms and other school related costs. The support programme involves a Steering Committee, which meets once a month. This involves a representative from a: Roma family, Traveller family, Garda and Leanbh staff.

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<sup>102</sup> Set up in October 1997, Leanbh is a service operated by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) to protect children who beg and children at risk on the streets. It works through a model of positive action and promotes parent and public education about child begging. Url website [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

### **Deonach: Tallaght Probation Service<sup>103</sup>**

As a response to probation referrals of Roma adults, the Deonach programme in the West Tallaght Probation Service recognised the need to address language and literacy issues for Roma clients. A pilot initiative, the 'Language and Literacy project with Roma women' has been developed and a sewing programme for Roma women established. The sewing programme is run with an instructor from the Henrietta Trust and an experienced literacy tutor. The next phase of the programme will involve development of literacy needs through sewing and other practical skill mediums. Roma male clients have also been accessing the language and literacy development through practical skills.

### **Refugee Information Service<sup>104</sup>**

**3.3.12** On request from the Roma Support Group, the Refugee Information Service (RIS) set up a clinic for Roma clients in 2003. The clinic operated once a month from July 2003 to May 2004 at the Pavee Point Travellers Centre, Dublin. An objective of the Roma specific information clinic was that Roma clients would be mainstreamed into general RIS services. The RIS believes that this objective has largely been achieved as much larger numbers of Roma people are now accessing RIS services. The RIS greatly valued the opportunity of working closely with the Roma community and in the future will hold occasional Roma specific clinics as the need arises.

### **Limerick Education Centre:<sup>105</sup> Circus and Fairground Support Service**

**3.3.13** The Limerick Education Centre does not have any Roma clients accessing any of its services. However, the Centre's 'Promoting Educational Continuity for Circus and Fairground Children' may have relevance for some Roma families/groups and service providers. Designed from a distance learning perspective, the programme uses a 'Blue Record Folder to keep records of the child's work while he/she is on tour with the family. Operating at primary school level, this support service involves teachers who visit the children at their different circus/fairground locations. It is funded through the special education unit of the Department of Education and Science. The support service is structured through the network of Education Centres and has designed a mechanism for recording and mapping what pupils have been taught.

### **Crosscare<sup>106</sup>**

**3.3.14** Founded in 1941 (as the 'Catholic Social Service Conference') Crosscare is the social care agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin. The agency has been proactively working with the Traveller community and other target groups for many years. Recognising the need to target the Roma community, Crosscare is involved in consultation with service providers and the Roma Support Group. The agency has

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103 Set up in 1995, the Tallaght Probation Project is a probation and welfare service initiative. Supported by FÁS and the VEC, the project provides training for offenders in the West Tallaght area.

104 The Refugee Information Service (RIS) currently run outreach information clinics in Dublin and Galway, url website [www.ris.ie/](http://www.ris.ie/)

105 Limerick Education Centre, url website [www.lec.ie](http://www.lec.ie)

106 For further information on Crosscare see their url website <http://www.crosscare.ie>



conducted a survey to education providers and mapped the Roma community in Dublin based on the findings from the survey.<sup>107</sup> Programmes provided by Crosscare include:

- Community education
- Community development
- Travellers programme
- Dublin food bank
- Drug awareness programme
- Carer support group
- Centrecare and Emigrant Advice
- Night shelters and a day centre
- Residential (youth) hostel
- Teen counselling.

### **3.4 International Education Programmes and Policies for Roma**

**3.4.1** Programmes and policies designed to meet the educational needs of Roma groups and the wider Roma community are given and provide a context to understand developing provision in this area. Racism as a primary factor in Roma participation and attendance in school is addressed. Key policy documents are then referred to in order to provide a framework for developing Roma inclusion in Irish education policy and practice. The policy documents clearly outline the responsibility of Member States in the Council of Europe towards addressing Roma populations within each country. Important international research reports are outlined in Appendix K. An outline of programmes for Roma is given in Appendix L.

#### **International Programmes and Policies**

**3.4.2** A key element in attempting to meet the educational needs of Roma begins by examination of the context in which policies and programs/projects specifically directed at Roma take place. This context has been briefly outlined in the beginning of this chapter by presenting a profile of Roma history, culture and experiences. It is only then, that valid observations and conclusions about effective social inclusion can begin to be addressed. There is no definitive 'best model of practice'. The projects reviewed and summarised for the present research were selected in order to demonstrate a range of program approaches and to examine different operational contexts. Education provision for Roma is summarised under segregated education provision and programmes, which promote Roma access, participation and outcomes in education.

**3.4.3** The most successful educational programmes and models of best practice for Roma are those in which:

1. Service providers have some knowledge of Roma history, culture and traditions.
2. Roma representation, consultation and evaluation of programmes.

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<sup>107</sup> A template of the Crosscare survey is given in Appendix F.

**3.4.4** These are the two fundamental issues in the development of all programmes, which aim to begin to meet the educational needs of Roma children and adults as:

Unfortunately, countless programs for Roma have been destined to fail because they were developed without Roma participation, and correspondingly, with scant awareness of the specific culture and needs of the intended beneficiaries as.<sup>108</sup>

However, there is another important element, which continues to ensure that the Roma community remains characterised by low levels of access, participation and attainment in formal education provision: racism.

## Racism

**3.4.5** The legacy of racism inflicted on Roma groups and the wider Roma community can only be overcome by positive, proactive policies. The United Nations has drawn attention to the fact that: 'Racism is a primary factor in the non-schooling or the inferior schooling of Roma in Europe'.<sup>109</sup> The General Policy Recommendation No. 3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies (Council of Europe: ECRI)<sup>110</sup> provides an important framework for addressing racism directed at the Roma community. Education has a key role in eradicating racism and valuing diversity.

## Expansion of the European Union

**3.4.6** The expansion of the European Union (EU) occurred on May 1, 2004. The ten Accession countries to join on that date increased the total membership from 15 to 25 EU States. Some of the new member States have large Roma populations, for example Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary. Following the enlargement of the EU, the Roma now form the largest ethnic minority group within its boundaries. However, in both the new and old Member States (and the candidate countries), the Roma 'often remain excluded from mainstream economic and social activities, whilst human rights abuses still occur'.<sup>111</sup> Critically, deep-rooted and persistent anti-Roma racism continues to exist throughout Europe. Traditionally, anti-Roma sentiment has been relegated to Eastern and Central Europe, however, it is evident in Western Europe and it may yet happen within an Irish context.

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108 Van der Stoep.M (2000) Ibid, pp.8.

109 European Roma Rights Centre/United Nations (2000) *Barriers in Special Session on Children: Education for Roma in Europe*, European Roma Rights Centre: Budapest, Hungary.

110 The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. *ECRI General Policy Recommendation No 3: Combating Racism and Intolerance against Roma/Gypsies*, url website [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Themes/racism/e\\_ECRI-Rec3.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Themes/racism/e_ECRI-Rec3.asp)  
Date last accessed: 20/08/2004.

111 European Commission. (2004) Ibid



### The Council of Europe

**3.4.7** The development of education policy and practice for Roma is clearly documented in the Council of Europe's *Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsies in Europe*. The recommendations outlined within this document highlight and work principally within the principles of an intercultural education framework. Emerging areas of concern are continuing high rates of non-literacy development, low numbers of students completing primary level education and low school attendance in Roma communities. Recommendation No R (2000) 4 emphasises the urgency of building new foundations for future education strategies targeted at the Roma community. Meeting the educational needs of Roma cannot be developed or implemented without the following (as advocated by the Council of Europe):

- Member states recognition of past educational policies for Roma, which operated on an assimilation and/or segregation models
- Guarantee of equality of opportunity for Roma in European societies
- Priority in national policies for the education of Roma children, which should be backed up by an active adult education and vocational education policy

**3.4.8** All policies in the field of educational provision for Roma, Recommendation No. R (2000) maintains, should be comprehensive and based on an acknowledgement that schooling is linked with other factors and preconditions (economic, social and cultural). In line with the factors and preconditions for a comprehensive education policy for Roma is an acknowledgement of 'the fight against racism and discrimination'.<sup>112</sup> The Recommendation lays out guiding principles for the establishment of an education policy for Roma children in Europe (Table 4).

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112 Council of Europe. (2000) *Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsies in Europe*, url website [http://www.coe.int/T/E/social\\_cohesion/Roma\\_Travellers/Archives/Recommendations/2000203\\_Misc\\_R\(2000\)4\\_Rec\\_educ.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/Roma_Travellers/Archives/Recommendations/2000203_Misc_R(2000)4_Rec_educ.asp) Date last accessed: 12/02/2005

**Table 4: Council of Europe (2000) Appendix to Recommendation No. R (2000) 4: Guiding Principles for Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe<sup>113</sup>**

<b>Specific Areas</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Structures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate resources and flexible structures should accompany educational policies for Roma</li> <li>2. Co-ordinate international, national, regional and local levels</li> <li>3. Education Ministers made sensitive to education of Roma children</li> <li>4. Pre-school education schemes developed and made accessible</li> <li>5. Better communication with parents where necessary using Roma mediators. Information and advice about education and supports to Roma parents</li> <li>6. Appropriate support structures through positive action, from equal opportunities at school</li> <li>7. Member States to provide necessary funds</li> </ol>
<b>Curriculum and Teaching Materials</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Educational policies in favour of Roma children implemented in intercultural policy framework</li> <li>9. Curriculum and teaching material designed to take into account Roma cultural identity</li> <li>10. This should not lead to establishment of separate curricula and/or separate classes</li> <li>11. Development of teaching materials based on good practice in order to assist teachers</li> <li>12. In countries where Romani is spoken, mother tongue learning opportunities at school</li> </ol>
<b>Recruitment and Training of Teachers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Future teachers provided with specific knowledge and training in Roma culture</li> <li>14. Roma community should be involved in design of curricula and directly involved in delivery of information to future teachers</li> <li>15. Support to training and recruitment of teachers from Roma community</li> </ol>
<b>Information Research and Assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Innovative research/action projects to address local needs and dissemination of these needs</li> <li>17. Roma education policies monitored</li> <li>18. Evaluation of education policies not to be limited to school attendance and drop-out rates. To include personal and social development</li> </ol>
<b>Consultation and Co-ordination</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. Involvement of all concerned parties: Roma families and organisations, school authorities and Department of Education</li> <li>20. Mediators from Roma community for all levels of schooling</li> <li>21. Department of Education facilitate and assist awareness-raising actions of all the concerned parties</li> <li>22. Exchange of experience and good practice encouraged and supported between Member States</li> </ol>

<sup>113</sup> This is an adapted version by the author of this report of the Guiding Principles. For the full outline of the recommendations see Council of Europe. (2000) Recommendation No R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers of Member States on the Education of Roma Gypsies in Europe.



**3.4.9** Other research stipulates that the components of an education policy for Roma should be based on:<sup>114</sup>

- Acquisition of basic instrumental skills
- Recognition of the Romani culture in the educational curriculum and in all areas of the educational system
- Intercultural education
- Equal participation and inclusion of all people involved in the educational process
- Opening the school to the community
- Encourage high expectations and educational success instead of a deficits approach
- The presence of Romani teachers

### Segregated Education Provision for Roma

**3.4.10** 'Segregated education provision' relates to (1) segregated classes and schools for Roma and (2) 'special schools'. A segregated approach has been the traditional and continues to be the predominant response in addressing educational provision for Roma. Severely criticised as a human rights abuse, the so-called 'special schools'<sup>115</sup> for Roma children continue to operate. Roma only schools or schools with an exclusive Roma specific curriculum do not officially exist. 'However, unofficially there are schools where all, or nearly all, the pupils are Roma/Gypsy children and where the provision is of an inferior quality to mainstream schooling. These schools are located in villages and urban districts where the majority population is Roma/Gypsy, which is then reflected in the composition of the school population'.<sup>116</sup> Roma children who attend mainstream education institutions are often channelled into classes (within schools) for mentally disabled children. The practice by school officials of transferring and/or routing Roma children to special education provision means extremely limited/no opportunities later to access professional training modules for example in colleges.

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114 Flecha, R.G. (2004) Briefing Paper 58: Center of Social and Educational Research (CREA), *Spain Creation of New Occupational Patterns for Cultural Minorities: the gypsy case*. The project began in October 2001 and is due for completion in November 2004. Project url website: <http://www.neskes.net/workalo/indexan.htm> Date last accessed: 29/09/2004

115 Characteristics of 'Special schools': Special schools' are schools for mentally disabled children or children with developmental disabilities and are found in the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. Although the schools are less prevalent in Romania and Bulgaria, the majority of Roma children attending school in Romania attend this form of 'education' provision. The (predominant) practice of referring Roma children to special schools effectively prevents any child (attending) from continuing/progressing to mainstream education. They are a degrading form of segregated education policy and practice as children who attend the schools are branded as 'mentally defective'. The use of psychological IQ tests/evaluations to measure Roma children's intellectual abilities and the issue of parental consent are major causes of concern. Many Roma parents do not understand that special education provision is radically different from the education curriculum used in mainstream schools.

116 Save The Children. (2001) Ibid, pp. 325.

## Multicultural Curricula and Training

**3.4.11** There is 'widespread consensus on the crucial need to provide teachers with training about Romani culture and history'.<sup>117</sup> Initiatives have involved programmes, which implement and incorporate Roma language and culture into mainstream education curricula. The *Federation of Roma Activists in Andalucia* (FARA) in Spain have implemented a programme to support teachers and Finnish primary schools have been teaching the Romani language in classrooms since 1989. In North America, the STEP (Systematic Training and Early Prevention) programme involved local Roma groups and non-Roma teachers collaborating on culturally appropriate school programmes for Roma children. The project operated in Tacoma (Oregon) Public schools throughout 1992. In Romania, a project to introduce Roma language and culture into mainstream education curricula has involved members of the Roma community. Details of the project are given in Box 2.

### Box 2 : Equal Opportunities for Romany Children through School Development Programmes

The project is based on the principle that Roma students' cultural identity awareness represents a key aspect of subsequent formal education engagement and achievement. Emphasis is placed on intercultural activities in schools and in local communities. Materials have been published in the Romani language as well as a guide for teaching Roma language in school. The author of the guide, Mihaela Zatreanu explains that a lack of information about Roma in school curricula contributes to Roma students losing their cultural identity, feeling ashamed of this identity and in some cases, early school leaving. By recognising the Roma language, Romani as a mother tongue, schools contributed to Roma students becoming more involved in school activities. Recognising the importance of the family unit, the project has helped to diminish the gap between the two competing institutions in Roma students' lives: the family and the school. Further details of the programme can be sourced at: Roma Language and Culture <http://www.egale.ro/english/resurce/rroma.html>

## Intercultural Education Projects

**3.4.12** Intercultural education projects and programmes on the Roma community have been developed, initiated and implemented throughout Europe. An example of an intercultural education project is given in Box 3.

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117 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) Ibid, pp. 84.



### Box 3 : Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)

The project was initiated in 1995 and funded by PHARE. The project goals were centrally to increase knowledge about Roma history, culture and traditions by teachers in primary and secondary schools. Materials developed include textbooks on Roma stories and fairy tales with written guides for their use. Training seminars helped to educate practitioners on how to use the new materials in the classroom as well as the development of school-based outreach activities.

Three significant barriers in educational attainment by Roma children were identified and subsequently addressed. Barriers include:

1. Prejudice against Roma children by non-Roma teachers and students.
2. Perspectives of Roma parents towards public schooling.
3. Attitudes of Roma students towards public schooling.

### Romani Schools

**3.4.13** One example of a 'Romani school' is the Gandhi Gimnazium school in Pecs, Hungary. Founded in 1994, the school's remit is to educate Roma adults in a professional capacity. The language of instruction in the school is Hungarian. Unfortunately, the school has experienced significant financial challenges and high drop-out rates.<sup>118</sup>

### Romani Teachers' Assistants and Mediators

**3.4.14** The key concept underlying the use of Roma as Teachers' Assistants in the classroom is to: help bridge linguistic and cultural 'communication gaps' between Roma parents, Roma students and non-Roma teachers. There are currently Roma Teachers' Assistants (RTAs) in mainstream (primary level education) schools in: Austria, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, The Slovak Republic and the Ukraine. The use of RTAs, for example in the Czech Republic,<sup>119</sup> has sought to assist Roma children in overcoming two significant barriers (in formal educational attainment): lack of competency in the Czech language and lack of a sufficient academic foundation when beginning school.

**3.4.15** Roma mediators are Roma who are trained to act as a point of contact and liaison between the school and Roma communities. Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland and Spain have implemented the use of such mediators. To date there have been mixed results in the use of mediators. In Denmark, Roma mediators have a high turnover. Reasons given for this refer to the fact that the mediators can only work for a short period of time as

118 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) Ibid, pp 86.

119 The programme was initiated in 1996 by Nova Skola, a Czech non-government organisation. For further details access url website <http://www.osi.hu/iep/minorities/Countries/Czech.htm> Date last accessed: 18/03/2005

they are studying and working at the same time. Also, there have been problems with Roma parents in relation to the use of family relatives as mediators.<sup>120</sup>

#### **Box 4: Premysl Pitter School, Ostrava, Czech Republic**

Promoted as a model of good practice, the Premysl Pitter School in Ostrava (Czech Republic) was founded in 1994. The school was primarily established as an alternative to the 'special schools' in which so many Roma children were effectively condemned an inclusive and effective education. Run by the Catholic organisation, Caritas, the school uses Roma classroom assistants in order to promote positive role models for children among the Roma community.

### **Pre-school and Kindergarten classes**

**3.4.16** There are numerous programmes and projects operating for Roma preschool children, for example a kindergarten funded by the Open Society Foundation which is located near a rubbish dump on the outskirts of Bucharest, Romania. The aim of this programme is to develop innovative programmes for its predominately Roma students with a key goal of improving the children's Romanian language skills. In Britain, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools have initiated different projects for Roma children. For example, the STEP by STEP programmes.

### **Extra Curricula Support Programmes**

**3.4.17** Extra curricula support programmes have been developed by Roma individuals and NGOs in Romania and Spain. In Greece (as in Ireland), 'Booster' and other programmes for children who need additional support in mainstream education have been advocated as models of good practice. The Roma Children's Centre (RCC) in Romania recommends the use of supplementary classes organised by a 'third party', for example, an NGO.<sup>121</sup>

### **Higher-Level Education**

**3.4.18** The numbers of Roma individuals who attend any form of higher-level education remains miniscule.<sup>122</sup> In Romania, government programmes have tried to remedy the situation by providing scholarships and using a quota system for Roma students in universities. A one-year preparation for university has been developed in Bulgaria with a specific emphasis on Roma communities.

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120 See: European Union. (2002-2004) Drom-Edu Project (EU-Comenius-2), url website [http://www.dromedu-forum.org/fileet/Project\\_Activities\\_-\\_May\\_2003.pdf](http://www.dromedu-forum.org/fileet/Project_Activities_-_May_2003.pdf) Date last accessed: 12/07/2004. See also: Council of Europe. (2003) Report of the Conference on the Harmonisation of Teaching Materials in Romani Language, 26-27 May 2003, Strasbourg, url website: [http://www.coe.int/T/E/social\\_cohesion/Roma\\_Travellers/Archives/Education/20041202\\_Rep\\_Conference%20of%20Harmonisation%20of%20Teaching%20Materials.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/Roma_Travellers/Archives/Education/20041202_Rep_Conference%20of%20Harmonisation%20of%20Teaching%20Materials.asp) Date last accessed: 15/03/2005

121 Kocic-Rakocevic, N and Miljevic, A. (2003) *The Roma and Education: Between Needs, Wishes and Possibilities*, Roma Children's Centre: Serbia.

122 United Nations, May 8-10 2002. *Special Session on Children: 'The number of Roma who manage to remain in the education system of their countries to university level is in many cases only in the single digits' (p29).*



**3.4.19** From 1985 to 1993, The Council For Cultural Co-Operation (CDCC)<sup>123</sup> ran teacher training courses and discussion seminars on school provision for Roma and Traveller children as part of its Teachers' Bursaries Scheme. The Soros Open Society has set up a working group on the education of Roma and includes specialists from the Roma community.

### 3.5 Summary of Key Points

- The Equal Status Act 2000 outlines the nine grounds in which it is illegal to discriminate against individuals and/or a community.
- Language and literacy development for asylum seekers and refugees is emphasised in the White Paper on Adult Education 2000 and research in a report on language and literacy needs of asylum seekers.
- Education provision and policy for the Traveller community may present an important framework for developing Roma inclusion in Irish education policy and practice. The National Traveller Education Strategy is due to be completed in June 2005. The Strategy provides an important opportunity to include a focus on the needs of Roma.
- Irish service providers in a response to local Roma population needs have developed a number of innovative and inclusive initiatives.
- Internationally, Roma access, participation and outcomes in education provision have been influenced by segregation policy and practice in schools throughout Europe.
- The Council of Europe Recommendation No R (2000) 4 provides a framework for the development of education policy and practice for the Roma community.
- There is no definitive best model of international practice in education policy and programme development for Roma groups and the wider Roma community. Successful programmes and projects recognise the need for Roma representation and consultation. Awareness of Roma culture and history is also important.
- Racism is an important component in addressing equal opportunities in education and celebration of diversity at all educational levels. *Planning for Diversity – The National Action Plan Against Racism (2005)* provides an intercultural framework based on five themes: Protection; Inclusion; Provision; Recognition; and Participation.
- Following expansion of the European Union in May 2001, the Roma have been recognised as the largest and most persecuted European ethnic minority.

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<sup>123</sup> The Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe. (18 December 2000) *Project On 'Education For Democratic Citizenship' – Towards Setting Up a Project On Roma Education*, Reflection paper, Council of Europe: Strasbourg.





# Chapter 4

## Emerging Themes from the Fieldwork

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section presents the findings of the fieldwork conducted for the report. An analysis of the emerging themes from the fieldwork conducted for this report is based on consultations with: Roma adults (men and women), Roma children and service providers. The themes relating to access and participation in education are: (1) Culture; (2) Barriers; (3) Supports and (4) Provision. In each theme, the findings begin by reflecting views from the Roma adults consulted, followed by findings from the non-Roma research participants. Appendix N provides a profile of Roma and non-Roma participants involved in the fieldwork.

### 4.2 Culture

#### Findings from Roma Adults

4.2.1 Roma adults reported that Irish majority society has limited or no knowledge of Roma culture and tradition. Roma are continually called Romanian or by the pejorative term 'Gypsy'. The terminology used for Roma people is important and is best explained by one of the Roma participants in this research:

1. *Roma is the right word for our ethnicity and that mean a man and Romani has two meanings: a man and a wife.*
2. *Gypsy came from the Greeks. In Greek language that you are a thief and dirty. Anyone who know the meaning, doesn't accept this word and me also – I don't like the word. All the Roma people like me, don't like the word Gypsy – Anyone who know what it means.*

*(Roma man)*

4.2.2 Roma distinguish between 'Roma education' and 'non-Roma schooling'. Roma children, depending on their gender, learn different skills from their older siblings, parents and grandparents. Education within the Roma community and family essentially means remembering tradition and who you are. At the core of everything a Roma child learns is respect.

*The respect goes to the father and the father has to respect the family. First his children, his wife, then her parents. Everything they do depends on the father.*

*(Roma man)*

*Respect your mother, father, brother – If someone comes to the house: In Romania cover your head. Learn to cook, clean, wash the clothes*

*(Roma woman)*



**4.2.3** There are important differences within Roma education for boys and girls. Roma boys learn general skills from their fathers, about horses and fundamentally, how to 'win the bread'. Roma mothers teach their daughters housekeeping skills, loyalty, codes of respect and preparation for their future roles as wives.

*It's a huge difference between the boy and girl: Boy learns to not drink, to go to party in town, the pub, the restaurant, to be quiet. Till the age of marriage come. Main age is sixteen years. The girl must be – It's hard for the girl: Learn not to go with another man before she is married*

*(Roma man)*

*(At) Five or six years, she must learn these things: cooking, cleaning ....*

*(Roma woman)*

*In our community, the Roma girls need education but not too much.*

*(Roma man)*

*The Roma girl, her destiny is to be a housewife and good mother. She doesn't need to make a career. Once she is married she will stay at home.*

*(Roma man)*

**4.2.4** Formal education (i.e. non-Roma education) or 'schooling' as it is more commonly referred to in the Roma community has clear differences relating to gender. Traditionally, Roma families consider schooling for boys to be more important than for girls. However, all the Roma women consulted for this report would like their daughters to attend school until they are aged 18 years old.

**4.2.5** Under communist rule in Romania, Roma had 'better' access to education but the form of education available to Roma was still not based on equality of provision and access. As a result, Roma did not have the opportunities to become professionals, for example doctors, lawyers and teachers. Older Roma men consulted generally had received less schooling than younger men. However, young Roma male respondents explained that the schooling available to them was characterised by segregation and inferior education provision. One Roma man aged in his early thirties attended school until he was 18 years old. However, Roma children in the school were segregated into a separate class and received one class a week. He explained:

*(I was) 13-14 years at Primary school but very difficult with what we learnt in that school to pass the exam for secondary school but I passed because of mediation at home because my parents paid someone (to give him extra tuition). But not enough money for other brothers. Only two only do primary school. One other brother go to secondary school. I tried to learn my other brothers what I learnt/was taught.*

*(Roma man aged 27 years old)*

## Findings from Service Providers

**4.2.6** Although many service providers consulted were aware of the differences between Roma and Romanians, there was a lack of knowledge, in general, regarding Roma culture, history and tradition. Traditional patriarchal roles of Roma families are presenting challenges in contemporary Ireland. The family as an intergenerational and extended unit is recognised by service providers as extremely important. When a Roma person calls into a service provider to make an enquiry or request, s/he is accompanied: by an extended family network of people (usually male). There are very clear gender divisions and socialisation roles among Roma clients: men (generally, but not always) ask the questions. Groups of Roma men calling in to the school enquiring and in some cases, demanding letters of attendance appears to reflect a lack of respect for female educationalists and other service providers. Extended Roma male networks often approach education organisers, school principals, etc for letters of attendance. Issues of communication and gender are relevant in this situation.

**4.2.7** The parallels and differences between the Roma and Travellers is a concurrent theme. The parallels to Travellers are made primarily in gender socialisation roles and adaptation to a formal learning environment. However, service providers feel from conversations with Roma parents and children (and their own knowledge)<sup>124</sup> that it is important to recognise Roma as a separate ethnicity.

**4.2.8** Some service providers have built up relationships with the Roma family or families in their local area. Differences were noted between the Roma and non-Roma asylum-seekers, for example, Roma, when looking for accommodation (unlike other asylum seekers/refugees), do not list proximity to schools as a priority. However, parallel to the experiences of asylum-seekers, stress, anxiety and inability to make a plan for the future dominate the lives of many Roma families/groups.

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<sup>124</sup> In an effort to gain further knowledge on the Roma community, some service providers have accessed material from the Internet.



## 4.3 Barriers

### Findings from Roma

**4.3.1** Roma in Ireland want to engage in educational provision at primary, secondary and adult education levels. However, anecdotal evidence reveals that, many of the population appear to be in the asylum process or awaiting decisions on their asylum applications. As a result their lives dominated by anxiety and stress are on hold, pending a decision on their residency in Ireland. All the Roma participants in this report listed the asylum process as a key barrier to engaging in education provision. Many Roma parents in Ireland are concerned for their children if they are forced to return to Romania. Roma children in Ireland are losing fluency in the Romanian language and this will have important repercussions on their participation within the Romanian educational system.

**4.3.2** The Roma have survived persecution, discrimination and exclusion over the centuries and in contemporary majorities societies. There are fears in relation to losing a culture that continues to be undervalued, misunderstood and excluded on a global scale. It is important for Roma not to mix too much with non-Roma or the gadje (the equivalent of the majority society pejorative term of Gypsy):

*Roma people say: Why you always talking to the gadje? You are leaving (the) Roma*

*(Roma man aged 27 years old)*

**4.3.3** It is important, for Roma in Ireland, that their culture is acknowledged in school classrooms. This will help to teach their own children and majority population children about the global Roma community. The family unit remains fundamental in the Roma community. Many Roma parents are unable to help their children with homework and do not understand school structures, protocol and systems.

**4.3.4** Previous experiences not just in education systems but, in majority societies create a very serious barrier – Trust. When asked about their life as a Roma person in Romania, all the Roma adults spoke of lives characterised by discrimination, prejudice and racism.

*My mother dressed me like a Romanian. They didn't know we were Gypsies. Cause where I lived they were Romanian. After they know I am Gypsy, they send me out (of the school) – at 12 years. Started (school) at 6 years. Some Gypsies came to the school and they talking to me in Gypsy (how school found out she is Roma) – They hate the Gypsies*

*(Roma woman aged 26 years old)*

**4.3.5** One Roma woman aged 18 years old explained that she went to school for three months, when she was ten years old. Her mother, who can read and write, taught her the alphabet as she was forced to leave school when people at the school repeatedly said:

*Go away Roma  
No good Roma*

**4.3.6** The Roma research participants explained that living as a Roma person in Romania is characterised by discrimination and exclusion by the majority Romanian population. Speaking about discrimination experiences in everyday life, they explained:

*Its racist(life in Romania)*

*Gypsy (They are seen as separate people)*

*We didn't have the chance to go to school*

*We lived in the dirt*

On issues of inequality in and access to formal education, they explained:

*They (schools in Romania) didn't want them (their children)*

*Your children are not allowed in schools*

*Everything apart because we are Roma Gypsies*

*But from this (the limite/segregated education) you can never go anywhere*

*They don't care. They don't try to teach you like the other one. They make that – with us because they are forced to – from the Director (of the school) or someone else from the school*

*(All quotes from Roma men)*

**4.3.7** Life in Ireland, they feel, is better as they are not exposed to their previous levels of abuse as Roma in Romania. However, life in Ireland is characterised by one dominant element: Anxiety about immigration status. Thus, the central barriers to participating in adult education programmes in Ireland given were anxiety/stress relating to their immigration status and trust.

**4.3.8** Many Roma participants were extremely worried about their immigration status and this had an adverse effect on schooling and accessing education, for example:

*Very stressed about the situation in Ireland*

*Can't learn because he is not sure – Immigration can come in the middle of the night (Roma man speaking for another research participant)*

*They would like so much to bring the children to school ... But they have no possibility, no chance ...*

*Because in their head is always the problem, the immigration will come, always, everyday in their head.*

*That's why most of the parents don't want to send their children to school – because they don't know what will happen next*

*(All quotes from Roma men)*

**4.3.9** Compounded by a lack of formal education/schooling as well as experiences within such provision, many older Roma people (that is aged over 35 years old) face particular difficulties accessing adult education. Some of the Roma male participants



feel they and their wives are now 'too old' to engage in education. However, this does not imply that Roma adults do not want to access and participate in adult education and/or vocational training. Translating for a Roma husband and wife (both in their early fifties), a young Roma man explained:

*They want to go to school but they don't have a translator. And with only four and two classes of experience in Romania –they have even forgotten how to sign their name*

**4.3.9** The Roma women who participated in the fieldwork identified specific barriers, which prevent them and other Roma women from accessing and participating in adult education. For example, immigration status was of major concern for many women:

*The big problem (awaiting status) is very scared*

*Not having the green card*

*We don't know if yes or no*

*We are sleeping with this, thinking with this, waking with this*

Lack of knowledge of education structures in Ireland and for some women, in their country of origin, emerged as a barrier. Non/limited literacy development and limited experiences of schooling were also significant issues:

*They don't know what a school is (that is most Roma women)*

*Most people they don't like to read or write*

Childcare responsibilities within the Roma community also affect Roma women's engagement in education provision. Several of the Roma women participants in this report explained:

*Everyone has children (re what makes it hard for Roma women to attend an adult education programme or class)*

**4.3.10** Socialisation roles and gender within some Roma families and/or groups affect Roma girls and women's access, participation and attainment in education. Roma male participants explained:

*In our community, the Roma girls need education but not too much*

*The Roma girl, her destiny is to be a housewife and good mother. She doesn't need to make a career. Once she is married she will stay at home*

*It is important to have head of house to speak English*

*The boys will be the head of the family*

### Findings from Service Providers

**4.3.11** The primary barriers identified by service providers relate to linguistic difficulties and cultural differences when trying to communicate with Roma parents. Roma children often act as translators (in the English language) for their parents and miss school as a result. Roma parents appear to have limited or no experience of formal educational structures. This leads to problems of support and encouragement for

school attendance, completion of homework in the home, punctuality and regular attendance. Many educationalists find it difficult to obtain information from Roma parents about their children's previous engagement in school(s) prior to coming to Ireland and if the children have been or are enrolled in other Irish schools. For example, a primary school principal explained that the children from a Roma family in her school (in Dublin) were registered in a school in Kerry. It is also, at times, difficult for school principals to assess the age of Roma children due to a lack of birth certificates and because of the authenticity of identity documents presented.

**4.3.12** Findings from consultations with Community Welfare Officers indicate the main barriers relate to communication. Many Roma clients have limited or no fluency in English. Roma women's English language skills and development are usually better, especially if their children are attending school. However, there are many Roma women who do not speak any English. Clear gender socialisation roles in the Roma community reflect the fact that Roma women are generally responsible for childcare and some school matters. Issues highlighted by service providers in education relate to:

- School uniforms (that is, a general reluctance to wear them)
- Behavioural problems
- Gender: Roma girls are leaving school at an early age in traditional Roma families; dress code of older Roma girls in primary schools; Roma boys and attitudes to girls in class and co-educational classrooms in secondary schools
- Disabled and Special Needs Roma children are not accessing services
- Punctuality and timekeeping

### **School Attendance**

**4.3.13** Anecdotal evidence reveals that some schools have refused to take Roma students and there appears to be little/no tracking of children in these situations. Generally, there are difficulties in attempts to involve Roma parents in formal education provision because of different social values and gender issues. Roma girls are leaving school earlier than Roma male classmates because of an emphasis on preparation for marriage and concerns by parents relating to virginity. High levels of irregular attendance and absenteeism are affecting schools' retention of Language Support Teachers.<sup>125</sup> Schools cannot validate this role, if children do not attend or attend sporadically (a common anecdotal example is four days attendance in a month for Roma children).

### **Adult Education**

**4.3.14** It is extremely difficult to encourage Roma adults to recognise the value of Adult Education. This relates to English language and literacy classes. Programmes and projects to date with a focus on Roma adult clients have seen low attendance except for Arts and Crafts classes. Gender issues also affect attendance because of traditional socialisation roles and responsibilities.

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<sup>125</sup> However, it could also be added here the current inadequate timeframe allocated to language support provision in that it is only available for children for a period of two years. It can take ten years to attain academic proficiency in English.



### Gender Roles in the Roma community

**4.3.15** Issues relating to traditional patriarchal roles are limiting educational access and participation for Roma women and Roma girls (aged over 13 years to 16 years).

Traditional early marriage patterns are prevalent in Ireland. This affects post-primary level education participation for Roma girls. Roma women have responsibility for all matters relating to childcare and this raises important issues of access and participation in adult education provision. Provision is needed particularly in healthcare and for example, enabling Roma women to communicate with medical practitioners. Many Roma women have little or no literacy (even basic level) development or previous experience in formal education provision.

**4.3.16** Adult asylum seekers entitlements to education access is limited and effects eligibility for different education and training programmes. The lack of accredited documents for existing skills and trades is a recurrent barrier for Roma men. Agencies, organisations and services are seen as working in isolation and creating further difficulties in attempting to build links and trust with the Roma community in Ireland. Past attempts at addressing some of the needs of this community have been characterised by difficulties in attendance and timekeeping.

## 4.4 Supports

### Findings from Roma

**4.4.1** If women are to access any form of educational provision, some form of childcare provision is required. This form of provision may not relate to 'traditional', mainstream childcare provision, for example, it could involve a Roma woman assisting with crèche/childcare for Roma children. Roma women highlighted support for women accessing maternity services. Many Roma women have limited/no English language skills and rely on other Roma women to translate medical procedures for them.

**4.4.2** Drawing attention to limited/lack of formal education and the stress of being in the immigration process, Roma men explained that they need support 'to manage their lives in a better way'. They would like a chance use their skills (and a chance to develop their skills in for example, car mechanics, decorating and other home maintenance) and provide for their families in a self-supported financial way. Being able to work would help them to integrate and contribute to Irish society. For their children, Roma men felt:

*The only one answer – they need to get a better education for their children*

**4.4.3** However, the future for their families rests with their being granted legal status. Other important supports were Romani translators (as opposed to Romanian translators) and Roma culture reflected in schools. Recognition of Roma culture in Irish society is important and is reflected in the repeated assertion that they want to be known as Roma, not as Romanians or as Gypsies.

## Findings from Service Providers

- 4.4.4** Many service providers view the different array of agencies, organisations and services, for example in education, as working in isolation. There is limited communication between different organisations and agencies seeking to target local Roma needs in their areas. The lack of an effective networking system for services prevents information exchanges on how to build links and trust with the Roma community in Ireland. Therefore, service providers are unaware of initiatives or programmes developed and implemented for Roma clients. This lack of networking means there is little support for service providers attempting to address on a local scale the needs of Roma adults and children in their areas.
- 4.4.5** With regards to health services and supports needed, service providers explained that generally a small male network of family members accompany Roma women during their maternity hospital appointments and visits. Roma men in these instances translate for women, raising important issues in relation to translation abilities of medical terms, complications and procedures. Translation services are usually refused.<sup>126</sup> An important issue relates to bereavement and counselling in cases of infant mortality and access to culturally sensitive support. Engaging Roma women in antenatal education needs to be addressed. Public Health Nurses are seen as an important link in targeting and establishing trust to provide support for Roma women.
- 4.4.6** The needs of Roma adults with psychiatric disabilities or who may be experiencing trauma as a result of migration, past experiences, the asylum process, etc. are currently not provided for. It is difficult to access members of the Roma community in Ireland with specific mental health needs and this is an area requiring attention.
- 4.4.7** Service providers raised concerns about Roma who may not be documented as residing in Ireland. These individuals and families are not accessing any services because of fears that if they do so they will have to leave the country. The children of such families are not attending school and it is unknown how many Roma may be currently in this situation.
- 4.4.8** Generally, Roma children appear to enjoy school but quickly lose interest due to a lack of support in the home. Frequently, homework is done in the classroom. Regarding school attendance, Roma boys attendance is better than Roma girls as there is more of an emphasis on their attendance by parents. In some primary schools, attendance has improved when the child enters into her/his second year at the school. However, absenteeism and sporadic/erratic levels of attendance remain prevalent issues. There is little if any transfer to second level education institutions. Attempts to address provision for Special Needs children<sup>127</sup> has presented difficulties.

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126 Anecdotal evidence from fieldwork indicates that the language offered in translation/interpretation is Romanian in the situation of Roma from Romania.

127 Given the history of Roma children in 'Special Schools', the term 'Special Needs' is understood by Roma as relating to segregation, discrimination and dehumanisation.



## 4.5 Provision

### Findings from Roma

**4.5.1** There was a clear difference among the Roma women participants in relation to the type of programmes, if they were able, that they would like to attend. This difference relates to age. The younger women consulted expressed interest in English language classes. The 'older' women (that is, aged over 30 years old)<sup>128</sup> would like to engage in sewing and dressmaking courses. One woman in this age band would like to train as a childminder.

*To learn English – to go to the class*

*Sewing. Dressmaking*

*Better to have a woman teacher but ok to have a man*

*(Roma women)*

**4.5.2** Some of the Roma men consulted have little or no English language fluency. Learning English would help them to have their existing skills as mechanics, drivers, painters, decorators, pavement layers, etc recognised. One man would like to learn how to: 'Hold a pen'. As head of the family, employment and resulting financial self-sufficiency was emphasised as extremely important for Roma men. However, they are not allowed to work in Ireland because of their current status and therefore are unable to use their skills. All the men have a profession, however, most have been given limited opportunities to develop and implement their trades:

*It's very hard for a Romani Gypsy to find somewhere to work. You have to work for yourself. I washed cars – It was the only job for me. I'm qualified mechanic – but they don't give me no job.*

*(Roma man aged 22 years old)*

**4.5.3** As head of the family, Roma men would like provision in education for their children:

*To be the same like other children*

*Roma culture in school*

*What we are – Where we are coming from and not to forget*

*To learn about other culture and our culture*

*Roma as teachers, as translators*

*Very important to go to school*

*To learn to read, to write – to speak correctly*

*(Roma men)*

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<sup>128</sup> Socialisation roles in the Roma community indicate that there are different perceptions relating to age than for majority communities, where women or men aged over 30 years old are not perceived as 'old'.

**4.5.4** For themselves and other Roma adults, the men listed English language classes; reading and writing (literacy) classes in order to develop and have their skills recognised as important:

*We want to be integrated but we need help. ... The Roma are very hard worker. Like painter, decorator. ... My dream is to work in a factory (as a mechanic)*

*Me, as a Roma man, from the Roma community with certain level of education – I would like to see all Roma, adult women and men with a level of education high enough to be accepted in the Irish community and to manage the children's education. And to manage their lives in better way*

*If we integrate into Irish society, first of all we have to speak English. Only this, we make things right and fine*

*(Roma men)*

## **Findings from Service Providers**

**4.5.5** Service providers drew attention to important differences in views among Roma women towards their needs in education provision. This relates to age: younger Roma women (and men) are interested in literacy and language classes; 'older' Roma women (estimated age is from 30 to 50 years old) enjoy sewing/dressmaking, cooking and music.

**4.5.6** Diversity within different Roma families in Ireland emerges as an important variable in service providers' contact with Roma groups. This diversity affects attitudes and participation in formal education provision and traditional/less traditional gender roles in family units. The preservation of strict gender responsibilities and authority, affects provision for Roma women's participation and access to literacy and language classes. Roma appear to have little or no understanding of Irish appointment systems or organisational procedures. Individuals rarely make enquiries in relation to adult education classes (that is, ESOL and Literacy classes). Agencies, organisations and services are seen as working in isolation and creating further difficulties in attempting to build links and trust with the Roma community in Ireland. Past attempts at addressing some of the needs of the community have been characterised by difficulties in attendance and timekeeping.

## **4.6 Research with Roma children**

**4.6.1** Five Roma children (boys and girls) were interviewed through the medium of their drawings. The children were aged between eight and thirteen years old. All are from Romania, live in Dublin and currently attending primary level education in Ireland. All the children are fluent in their mother tongue (Romani), English and Romanian. However, all the children explained they are forgetting Romanian words, as they no longer speak this language in their family group. English language skills for their parents are limited and/or non-existent. Referral was made by one of the children to the fact that his father is very worried about being able to stay in Ireland: 'He got white hair.' The themes to emerge from the drawing interviews with Roma children relate to:

- Roma culture, traditions and food
- Life in Romania/other countries



- Life in Ireland
- Teachers, homework and school
- University
- Gender
- Name calling by non-Roma children in school

**4.6.2** The children appear to enjoy school in Ireland and have generally made Irish friends. However, there were incidents of name calling by non-Roma children in and outside of the classroom. However, one child in the drawing interview process drew a picture of himself and his Irish friends playing football together.

The children felt although the teachers explained this issue would be addressed, in reality nothing was said to the 'name-callers'. Three of the children stated that '(t)eachers don't like us'. The children explained that:

*In my school, I don't have any friends only one friend – she understands me.  
She (is) English-Irish – Lives beside me*

*(Roma girl – aged 13)*

*Call us Pakistan*

*And call us Pakistan ball*

*Because they (people in Pakistan) make footballs*

*(Roma children)*

**4.6.3** The children's homework is frequently completed in class. One child explained that her teacher allowed her to complete homework in the classroom (as opposed to at home). Being able to do homework the following morning, at the beginning of the school day, with the assistance of a teacher was viewed by the children as helpful and a positive experience. One of the children explained that he has to miss school sometimes in order to translate at meetings for his parents as neither can speak English.

**4.6.4** The Roma children interviewed like to play with their friends and listen to Roma music as well as contemporary pop music. All of them feel that it is better to be doing something instead of 'sitting all day watching television'. Art, Maths and English at school were perceived by the children to be 'good' subjects. This contrasts to a dislike of Geography and Irish.

*Too much hard work at the beginning but when I talked English it wasn't hard any more*

*Someone from same country (Romania), was the same side (sits beside) as her.  
They didn't speak for a while but (now) are friends*

*Really boring part is when reading, fun part is doing art*

*Learn (ing) about older Irish people: no cars – had to wear long skirts (as interesting)*

*Draw pictures (like to)*

*For new Romani people – give them easy work and they should stay all day because it wouldn't be fair to the others. Just because they are different, they shouldn't go half day.*

*(Roma children)*

**4.6.5** Of particular importance, for all the children, was Roma culture, tradition and history. Roma music and celebrations were highlighted as elaborate and distinct (that is from Irish weddings), for example:

*(The) Mother of bride has to give money to the musicians to sing the bride's name in a song. The bride has to go round with a bag in which people put money. Can be €500 or even €1000 but not €100 or €150. They also cut a cake. Roma weddings are big with 500 or 1000 people. Not like Irish weddings with 100 – You can have them in your garden or rent out a restaurant*

*(Roma girl aged 12/13 years)*

**4.6.6** It was difficult for the children when they first went to school in Ireland. The work was initially hard because of language barriers (that is because they did not speak English) as well as cultural differences.

*Bad people make it hard. They were slagging me because (I am Roma).*

*(Roma boy – aged 11 years)*

**4.6.7** The children drew attention to 'special' teachers who help with learning the English language. Three of the children would like to go to university and become teachers. However, they explained:

*At sixteen you are too old to go to school*

*Right age to finish school – thirteen years (old)*

*(Roma children)*

## **4.7 Summary of Key Points**

- Irish majority society reflects a lack of knowledge about Roma history, culture and traditions. Roma are frequently referred to as Romanians or by the pejorative term 'Gypsy'.
- Roma education and schooling are different. Roma education is transmitted through intergenerational learning and gender roles are clearly defined in socialisation patterns. Previous experiences of schooling for Roma adults are characterised by discrimination and inequality. Many Roma adults have limited experience of schooling and cannot help with their children with homework. Past negative experiences and the fear of mixing too much with non-Roma societies, impacts on support in the Roma home for formal education or schooling.
- Roma adults have a general lack of knowledge about Irish education structures and for example, appointment procedures. Many Roma women do not know what a school is and Roma children's attendance in school is characterised by sporadic attendance. Children often act as translators for their parents or the family group.



- Service providers drew attention to the parallels between the Roma and Traveller community. However, they felt it was important to also highlight the differences between the two distinct communities.
- Roma families who are in the asylum process are experiencing stress and anxiety. This is affecting their ability to plan for the future and in turn their children's attendance in school.
- Barriers highlighted by service providers indicate linguistic/communication difficulties with Roma families. Traditional cultural socialisation roles also affect attitudes and engagement in school and adult education provision. Roma adults expressed fear about losing their culture, a lack of knowledge about Roma culture and history and their experiences in schooling provision.
- Supports are needed for Roma women are childcare, maternity services and the development of English language skills. Roma men need support in being able to work, have their existing skills recognised and to become financially self-sufficient.
- Agencies, organisations and services are perceived as working in isolation and this affects service providers' ability to identify, establish a link and build trust with local Roma groups.
- Roma children need support from the family unit with their schooling and an understanding of school and other institutions' procedures, structures, etc provided for Roma groups.
- English language skills, vocational training (for example in dressmaking and sewing) as well as childcare need to be provided for Roma women. The promotion of literacy for Roma adults is important as well as accreditation of Roma men's skills and trades.





# Chapter 5

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Final Conclusion

**5.1.1** The dearth of official statistics relating to the Roma population in Ireland presents challenges for service providers in order to identify and target local provision for Roma groups. Currently, there are estimates relating to the size and demographic profile of the community. However, the situation does not pertain exclusively to Ireland and corresponds to a global phenomenon in which nationality as opposed to ethnicity is collated for example in national censuses and education systems. It is evident that Roma experiences in schooling have been negative and dominated by segregation. Given the history of discrimination and social exclusion experienced by Roma groups and the wider Roma community, programmes designed to address educational needs must be based on short, medium and long-term objectives. Meeting the educational needs of the Roma in Ireland cannot be addressed over a short timeframe. The development of successful policies and programmes should be constructed, implemented, monitored and evaluated over a strategically planned timeframe.

**5.1.2** The relevant agencies, organisations and bodies responsible for implementing social inclusion in education must be identified. However, in order for successful outcomes, adequate resources and funding is vital if support throughout educational provision, from pre-school to adult education is to be effectively developed, promoted and implemented.

**5.1.3** While observing the different needs of adults and children in education, a family centred approach should be adhered to in addressing the educational needs of Roma. Targeting adults and/or children outside the family nucleus will not succeed in access, participation and successful outcomes for Roma in formal education or 'schooling'. The key to targeting Roma adults is recognising the importance of family in the Roma community and how education is structured within this community. The participation of Roma men and women in any programmes involves understanding the traditional social and cultural roles maintained by the majority of the Roma population in Ireland. For Roma men, programmes need to have specific work-related outcomes. For Roma women, provision needs to reflect childcare responsibilities and socialisation roles. Above all, the link between home and school is fundamental.

**5.1.4** Throughout Roma history and interaction with majority societies, recurring patterns of exclusion and trust permeate. Social policies have until recently either ignored or attempted to eradicate Roma culture. Service providers and educationalists require knowledge of Roma history, culture and experiences. All programs, projects



and initiatives that focus on promoting educational provision for Roma must consult with the target population they aim to assist:

**Unfortunately, countless programs for Roma have been destined to fail because they were developed without Roma participation, and correspondingly, with scant awareness of the specific culture and needs of the intended beneficiaries.<sup>129</sup>**

**5.1.5** In developing policy that reflects an intercultural and equality framework for Roma, policy makers, service providers, agencies and organisations need to recognise that Roma have a long history of exclusion, discrimination and human rights violations in education policies and practices. Development and promotion of inclusive educational provision for Roma involves recognising that the issues are long-standing, complex and multi-faceted. Irish educational policy for Roma must begin by working from an international framework in which human rights are the central focus. Fundamental to the process of beginning to address and promote the educational needs of Roma in contemporary Ireland is the inclusion of Roma consultation, collaboration and evaluation. Emerging issues highlighted in this research report on the educational needs of Roma in Ireland are provided below.

### Emerging Issues

- Lack of statistical data on Roma community in Ireland in order to locate, identify and target needs.
- Barriers to adult Roma participation in education (language and literacy development) are primarily: the asylum process, mother tongue non-literacy, traditional gender roles, cultural attitudes to mixing in non-Roma sectors and limited experience and/or negative experiences in formal education provision.
- Barriers to Roma children's participation and achievement in education are primarily: lack of family support for school, parental inability to help with school work, traditional gender roles, difficulties eliciting accurate information on children's previous school experiences and/or enrolment, peer group relations in schools, literacy and familiarity with formal learning environments.
- Need for outreach support, for example, mediators to act as vital points of contact between learning environments outside the Roma community and Roma families. Establishing and building a link between the home and school is critical.
- Institutional racism, direct and indirect discrimination and low expectations of Roma populations have impacted on education participation for the Roma community.
- Provision, recommendations and strategies for Travellers reflect parallels and differences between Roma education needs and perceptions of formal education provision.
- Important link between: education, health care (Public Health Nurses, Medical Social Workers in maternity hospitals) and social welfare (Community Welfare Officers) sectors.
- Importance of Roma consultation in the development of targeted education initiatives.

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<sup>129</sup> Van der Stoel, M. (2000) *Ibid*, pp.8.

- Transition from primary (child-centred approach) to secondary (several teachers specialising in different subjects/areas) levels. Roma parents do not understand the differences in each level's structure for example, co-educational secondary schools may present difficulties given traditional patriarchal socialisation gender roles.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations in this report have been devised within an Irish context from consultations with Roma and service providers. The framework for their design has been drawn from extensive research of international policy and good practice recommendations for Roma in education. The launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015) highlights four priority areas: education, employment, health and housing. Launched in February 2005, the Decade has created an important context on which to base this report's recommendations.

### Recommendation One: The Development of a Roma Education Policy

The Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Science should coordinate a Roma Education Policy. The policy should be developed within the framework of existing strategies and developed: at pre-school, primary, secondary and Adult and Further Education levels. The National Traveller Education Strategy<sup>130</sup> should have relevance to the development of the education policy. The Department of Education and Science should include specific reference and strategies to Roma within this forthcoming policy.

- The Guiding Principles of Roma education policy: Recommendation No R (2000) 4, as outlined by the Council of Europe, should inform the development of educational policy for the Roma community in Ireland today.
- An intercultural framework underpins the *National Action Plan Against Racism: Planning for Diversity*. Within the five objectives (protection, inclusion, provision, recognition and participation) there is a commitment to develop an intercultural education policy, including a focus on whole school planning. It is important that there is focus on Roma in the development of a national education policy with reference to broader equality policy.
- With specific reference to children, a Roma education policy should address issues relating to tracking within the school system and self-identification of ethnicity.
- International research has highlighted the failure to consult and collaborate with the Roma community in the development of education policy and practice has resulted in failure of same. Therefore in this report it is strongly recommended that consultation and collaboration be an integral part of policy and practice. Roma representation should be included in all relevant forums.
- There should be adequate funding and resources allocated for implementation of the policy.

<sup>130</sup> The National Traveller Education Strategy is due to be completed in June 2005. The Strategy provides an important opportunity to include a focus on the needs of Roma..



- vi. Family support should be an integral part of the education policy for Roma.
- vii. The VEC local education providers and Health Boards should collaborate on an educational component in health care programmes for Roma.
- vii. The Further Education Section in the Department of Education and Science should support the development of literacy for ESOL including tutor training resources and materials, as well as the piloting of family learning initiatives.

### **Recommendation Two: Roma inclusion in the School Curriculum**

- i. At national level: The Department of Education and Science should ensure that Roma culture and identity is recognised within Intercultural policy.<sup>131</sup> The promotion of intercultural education should ensure teaching materials and learning materials reflect Roma and other minority cultures. Curriculum and teaching materials designed to take into account Roma cultural identity is advocated in No.9 of the Guiding Principles of Roma Education Policy (2000), Council of Europe.
- ii. At individual school level: Whole school policies promoting cultural diversity should include the celebration of Roma culture.
- iii. At individual school level: Noting the Department of Education and Science shift from Traveller-only provision, this policy should be applied to the Roma. There should be no segregated/special Roma-only classes provided for within the curriculum.
- iv. Roma children should access language development support where necessary.

### **Recommendation Three: The Development of a Vocational Training Programme for Roma**

- i. At National Level: The Department of Enterprise and Employment, through FÁS should develop a vocational training programme targeted at meeting the specific needs of the Roma community.
- ii. FÁS and local education providers should collaborate on the delivery of the educational components within the vocational training.

### **Recommendation Four: Outreach and Coordination for Educational Provision**

- i. Given the dearth of any official statistics on the Roma population in Ireland and the fact that the Roma constitute a hard-to-reach/traditional non-participant group, the Department of Education and Science should put in place a proactive outreach strategy to engage the Roma in educational-based activities.
- ii. The Department of Education and Science should resource local education providers to engage in outreach activities aimed specifically at the Roma community within their local area. The Department should also provide incentive-based payments for participation and support for childcare and travel.

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<sup>131</sup> A Romany and Cultural studies module has been introduced to some English school curriculum in the UK. For further information see the 'Gypsy/Traveller Achievement Project Summaries' at [http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities.resources/Travellers\\_Achv\\_Summ\\_May04](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities.resources/Travellers_Achv_Summ_May04) Date last accessed: 08/10/2004

- iii. The VEC should have a policy of proactively targeting the asylum seeker population including the Roma.
- iv. The Department of Education and Science should provide the additional resources and supports, for example, translators, etc in order to provide a fully comprehensive home/family school-community liaison service to the Roma. Establishing a link between education services and Roma groups would assist in building trust and promote understanding.
- v. Adequate resources and funding should be provided to support for Home/School Liaison Officers working with local adult literacy providers on family learning.
- vi. The Department of Education and Science should provide funding for intergenerational learning and family learning. Examples of current practice that could be adapted for Roma family learning are family literacy as developed by NALA and the VECs.
- vi. A youth work dimension should be incorporated, for example networking with home/school liaison.
- vii. Outreach strategies developed on reaching the hard to reach should be implemented. This could take into consideration outreach work currently being developed in Ireland. Outreach strategies developed by the National Organisation For Adult Learning<sup>132</sup> (NIACE) in England could inform development in this area.

#### **Recommendation Five: Training for Roma Adults in Education Provision**

- i. At national level: The Department of Education and Science should provide funding for the active recruitment, training and employment of Roma mediators and mentors. This will establish a direct link and dialogue between the Roma community and educational institutions, agencies and programmes at all levels.
- ii. Training should take into consideration international employment and training schemes in operation for Roma. This would incorporate models of best practice, advocacy and the expertise of Roma professionals already employed in the area.

#### **Recommendation Six: Roma Translators and Interpreters**

At national level: The Department of Education and Science should provide funding for the active recruitment, training and employment of Roma translators/interpreters in the Romani language. A register of approved translators/interpreters should be compiled for schools and other educational institutions, organisations, etc.

#### **Recommendation Seven: Language and Literacy**

- i. Given the allocation of adequate funding by the Department of Education and Science, the VECs and other service providers should provide ESOL literacy programmes in their local areas.

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132 The NIACE website is located at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/information>



- ii. Taking into account previous research<sup>133</sup> Adult Literacy Tutors at national, regional and local level, should be provided with specific ESOL literacy training. Tutors should receive specific training on how to assist Roma adults in their language and literacy needs. Given the negative experiences of Roma in formal education provision, tutor training should include language and cultural sensitivity.
- iii. Classes for Roma adults as well as family literacy programmes should be provided that specifically target the needs of the Roma community. Best practice models, which promote language development using the interests of the target group, should be implemented as a basis for learning. Learners who are not literate in their mother tongue should receive instruction in this language before second language and literacy acquisition.
- iv. Funding for training should be provided for training in ESOL literacy provision.

### **Recommendation Eight: Establishment of a Statistical Profile of the Roma Community**

International research and research conducted for this report highlights the critical and urgent need for accurate and comprehensive data on the Roma community. In collating statistics relating to ethnicity, anonymity should be guaranteed for all individuals.

At national level:

- i. The Central Statistics Office should create a category for ethnicity in the national census and quarterly household statistics.<sup>134</sup>
- ii. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should include ethnicity as a question for individuals in the asylum process.
- iii. The Department of Education and Science should compile statistics relating to ethnicity at all levels of education provision.
- iv. The Department of Family and Social Affairs should compile statistics relating to ethnicity for all applicants in receipt of social welfare benefits.

### **Recommendation Nine: Discrimination and Promotion of Equality**

At national level: All equality policy documents should include reference to anti-discrimination measures for the Roma community.

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133 Ward, T. (2002) *Asylum Seekers in Adult Education: A Study of Language and Literacy Needs*, City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC: Dublin.

134 Included in the 2004 Census Pilot Survey four new questions is 'Ethnic Group'. The recommendation in relation to this question is that: 'A high level of acceptance on the part of the public suggests that this question is a possibility for inclusion (in the 2006 census form)' pp7.

### **Recommendation Ten: Anti-racism Training**

As outlined in international research, organisations and agencies, racism is an integral factor in the access and participation of Roma within schooling or formal education. The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015) promotes knowledge of racism experienced by the global Roma community and the need to address this area. Following this, all anti-racism training should include specific reference to the Roma community in Ireland and within the international context.

### **Recommendation Eleven: Further Research**

All educational research on minority ethnic communities and majority communities conducted by, for example the Department of Education and Science and the VECs should include reference to the needs of the Roma community in Ireland.

### **Recommendation Twelve: Community Development**

The Roma Support Group in Ireland should be given funding to provide at least two full-time workers through the Community Development Support Programme. Other programme funding should be provided by other programmes, projects, etc for example, the European Refugee Fund (ERF), administered by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). Trust funding should also support Roma inclusion.



## Appendix A: Advisory Committee

### Members

**Bernadette Sproule**

*Adult Education Officer – City of Dublin VEC*

**Deirdre Coyle**

*Programme Officer – FÁS: Social Inclusion and Equality Unit*

**Fergus Dolan**

*Training Officer – National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)*

**Finola McDonnell**

*Policy Officer, AONTAS*

**Gheorge Dancea**

*Co-founder – Roma Support Group*

**Ion Zatreanu**

*Co-founder – Roma Support Group*

**Liz O’Sullivan**

*Adult Education Officer, City of Dublin VEC*

**Mary Kett**

*Further Education Co-ordinator, Further Education Unit, Department of Education and Science*

**Pat Brady**

*Programme Manager – Travellers Programme, Crosscare*

**Patricia Doran**

*Adult Education Officer – County Dublin VEC*

**Philip Watt**

*Director – National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI)*

**Ronnie Fay**

*Director – Pavee Point Travellers Centre*

## Appendix B: Roma Support Group<sup>135</sup>

The Roma Support Group (RSG) was established in 2001. It represents the interests of the Roma community living in Ireland. Roma families living in the greater Dublin area are directly involved in the RSG and it has contacts with Roma families throughout the country.

The RSG is a voluntary group that has been working to:

- Highlight the situation of Roma living in Ireland and lead to an improvement in their circumstances.
- Articulate and represent Roma interests with policy makers and service providers in statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Provide information and training to the Roma community.
- Produce and disseminate information on the Roma community.
- Develop relationships between the Roma and majority population.

Further details on the Roma Support Group can be obtained from their website at: <http://www.romasupport.ie>

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<sup>135</sup> The Roma Support Group provided the outline of the Roma Support Group. They are based in Pavee Point Travellers Centre.



## Appendix C: Focus Group Topics and Questions

- Introductions
  - Where do people come from?
  - What was life like there? What did they do there?
  - How long have they been in Ireland?
  - What is life like in Ireland for them?
  
- Education
  - Roma education
  - Formal education
  - Is it important to go to school?
  - Own education
  - Do any of them have children in school in Ireland?
  - What advantages do they see in sending their children to school?
  - Any differences in education for boys and for girls?
  
- Barriers to Education
  - What are the main barriers to accessing education?
  - Fears? Worries? (For example, accommodation, health ...)
  - What are the reasons for not going to educational or training programmes?
  - What are the reasons for not sending children to school?
  
- The Future
  - What do you need to be offered in education or training programmes?
  - What kind of courses? Classes?
  - What does the Department of Education need to do?
  - What do you think teachers need to do in the classroom? For children?  
For adults?
  - How to create a positive image of Roma in Ireland?

## Appendix D: Life History Interviews

- Personal and familial data
  - Birthdate, place of birth, marital status
  - Parents' education and occupation
  - Grandparents' education and occupation
  - Siblings' education
  - Migration history within the family and their own
  - How long they have been in Ireland
  
- Education
  - Number of years in school
  - Experience(s) of school
  - Views on school
  - Their occupational history
  - What they would like to do in the future
  - How they see the future
  - Future for their children
  - Supports re education that can be put in place?
  
- Culture` and identity
  - Importance of being Roma
  - Roma language, culture and traditions
  - Roma representation and portrayal of Roma in/to majority society? (And in school)
  - What is their mother tongue?
  - Other languages?
  - Writing and reading in mother tongue? In other languages?



## Appendix E: Drawing Interviews with Roma children

Consultation (prior to interviewing Roma children) took place with an experienced Child Educational Psychologist in June 2004. Eilean Bradley has been working for twenty years with children and young people from South American communities in New Jersey, United States of America. Language and literacy needs are important components of the drawing interviews she conducts. The aims of the drawing interviews were to gather information about the children's experiences, needs and skills in relation to formal education provision or 'schooling'. Organised and supervised by Leanbh, the drawing interviews were conducted in Leanbh's Baggot Street offices by the researcher.

Supplied with paper, pens, pencils and crayons, the children were asked to (1) draw a picture of a person and (2) give a name and age to this person. The interviewer then asked two specific questions: (1) What does this person like to do best? and (2) What does this person like to do least?

This technique can be applied as a direct and indirect approach to interviewing children. In a direct approach, children will draw a picture of themselves. However, in an indirect approach, children draw a picture of a person. In both cases, the children will have completed a drawing, which represents a character. It is important that the interviewer explains this is a storybook and they are the authors of this story.

In relation to this project, the information being sought connects to school. So the question, what they like to do best and least can be linked to school. As an interviewer and/or researcher you are not critiquing the children, their parents and/or their community but attempting to establish a profile of educational needs and emerging related themes/issues.

## Appendix F: Crosscare survey

A survey of schools of the Dublin Archdiocese carried out by Crosscare between June and September 2004. The survey was sent to over 400 schools and results pertain to schools with Roma children enrolled.

pbrady@crosscare.ie

Date

Parish Priest Name

Address

Address

Address

Dear,

### **Re. Assessing the pastoral needs of parishes to respond to Romani in Ireland.**

Crosscare is carrying out a survey of priests and parish leadership groups to assess the needs of parishes in responding to Roma in the Dublin archdiocese. To this end, I would appreciate your cooperation by answering the questionnaire below.

Crosscare is concerned about the response to members of the Roma community who have a long experience of exclusion and discrimination. In order to plan any programme or prepare resources for parishes, it would be beneficial to consider the experience and views of those in the parishes. The questionnaire is concerned with your experience of Roma in relation to parish services or events and also to your experience of Roma in the wider community.

Please complete the following questionnaire and return by post or email by the 30th June. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

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Mr Pat Brady,

Travellers Programme



## Crosscare Questionnaire

Name of Parish:

Address:

Telephone No.:

Email address:

Name of Parish Priest:

1. Do you have a parish committee?
2. Do you have Romani parishioners? Please tick the most appropriate box
  - None
  - One family group
  - Less than 5 families
  - More than 5 families
3. Do you have experience of members of the Roma community in your neighbourhood?
  - None
  - Rarely
  - Occasionally
  - Regularly

If so, can you provide details: (please attach additional pages if necessary)
4. Are there any specific/cultural needs around baptism, marriage, funerals or any other pastoral need that you have encountered?
5. In the wider context, in what ways could the parish be supported in terms of:
  - a. Raising Awareness of cultural differences
  - b. Combating Prejudice
  - c. Other

## Appendix G: Consultation with Service Providers

1. Current role, organisation, department, etc
2. Provision re individuals from Roma communities in your organisation, department (or in a prior post, sector, etc)
3. Contacts with individuals from Roma communities – have individuals made contact, been referred, etc? How do clients find out about services?
4. How do you consult with Roma communities in design of programmes/services? Target communities? How do you get Roma involved in the education/training sector?
5. Do you work/consult with other organisations, centres, service providers, community leaders, etc? Links with other organisations? Do you know of other organisations that are working with individuals from Roma communities? Or whom Roma has contacted?
6. Development of curriculum, modules and programmes specifically for Roma?
7. Importance of support services for Roma?
8. Barriers to participation and access to services?
9. Intercultural education and models of best practice?
10. Recommendations and guidelines for future?



## Appendix H: Individuals and Organisations who contributed to the report

### Vocational Educational Committee

Pat Morrissey, Community Education Facilitator, City of Dublin VEC  
Helen Geoghegan, Community Education Facilitator, City of Dublin VEC  
Sandra Buchanan, County Co-ordinator, Donegal VEC  
Pauline Ryan, ESOL Coordinator, Co. Dublin, VEC  
Secondary School Teacher, Dublin VEC College  
Declan Clarke, Travellers Training Centre, Meath VEC  
Paul Carroll, Adult Literacy Organiser, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin VEC  
Maria Culbert, Adult Literacy Organiser, Co. Dublin VEC.  
Jane Spearman, Mosney Reception Literacy Service, Meath VEC  
Lorraine Lynch, ESOL Co-ordinator, Dublin Adult Learning Centre  
Alice McGlinchey, Adult Literacy Tutor, Dublin Adult Learning Centre  
Louise Michael, Co-ordinator CDVEC Asylum Seeker and Refugee Education Initiative  
Frank Shiels, Co-ordinator, Tallaght Youthreach  
Patricia Doran, Adult Education Officer, County Dublin VEC  
Pat Higgins, Adult Education Officer, County Mayo VEC  
Patricia FitzGerald, Literacy Tutor, County Mayo VEC  
Crona Gallagher, Adult Education Officer, County Donegal VEC  
Gay Hogan, Adult Education Officer, Co. Dublin VEC  
Bernadette Sproule, Adult Education Officer, City of Dublin VEC  
Michael King, Principal, Liberties College, CDVEC  
David Billings, St. Catherine's Education and Resources Centre, Ballina, Co. Mayo  
Mella Cusack, Research Officer, Education for Reconciliation, Curriculum Development Unit, Dublin  
Jessica Wanzenbock, Co-ordinator, Separated Children's Education Service, CDVEC.

### Non-Governmental Organisation

Tanya Ward, Senior Research and Policy Officer, The Irish Council for Civil Liberties  
George, Ion, Altafin, Vasile and Monica, Roma Support Group  
Sr. Breege Keenan, Director, Vincentian Refugee Centre  
Gerry Callaghan, New Horizon, Athlone Refugee Asylum Support Group  
Anne Moroney, Director, Access Ireland  
Alice Binchy, Tallaght Intercultural Action  
Brid O'Sullivan, Information Co-ordinator, National Children's Resource Centre, Barnardos  
Ronnie Fay, Director, Pavee Point Travellers Centre  
Frank McNamara, Assistant Director of ESOL, SPIRASI  
Romanian Society of Ireland

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136 In order to preserve the confidentiality and ensure anonymity for some individuals consulted for the report, not all names have been listed. Titles for individuals are those given at time of the report fieldwork.

Gemma Lynch, Research Officer, NALA  
Pat Geurin, Liaison Officer, Irish Refugee Council  
Ali Dennehy, Information Officer, Refugee Information Service  
David Joyce, Accommodation Officer, Irish Travellers Movement, Dublin  
Jennnifer Roche, Development Officer, Ruhama Women's Project

## **Community**

Carmel O'Grady, Monaghan Partnership  
Ursula McKenna, Director, Dochas for Women, Monaghan  
Nchechi, Nuala and Marie at Dochas for Women.  
Leanna Joyce, North Fingal Romany and Traveller Movement  
Aileen O'Donoghue, Manager, Clondalkin Partnership  
Molly O'Duffy, Education Co-ordinator, Dublin Inner City Partnership  
Siobhan Cronin, Co-ordinator, Local Employment Service, Dundalk  
Fr. Godfrey O'Donnell, Romanian Orthodox Church, Ireland  
Noel Kelly, Northside Local Employment Service, Dublin  
Catherine Durkin, Education Co-ordinator, Blanchardstown Partnership  
Peter Nolan, Employment and Enterprise Co-ordinator, Dublin Inner City Partnership  
Sinead Delaney, Education Co-ordinator, Dundalk Employment Partnership  
Emer Coveney, Manager, Dublin Inner City Partnership  
Tony Jordan, Community Development Officer, Ait Daoine, Dundalk.  
Gerry Callahan, New Horizon, Athlone Refugee Support Group

## **Primary and Secondary School Providers**

Ann McMahon, Principal, St. Cronans JNS, Co. Dublin  
Kathleen Dawson, Principal, St. Louis National School, Monaghan  
Betty Holden, Principal, St Louis National School for Girls, Monaghan  
Language Support Teacher, Primary School for boys, Dublin city  
Principal, Primary school for girls, Dublin County  
Sheila Nunan, Principal, St. Kiernan's National School, Bray, Co. Dublin  
Deirdre Kirwan, Principal, Scoil Bhríde National School, Dublin  
Bernie Dunne, Resource Teacher, Scoil Bhríde National School, Dublin  
Sr. Denise O'Brien, Principal, Our Ladies Bower, Athlone

## **Other Education Providers and Services**

Barbara Lazenby-Simpson, Director, Integrate Ireland Language and Training, Dublin  
Mervyn Morrissey, Programme Co-ordinator, Integrate Ireland Language and Training, Dublin  
Audrey Wilson, Family/School Liaison Officer, Monaghan Education Centre  
Joe O'Connell, Director, Limerick Education Centre  
William Lacombe, Co-ordinator, Deonach, Tallaght Probation Project, Co. Dublin  
Marcie Barron, Dochas Education Centre, Mountjoy Women's Prison, Dublin  
Mary English, Donegal Second Chance Education  
Denise Shannon, Education EEI Co-ordinator, Leargas  
Helen Newman, Consultation, Leargas



### **Government Union Bodies**

Deirdre Coyle, Programme Officer, FÁS: Social Inclusion and Equality Unit, Dublin  
Michael O'Riordain, Manager, Tallaght Training Centre, Co. Dublin  
Deirdre O'Connor, Irish National Teacher's Association, Dublin  
Garda Jonathon O'Mahony, Garda Racial and Intercultural Office, Dublin  
Terry Madden, Chief Welfare Officer, Housing Welfare Section, Dublin City Council  
John Hanley, Senior Welfare Officer, Housing Welfare Section, Dublin City Council

### **Department of Education and Science**

Mary Kett, Further Education Co-ordinator, Further Education Unit  
Maugie Francis, National Education Officer for Travellers  
Breda Naughton, Principal Officer, Department of Education and Science  
Gerard Griffin, National Co-ordinator of Senior Travellers Centre  
Bill Sweeney, National Education Welfare Board  
Tony Gaynor, Higher Executive Officer, Social Inclusion Unit  
Anne McCluskey, Visiting Teacher for Travellers, Dublin  
Anne Thorton, Visiting Teacher for Travellers, Dublin  
Dermot Stokes, National Co-ordinator Youthreach

### **Individual**

Mairin Kenny, Research Consultant  
Michael O'hAodha, Librarian, University of Limerick Library  
Professor John A. Jackson, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin  
Carmel Dinan, Department of Sociology, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin  
Sarah Williams  
Geneviere Halkett  
Eilean Bradley, Child Psychologist, New Jersey, United States of America  
Dr. Phyllis Murphy, Research Fellow Outreach Co-ordinator, Equality Studies Centre, University College Dublin  
Administration and Management, St. Patrick's Asylum Seekers' Accommodation Centre, Monaghan  
Audrey Kaufman

### **Management Body**

Pat Brady, Programme Manager, Travellers Programme, Crosscare  
Anna Dangerfield, Programme Manager, Community Education, Crosscare  
Colin Thompson, Project Co-ordinator Traveller Programme, Crosscare

### **Children**

Adriana Blic, Child Support Worker, Leanbh, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dublin  
Tracey Bolger, Regional Manager, Leanbh, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dublin

## **Community Welfare Officers**

Community Welfare Officer, Co. Louth

Tom Maguire, Superintendent, Asylum Seekers Unit, Dublin

Aidan Murray, Community Welfare Officer, Dublin

Aimee Byrne, Community Welfare Officer, Ballynanty Health Centre, Limerick

Joseph Whittle, South Western Area Health Board

## **Medical Social Workers**

Dana Cartmill, Medical Social Worker, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Loreto O'Reilly, Head Medical Social Worker, National Maternity Hospital, Dublin

Cathy Sherlock, Maternity Department, University College Hospital, Galway

Eilis McDonnell, Head Medical Social Worker, Rotunda Hospital, Dublin

## **International contacts**

Martin Kovats, Project & Research Fellow, University of Birmingham– Consultant to Ian Hancock, Professor of Linguistics, University of Texas.

Thomas Acton, Professor of Romani Studies, University of Greenwich.

Natasa Kocic Rakocevic, Project Manager, Roma Children Centre (RCC), Serbia.

Ann Pesic, Programme Manager for Serbia, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

Szilvia Nemeth, Educational Researcher at the National Institute of Public Education in Budapest.

Daniel Bertaux, Director of Research, French National Center for Scientific Research.



## Appendix I: Agencies, Organisations and Programmes for Roma

### Britain

Department of Education and Skills (DfES) *Gypsy/Traveller Achievement Project Summaries* at url website

[http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Travellers\\_Achv\\_Summ\\_May04](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/Travellers_Achv_Summ_May04)

Office For Standards In Education (OFSTED) *Raising the attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. This report is available at url website <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/public.index.htm>

### International

*The Roma Education Resource Book* Volume 1 (1999) provides international information for educators, policy makers, etc on development of Roma education provision, participation and successful outcomes. The Resource book is available at url website <http://www.osi.hu/iep/minorities/ResBook1/ResBookAll.htm>

Van der Stoel, M. Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). (2000) *Report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*. This report is available at url website <http://www/osce.org/odihr/cprsi>

Save the Children (2001) *Denied a future? The right to education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children in Europe*. This publication is available at url website <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/details>

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) (Dec 2004) *Annual Report* (December 2004). The report is available at url website <http://eumc.eu.int>

European Roma Information Office (ERIO) at url website <http://www/erionet.org/Prejudices.htm>

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) at url website <http://www.errc.org>

The Patrin Web Journal: Romani Culture and History at url website <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm>

The Romani Archive and Documents (RADOC) at url website <http://www.radoc.net>

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) at url website [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

## Appendix J: Travellers and Formal Education in Ireland

Education Level	Provision	Outline	Participation
<b>Pre-school</b>	Pre-schools for Travellers; pilot scheme of Early Start preschool	Specific preschool provision for Travellers developed in voluntary sector, supported by Health Boards, VECs and NGOs. Funded (98%) by Dept. of Education & Science	Currently, 45–50 pre-schools for Travellers with an estimated 500 children attending. However, there is a shortage of pre-school places
<b>Primary</b>	Mainstream education: Resource Teachers for Travellers and Learning Support Teachers Traveller primary schools (there are currently two)	The Department of Education and Science's policy (since 1980) is to place Traveller children in mainstream education	Estimated attendance level of Traveller children at this level is 80%
<b>Post-primary</b>	No Traveller only secondary schools. School support services at this level include: Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers and Homework Clubs (but there is resources/ funding issue regarding their continuation)	Traveller attendance at this level is predominantly until 15/16 years old (or until the Junior Cycle Cert Programme)	Very low rates at this level though Travellers are participating in the School Completion Programmes which target children and young people at risk of early school leaving (4–18 years old)
<b>Training Centres (Youth)</b>	Three Traveller Junior Training/Education Centres Youthreach programmes (education, training and work experience)	Established during 1980s to promote transition from primary to secondary education. Traveller only units are being phased out. Training at this level is for 15–20 year olds	Three centres remain in operation with an estimated 100 students. Traveller Junior Training Centres are in the process of being phased out
<b>Traveller Centres (Adults)</b>	Senior Traveller Training Centres	General education programme, vocational training, work experience, counselling and psychological services	Twenty eight Senior Travellers Centres. See url website <a href="http://www.sttc.ie">http://www.sttc.ie</a>
<b>Adult Education</b>	VEC Adult Literacy Programme for Travellers; Community Education and Development Programmes	28 VEC Adult Literacy Programmes for Travellers	See VEC url website, for example: <a href="http://www.donegal.vec.ie">http://www.donegal.vec.ie</a>



## Appendix K: International Reports relating to Roma and Education

'Education: Conclusions and Recommendations' in Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area (2000)<sup>137</sup>

Target Group/Area	Action
<b>1. National Governments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Multicultural education training for teachers and other education professionals</li> <li>● National law to include provision against discrimination in any education level/section</li> <li>● Anti-discrimination in schools</li> <li>● Eradication of segregated schooling for Roma</li> <li>● Support for pre-school programs and 'booster' programs for Roma children who are attending mainstream schools</li> <li>● Meals, textbooks and other relating costs covered for families who cannot afford these costs</li> </ul>
<b>2. Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A 'keystone' of educational programmes aimed at promoting and enhancing access to education and achievement should be flexibility. However, this should not be at cost of setting high standards</li> </ul>
<b>3. Curricula</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educational texts to include history and culture of Roma, especially in countries-regions/localities with substantial Roma populations: in order to ensure dignity of all children in respected in schools</li> </ul>
<b>4. Roma Women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The educational needs of Roma women given special consideration. Roma women should be involved in design and implementation of programmes</li> </ul>

137 Van der Stoel, M. (2000) Ibid, see Section Three, Education: Conclusions and Recommendations, pp 95 – 96.

## Recommendations from Save the Children Report (2001) Denied A Future

Target Group/Area	Action
<b>Governments</b>	<p>Long-term commitment by governments regarding adequate resources for discrimination reforms and to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. This can only be achieved if the proper systems are put in place.</p> <p>Collection of accurate and comprehensive data on access of Roma children to school and subsequent attainment. Without such data, monitoring of access, participation, etc will continue to rely on anecdotal evidence. Educational provision for Roma should be 'mainstreamed' over time in overall national education policies and budgets. Evaluation and monitoring of all mainstreaming measures and provision should take place over a 5–10 year period</p>
<b>Civil Society</b>	<p>Role of media and non-governmental organisations in raising public awareness for support of equal education opportunities for Roma children</p>
<b>Education Systems</b>	<p>To promote visibility and role models in schools in order to build up Roma students' confidence. This can be achieved by ensuring Roma adults are trained and employed as role models and representatives of the Roma community. For example, as mediators, mentors, classroom assistants and teachers. As a result, links and dialogue between the school and Roma community/group could be established</p>
<b>Programmes</b>	<p>Importance of pre-school provision to prevent children from falling behind/early school leaving at primary level. Importance of pre-school provision needs to be acknowledged by governments with specific reference to usefulness for bilingual children</p>
<b>Interagency Approach</b>	<p>Affirmative action can help to overcome Roma parents' negative associations of formal education/schooling. Good policy and practice (in pre-primary and primary education) by non-governmental agencies, national and local government agencies should be adopted</p>
<b>Inclusive Approach</b>	<p>Government agencies, education providers and Roma communities work together to define the results they hope to achieve. Proposed investment/activity should be based on grounds for achieving results and accompanied by ways to evaluate and monitor outcomes</p>
<b>Research</b>	<p>Further research is needed (quantitative and qualitative) in order to establish a better understanding of gender and education; family, adults and children's perceptions of schooling; needs of young people who are parents and/or who work; challenges of meeting the needs of children whose mother tongue is Romani; effects of adult labour market discrimination on how Roma children perceive education and career expectations in schooling</p>



## Appendix L: Programmes for Roma

Type of Initiative	Target Group	Aim	Examples of Programmes
<b>Kindergarten</b>	Children aged between 3 and 6 years old	To develop innovative programmes for predominately Roma students to help them prepare for primary school and improve their majority language skills	<i>Open Society Foundation STEP by STEP</i> For further details: <a href="http://www.soros.org">http://www.soros.org</a>
<b>Pre-school</b>	Children with limited or no previous experience of a formal learning environment	To assist children in adapting to formal learning environments	Summer camps and workshops, which prepare children for school enrolment and participation
<b>Extra Curricula Support Programmes</b>	For children in mainstream primary/post-primary education	To assist children who need additional support in mainstream education	There have been many programmes developed by Roma individuals and NGOs, for example in Romania and Spain. In Greece and Ireland (for Travellers) 'Booster' programmes are used
<b>Personal Advisers</b>	For young people aged 13 to 19 years old	To visit families and help young people at risk of leaving school early/who need extra help	A British government support service called <i>Connexions</i> . In 2004, the service trained a member of the Traveller community with a specific remit to work with teenage Travellers
<b>Outreach Programmes</b>	For children in mainstream primary/post-primary education	To assist Roma children succeed in educational environments by using, for example, Roma Teaching Assistants who act as a bridge between the school and Roma community	The <i>International Step by Step Association</i> operates outreach programmes for Roma children in thirteen European countries

## Appendix L: Programmes for Roma (continued)

Type of Initiative	Target Group	Aim	Examples of Programmes
<b>Literacy Programmes</b>	For adults; adults and children (family literacy)	To promote basic functional literacy training and support understanding for Roma parents of formal education for their children	The <i>Roma Education Initiative</i> (2002) works in cooperation with state institutions to provide literacy programmes for Roma adults. Other initiatives include <i>The Only Chance</i> programme (Phare Lien) and the Roma Children's Centre, Serbia



## Appendix M: Data Collection

### Primary Sources of Data Collection

Method	Outline	Location	Participants
<b>Focus groups with Roma adults</b>	To create an informal forum for Roma on their educational needs. Three key topics addressed were: School-Education in Ireland-Barriers to Education	Conducted in County Dublin (Tallaght and Swords) and Dublin City Centre. In private houses and Pavee Point	Twenty-three male and seven female Roma adults aged between 18 and 55 years old. Participants are from Romania and were predominately asylum-seekers
<b>Life-history interviews with Roma adults</b>	To provide an in-depth profile of individual and intergenerational experiences of formal education	Conducted in Dublin City: Pavee Point, Private house and inner city coffee shop	Three Roma men and two Roma women aged between 18 and 55 years old
<b>Drawing interviews with Roma children</b>	To understand influences and experiences of formal education provision – from a child’s perspective	Organised and supervised by Leabh in their Baggot Street office, Dublin 4	Five Roma children from Romania aged between 8 and 13 years old. All at time of interviews were enrolled in primary level education
<b>Semi-structured consultations with non-Roma</b>	To establish issues and themes relating to education provision and Roma	Face-to-face consultations with service providers in Dublin and Monaghan. Telephone and email consultations in Dublin, Republic of Ireland and internationally	See Appendix G
<b>Survey to schools</b>	To assess participation and numbers of Roma in primary and secondary schools. And to gauge knowledge of Roma at these levels	Designed, implemented and conducted by CROSSCARE to schools in their Dublin Archdiocese	Survey posted to 400 primary and secondary school principals

## Secondary Sources of Data Collection

Sector Contacted	Aim of Contact	Method
<b>National and international agencies, organisations and service providers.</b>	To establish current practice and policy for Roma in education	By telephone and email
<b>Education Centres in Ireland</b>	To confirm if members of the Adult Roma community in Ireland are accessing education provision	Profile of report aims emailed to Education Centres in Ireland; telephone and email
<b>Community Welfare Officers, Ireland</b>	To draw up a demographic profile of Roma in Ireland and identify emerging needs	Letter sent to Health Centres in Dublin (City and County) and in each County in Republic of Ireland
<b>Medical Social Work Teams, Irish Maternity hospitals</b>	To provide a link between education and health needs. And identify emerging barriers for Roma clients and service providers	By letter, email and telephone
<b>VEC Adult Education Organisers</b>	To establish Roma participation in language and literacy provision in the VEC	By email and telephone
<b>Desk research</b>	To access global education policy and practice for Roma. Research also included Traveller education and human rights perspectives in educational policy	Via internet and library: projects, reports, journals, websites and other sources of documentation on Roma



## Appendix N: Profile of the Participants in the Research

Participants	Profile of individuals/groups/agencies/organisations consulted
<p><b>Roma women</b> (all from Romania)</p> <p>Total number of seven participants</p>	<p>Female research participants from the Roma community were aged between 18 to 36 years old. All the women have children apart from one woman who is expecting her first child. The average length of residence in Ireland is two and a half to four and a half years. All are asylum-seekers and their experience of participating in mainstream (Romanian) school environments is generally very limited. The average school attendance is from three months to two years. One woman spent eleven years boarding in one of the so-called ‘special schools’ and characterised her education experience as an unhappy time in her life. Another woman was forced to leave school once her ethnicity (as a Roma person) became known to the school authorities</p>
<p><b>Roma men</b> (all from Romania)</p> <p>Total number of Twenty three participants</p>	<p>The Roma men consulted are aged between 25 to 55 years old. The average length of time in Ireland is one and a half to five years. A minority of the men have refugee status and the majority are awaiting a decision on their asylum application. All are married and have children apart from one man whose wife is pregnant with their first child. There was little chance for them to go to school in Romania and if they did it was either segregated schooling or in the ‘special schools’. The educational provision offered to Roma in Romania was substandard and in many cases limited to one class a week</p>
<p><b>Roma children</b> (all from Romania)</p> <p>Total number of Five participants</p>	<p>Roma children consulted are aged between eight and 13 years old. Three boys and two girls took part in the research. Access to the children was organised, facilitated and supervised by the Leanbh programme of the Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. At the time of the research fieldwork, all the children were attending primary schools in the Dublin area</p>
<p><b>Service providers</b> (Irish)</p>	<p>Service providers consulted in the report refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education providers at mainstream primary and post-primary schools (Principals; Teachers; Home School Liaison Officers; Language Support Teachers)</li> <li>● Traveller and Roma Education (Organisations, Social Workers, Teachers working with Travellers)</li> <li>● Organisations working with asylum seeker, refugee and ethnic minority clients</li> <li>● Direct/Indirect education provision for adults (Literacy and ESOL, Probation Service and the Department of Education and Science)</li> <li>● Welfare (Community Welfare Officers)</li> <li>● Health (Medical Social Workers in maternity hospitals)</li> </ul>

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