



PAVEE POINT  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

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Manifesto  
Considerations  
ELECTION 2024/2025





## Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('Pavee Point') is a national NGO comprising Travellers, Roma and majority population that works at local, regional, national and international levels to address Traveller and Roma inequalities and promote human rights.

Pavee Point has been working to challenge racism and promote Traveller and Roma inclusion in Ireland since 1985.

The organisation works from a community development perspective and promotes the realisation of human rights and equality for Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

**Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre is calling on election candidates to make Traveller and Roma human rights and equality a Government priority in 2024/2025.**

**Let's ensure an Ireland, free from racism and discrimination, where all Travellers and Roma can fully realise their potential and participate as fully respected members of minority ethnic groups.**

**Pavee Point is seeking commitments from General Election candidates, that if elected they commit to:**

### **1. Implementation and resourcing of existing policy commitments:**

- [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II \(NTRIS II\) \(2024-2028\)](#)
- [Traveller and Roma Education Strategy \(2024-2030\)](#)
- [National Traveller Health Action Plan \(2022-2027\)](#)

The State has made progress on its key policy commitments and international obligations related to Travellers and Roma, with the publication of three significant strategies; a successor National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS II), the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) and the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP). While these positive developments are welcomed, fundamental to the success of these strategies is implementation and ongoing resourcing. The National Traveller Health Action Plan has not received any new core funding since the launch. At minimum, €2 million per annum is required for the lifetime of the Plan. Ambitious targets set in these plans must be accompanied by funding and a whole of Government approach in order to ensure tangible outcomes for Travellers and Roma.

### **NTRIS II priority actions:**

#### **1.1 Traveller and Roma training, employment and enterprise strategy:**

Only 17% of Travellers are employed. The State needs to lead the way in tackling the unemployment rate in the Traveller community to create opportunities and give hope of a better future to young Travellers. Commit to developing and delivering on comprehensive Traveller and Roma training, employment and enterprise strategy with a robust implementation and monitoring plan, and ensure Travellers and Roma are included in key mainstream policy initiatives related to employment.

#### **1.2 Publication of a Roma Health Action Plan**

Action 29 of NTRIS II commits the Department of Health (DoH) and Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop a specific Roma health action plan to address Roma health inequalities and improve the poor health status that Roma continue to experience. The Action plan must have a specific budget for its implementation and the DoH should establish a consultation structure to drive its implementation and monitoring; and ensure all actions in the Plan have clear targets, indicators, outcomes, timeframes and budget lines.

The Department of Health should also ensure direct targeting of Travellers and Roma in key mainstream policy initiatives related to health, including Sláintecare and Healthy Ireland.

## 2. Commit to addressing Traveller and Roma homelessness

- Address Traveller accommodation provision at a senior department level
- Implementation of the [Independent Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation recommendations](#)
- Commit to targeted measures to end Traveller homelessness
- Remove the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) as a condition to access homelessness supports

Traveller accommodation is at a crisis point; 39% of Travellers are effectively homeless living in uninhabitable and unsafe conditions in severely overcrowded accommodation. Serious concerns have been raised over the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 by a significant number of human rights bodies.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, an Independent Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation set out a clear recommendation to overhaul all relevant legislation and policies which impact on accommodation provision for Travellers.<sup>2</sup> No new Traveller-specific accommodation units have been delivered by Local Authorities since 2013. Actions recommended by several human rights bodies must be accelerated to ensure Travellers can live in dignity with access to basic facilities such as running water and electricity. Two in five Travellers are homeless, and one in five Roma live in extreme poverty; culturally appropriate accommodation is essential to meeting the needs of both communities.

€23 million has been allocated for Traveller-specific accommodation in Budget 2025, an increase of €2 million on Budget 2024. It is important that this funding is used to support development of new units and sites where required given significant overcrowding and homelessness for Traveller families across Ireland.

## 3. Address Traveller and Roma Child Poverty

- Remove Habitual Residence Condition for Child Benefit, making it truly universal
- Ring Fence budgeting for Traveller and Roma children homelessness prevention
- Invest in Traveller youth mental health
- Promote Traveller and Roma arts and culture in the school curriculum
- Invest in the upcoming Traveller Heritage Strategy

In this day and age, Ireland should not condemn families, including Roma families, to live in poverty. Universal child benefit should be a starting point for combatting child poverty. However, child benefit in Ireland is not truly universal, as many children in Ireland, including Roma children, are not entitled to it due to the implementation of the right to reside (European Directive 2004/38) and the associated policy – Habitual Residence Condition – by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.<sup>3</sup> Nearly 1 in 2 (49.2%) Roma households with children were not successful in their application for social protection payments, which means they are not receiving Child Benefit and other crucial payments and supports. The State needs to mainstream the protection of minority and marginalised groups in its poverty strategy and all in all policies and programmes via the adoption of special measures, such as an exception to the Habitual Residence Condition, for Roma families living in the State, in order to progress the rights of Travellers and Roma. A review of legislative and policy restrictions, which disproportionately impact Roma access to basic social protections and humanitarian supports, is needed. We're asking candidates to commit to extending the regularisation scheme for undocumented Roma EU citizens who have been living in the State on a long-term basis.

1. UNCRC, 2016; HRC, 2014; , CESCR 2015; CEDAW, 2017, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, FCNM, 2019; ECRI, 2019; Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, 2016.

2. Independent Expert Group on behalf of the Minister of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Traveller Accommodation Expert Review, 2019, [https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2019\\_july\\_expert\\_review\\_group\\_traveller\\_accommodation-final\\_reportrt\\_00.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2019_july_expert_review_group_traveller_accommodation-final_reportrt_00.pdf).

3. 40% of Roma households with children are not successful in applying for social protection payments. Under the European Directive Roma have a right of residence without restriction for three months. Establishing a right to reside is a prerequisite to meeting the HRC, which a person must meet in order to access welfare supports, including Child Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Rent Allowance, public housing, and employment and training supports. Roma face significant difficulties with proving residency in the State with lack of documentation, proof of address and language and literacy skills. 25.5% of Roma don't have the right to reside; 25.7% of Roma are not habitually resident; 38.5% of Roma don't know if they have a right to reside; 26.9% don't know if they are habitually resident. Curran et al., National Needs Assessment, 2018.



#### 4. Combatting all forms of racism and discrimination

- Develop and pass robust Hate Speech legislation
- Implement the National Action Plan Against Racism
- Implement new Hate Crime legislation via a comprehensive action plan

The State must legislate against extreme forms of hate speech online or offline which is crucial to protecting minorities, including women, within our society. It is also crucial to send out a message that we, as a society, do not accept hate against any group, including Travellers and Roma; and instead, want a society that is cohesive and inclusive.

This is now more necessary than ever, in light of the violent, far-right ignited riots that took place in Dublin in November 2023, and subsequent protests fuelled by online activity that aim to create division and disorder.

#### 5. Support Independent National and Local Traveller Organisations and Traveller Representation

The national strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland, *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities*, sets out a long-term vision for community and local development in Ireland and commits the State to involve communities in decisions that affect them. The Strategy commits to the development of partnership and collaborative approaches to policy and programme development. Funding needs to be provided to support existing organisations, and the creation of new, autonomous Traveller and Roma organisations who can engage with local and national structures for policy consultation, design and service delivery including social inclusion programmes. Quotas and/or reserved seats need to be identified for Travellers in representative and participative democracy structures with specific seats in the Seanad and reserve seats in local government community engagement structures.

#### 6. Treat substance misuse as a public health issue and not a criminal justice issue

Ireland ranks as the worst in the EU for drug deaths. Deaths from drug use disproportionately affect marginalised communities, including Travellers. Addiction is not a criminal justice issue. Pavee Point advocates for a health-level response to addiction. This includes decriminalisation of drugs for personal use and personal possession. This was outlined in recommendation 17 of Citizens Assembly to Government for the next National Drugs Strategy. However, legislative change is pending.

We call on candidates to ensure there are targeted and mainstreaming measures, and wrap around support, to support Travellers and Roma to get adequate treatment for addiction. Resources need to be made available to Traveller organisations to undertake this work.

**We are making progress, but we are nowhere near where we need to be. These actions, if prioritised by General Election candidates, will drive forward positive outcomes for Traveller and Roma families across the country.**

## Traveller & Roma Key Facts and Figures

- The population of Travellers in Ireland is circa 36,000 (AITHS 2010/CSO)
- The population of Roma is circa 16,000 (Census 2022)

### Health

- 134 excess Traveller deaths per year
- Infant mortality rate is 4 times higher than in the general population
- Traveller suicide rate is 6 times higher in comparison to general population and accounts for approximately 11% of all Traveller deaths
- Mortality is 3.5 times higher, with Travellers live on average 13.3 years less than the general population

### Accommodation

- 39% of all Travellers are effectively homeless
- Nearly 40% Traveller households had more persons than rooms compared with less than 6% of non-Traveller households<sup>4</sup>
- 73% Travellers reported being discrimination when trying to rent or buy houses in the last 5 years<sup>5</sup>
- Approximately 2,616 Travellers are living on the roadside without basic facilities<sup>6</sup>

### Education

- 13% of Travellers complete secondary education in comparison with 92% of the general population<sup>7</sup>
- Less than 2% of Travellers go on to third level education<sup>8</sup>
- 28% of Travellers leave school before the age of 13, compared to 1% of non-Travellers<sup>9</sup>
- 62% of Travellers experience discrimination at school<sup>10</sup>
- Half of Travellers have poor functional literacy

### Employment and Poverty

- Only 17% of Travellers are employed<sup>11</sup>
- Over 1 in 4 Traveller children experience severe material deprivation<sup>12</sup>
- 55% of Travellers have experienced discrimination at work<sup>13</sup>
- 38% of Irish Travellers interviewed reported experiencing discrimination while job-seeking

### Roma Key Facts and Figures

- 39% of Roma respondents did not have access to a GP and 36% had difficulty accessing maternity services
- Roma respondents state they had no kitchen (12.4%); no cooker (9.6%); no fridge (13.5%)
- 44.8% of Roma respondents said they did not have enough beds in their accommodation
- Only 16.7% of Roma respondents reported that they are in employment with only 6% of households attending 3rd level education

### Further Background information can be accessed at:

[https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Pavee-Point-Traveller-and-Roma-Centre\\_ICESCR-Ireland-Traveller-and-Roma-2024-Final.pdf](https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Pavee-Point-Traveller-and-Roma-Centre_ICESCR-Ireland-Traveller-and-Roma-2024-Final.pdf)

4 Central Statistics Office, *Census 2016 Profile 8 - Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion*, 2016.

5 Fundamental Rights Agency, 2021

6 DHPLG 2023

7 All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team (AITHS Team), *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010.

8 Census 2022

9 Central Statistics Office, *Census 2016 Profile 8 - Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion*, 2016.

10 All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team (AITHS Team), *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010.

11 Census 2022

12 Fundamental Rights Agency, 2021

13 All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team (AITHS Team), *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010.