



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Draft National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2024-2028

Introduction

The purpose of this short overview of the Draft National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) is to provide brief information about its contents, background and origins which might support reading it and considering perspectives on its contents. We hope it can be of use for you, however time constraints means that the contents is short, limited and that there may be additional matters of importance. Included at the end is a short summary of Pavee Point's previous NTRIS submissions and submissions regarding Ireland meeting EU 2030 Commitments.

Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma successfully lobbied the State for the development and implementation of a comprehensive NTRIS in order ensure a more strategic, co-ordinated and whole of government approach to Traveller and Roma inclusion. The strategy was published in 2017 and contained 149 actions to be delivered over a 5 year period. The State undertook a review of the Strategy as per commitments in the Programme for Government, and following a comprehensive consultation process, recently published a successor Strategy, NTRIS II, in addition to a 2 year action plan. Ireland is required to developed this Strategy as part of its ongoing EU obligations under the EU Roma¹ Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (the EU Roma Strategic Frameworks 2020-2030).

Traveller and Roma representatives on the NTRIS Steering Group have been asked to review the documents and provide feedback to the Department by May 13th in advance of the NTRIS Steering Group meeting, with further comments by Wednesday 22 May, 2024 @1pm.

Background

The draft Strategy is informed by the consultation process in 2022 which comprised of four local consultation events with Traveller organisations (Dublin, Tullamore, Ballinasloe and Cork) and two local consultation events with Roma and groups working with Roma (in Longford and Dublin). The consultations involved participation with a wide range of stakeholders including: Travellers and Roma, Government departments, Traveller organisations, groups working with Roma and other statutory and non-statutory bodies. A published report on the consultation process was submitted to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to inform the development of NTRIS II.

The Strategy

The Strategy sets out nine themes, aligning with those in the EU Roma Strategic Framework on Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-30:

1. Combating Racism and Discrimination
2. Children and Young People
3. Gender Equality
4. Health and Wellbeing

¹ EU institutions use the term 'Roma' as an umbrella term including groups of people who share more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as the Roma, Irish Travellers, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.)

5. Employment and Enterprise
6. Accommodation
7. Education
8. Culture, Heritage and Identity
9. Participation, Empowerment, Cooperation and Accountability [including in Implementation of this Strategy]

Each theme has its own strategic outcome and strategic objectives, which are set out in in the Strategy. The objectives in the Strategy will be delivered through two 2-year action plans, which outlines Key Performance Indicators, responsibilities and timelines for implementation of actions. The first Action Plan is published alongside the Strategy (attached) and contains 79 actions in total.

See below a flavour of the NTRIS II action, in no particular order/priority:

1. Combating Racism and Discrimination

- To ask the independent Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism to be appointed under the National Action Plan Against Racism to report to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and to the Steering Committee for this Strategy, on an annual basis on the progress being made towards achieving the objectives of the plan insofar as the Traveller and Roma communities are concerned.
- Take effective measures to address hate speech and hate crime, and ensure an adequate implementation and enforcement process for all forms of hate crime and hate speech experienced by Travellers and Roma.

2. Children and Young People

- Support the development of a sustainable national home visiting service through Tusla, which will include a focus on programmes that have the ability to adapt their approach to ensure it is inclusive and positively engages the Traveller community.
- Youth work organisations and Education and Training Boards will work to ensure that youth services are actively inclusive of members of the Traveller and Roma communities, including through implementing the Supporting Travellers Advance through Universal Services (STATUS) Toolkit within their organisation. Children and Youth People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) will ensure the active participation of Travellers and Roma in their representative structures.

3. Gender Equality

- Encourage and support Traveller and Roma women community engagement, political participation and participation in elections and implement training programmes for members of political parties and civil society organisations to avoid, reject and react to all forms of discrimination and prejudice against Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Address the needs of Roma women experiencing violence to enable them to access supports, including women’s refuges.

4. Health and Wellbeing

- Evaluate the impact of primary healthcare projects for Travellers to inform monitoring and need for future developments.
- Coordinated implementation of a range of actions related to Traveller and Roma mental health across the continuum of mental health services and mental health promotion.
- Develop a Roma Health Action Plan, incorporating mental health actions, as appropriate, and drawing any relevant lessons from Roma health pilot advocacy projects currently underway.

5. Employment and Enterprise

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- With the support of Traveller and Roma organisations, promote the provision and uptake by Travellers and Roma of internships, work placement, work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within the public sector.
- Extend the Special Initiative for Travellers (SIT) and implement reforms to address the recommendations set out in the Report on Special Initiative for Travellers (SIT) Support Work (2022).

6. Accommodation

- Provision of Traveller-specific accommodation in accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.
- Address experiences of homelessness and needs of large Traveller and Roma families which overcrowded accommodation affecting Traveller and Roma families, taking account of the special exceed the limits of existing local authority standard provision, and those of Traveller and Roma women moving away from violent domestic situations. Improve data collection in relation to homelessness among the Traveller and Roma populations.

7. Education

- Develop, publish and implement the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) to support equity of access, opportunity and outcome in the education system for people from both communities, address the barriers that impact on these, include measures to ensure meaningful participation and to support an inclusive system where Travellers and Roma feel respected and included, giving special care to the management of key transition points.
- Develop, publish and implement the Equal Start model to achieve equity of access and opportunity to participate, with a prepared transition to primary education, for very young Traveller and Roma children in early learning and care (ELC) provision.

8. Culture, Heritage and Identity, and Building Inter-Community Understanding

- Develop a Traveller Heritage Strategy in collaboration and partnership with national and local Traveller organisations.
- Take steps to address the negative stereotyping of Travellers and Roma, in all their diversity, in the reporting of issues across all media formats; promote and support media understanding of the nature and impact of media representation of minority ethnic groups; and deal effectively with the dissemination of hate speech.

9. Participation, Empowerment, Cooperation and Accountability [including in Implementation of this Strategy]

- National Traveller organisations, supported by DCEDIY, DRCD, DoH, and DHLGH to carry out an audit of local representative structures with the aim of identifying gaps in local structures, by local authority area, and making recommendations in relation to same. DCEDIY and DRCD to consider the recommendations made and provide additional supports, as appropriate, through an efficient and effective funding model.
- DCEDIY, supported by DRCD and DHLGH, DoJ and AGS, to commission a study on the Traveller Interagency Groups (TIGs) that still exist to assess their efficacy and determine whether the TIGs are a model that should be given renewed focus and impetus or whether other more recent structures could fulfil a similar role.
- DCEDIY, in collaboration with DPENDR, DHLGH, DRCD, D/Health, D/Education, DTCGASM, AGS, HSE, Tusla, local authorities and other relevant Departments/Agencies, to prepare a report on the potential for assigning designated posts for the employment of Travellers and Roma under permanent or temporary work contracts within national and local administration, particularly for services/research relevant to Traveller and Roma and having regards to the requirements of the Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty.

- Review the current systems of data collection across all state-funded organisations, processes and systems relevant to the Traveller and Roma communities to identify any gaps that exist; consider further publication of disaggregated data; and consider ways to improve the quality of data collected, including through communication and information, informed by the upcoming National Equality Data Strategy.

Implementation

This cross-departmental Strategy commits to a stronger outcomes-focused approach and a transparent implementation structure, with achievable actions, clear performance indicators and a monitoring system. The strategy will be supported and coordinated at central Government level:

- **Responsibility:** Oversight will continue with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Minister and the Steering Committee will actively communicate with the Oireachtas Committee and Senior Officials Groups to ensure accountability at senior level.
- **Political oversight:** Will be provided by the Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Public Services.
- **Reporting:** Quarterly and annual reporting on progress of NTRIS II for presentation to the Minister and relevant Government and Oireachtas Committees. There will be a parallel accountability structure for individual departments through their Ministers regarding their own sectoral Traveller and Roma strategy/action plan implementation.
- **Implementation Group:** A new NTRIS Steering Committee established within 3 months of the publication of the Strategy. The Steering committee will consist of not more than 18 people (Government Departments, public sector bodies, and Traveller orgs and groups working with Roma). It will be chaired at Ministerial level in DCEDIY and will meet on a quarterly basis. Clear ToR will be drawn up and sub-committees will be established. The sub-committees will focus on specific areas (e.g.) culture, research and will inform the main Steering Committee's decision making.
- **Data:** A review will be conducted of systems of data collection and available research across all state-funded organisations, processes and systems relevant to the Travellers and Roma. For any gaps identified, improvements will be made in the quality of data collected, the variety of disaggregated data published, consistent with the National Equality Data Strategy (soon to be published), and new research conducted to underpin actions under the second NTRIS II Action Plan, 2027 – 28.
- **National Consultative Traveller and Roma forum:** An annual Traveller and Roma consultative forum will be created providing an opportunity to the wider committee members to raise concerns and find out more about the implementation of the NTRIS. It will also allow committee members to provide feedback directly to the Steering Committee.
- **Review of the Strategy:** A mid-term review of the Strategy will be undertaken in 2026 and will inform the development of new actions to be undertaken before the Strategy concludes in 2028.

Short summary of Pavee Point's previous submissions in relation to NTRIS II and in order to meet our EU commitments:

- **Targets, Indicators and Implementation:** Set targets in line with the EU Roma Strategic Framework (under the 7 common objectives), with associated measurable indicators and proposed timelines should be established across areas of action. Annual targets should be identified to cover the lifetime of the strategy.
- **Identified leads:** Clearly defined actions should be associated with a named department/agency responsible for its delivery. Where activities are relevant to a number of departments/agencies, a lead driver department/agency should be identified.
- **Data and Monitoring:** Each department/agency identify what baselines and data are available and will be required to monitor progress using strategy indicators and targets. Gaps need to be identified and addressed/mitigated at the design stage.

- **Budget allocation:** Strategy must be costed and associated with a defined and ring-fenced budget to support implementation from all government departments/agencies (not just the lead department), ensuring full and optimal use of EU funding for the areas of social cohesion (ESF+, ERDF) There is also a need for increased administrative supports to the NTRIS Steering Group.
- **Policy alignment (targeting and mainstreaming):** Alignment and mutually reinforcing outcomes with the following: the national employment strategy 'Pathways to Work' (2021-2025); 'National Action Plan Against Racism'; the 'National Traveller Health Action Plan'; the forthcoming "National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy,' 'The Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan,' the 'National Strategy for Women and Girls'; the third 'National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence'; the 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities Strategy: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024;' and the forthcoming 'National Equality Data Strategy.'
- **Direct Traveller and Roma Participation:** Building on the existing Strategy, all key stakeholders should be consulted and involved in the development and implementation stage.