

## **National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2016 – 2010: Phase 2**

### **A Submission by the Citizens Information Board on the Strategy Draft Objectives**

**March 2016**

- 1. Traveller culture, identity and heritage is supported and valued by Irish society.**  
Social inclusion requires the recognition of all people as full and equal members of society and implies respect for their culture, identity and heritage. This requires the removal of barriers and obstacles to the expression of cultural identity by Travellers and Roma communities in Ireland.
- 2. Travellers and Roma are supported to preserve and develop their cultural heritage.**  
The Traveller and Roma communities want their cultural diversity to be respected and accommodated across all social policies – housing, health, education. This can only happen within a framework where Travellers and Roma are equal partners in all processes of negotiation and consultation.  
The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, commenting on the concept of ‘cultural adequacy’, states that “the way housing is constructed, the building materials used and policies supporting these must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing”. This applies in particular to Traveller accommodation policies.
- 3. Programmes around horse ownership should be encouraged to promote intergenerational learning, cultural continuity and positive self-identity for Travellers.**  
Horses have traditionally been part of Traveller life and horses continue to be used for both recreational use and economic trading. For some Travellers, working with horses is central to their livelihood and for many the tending of horses is something they enjoy and hope to pass on their children. The availability of programmes around the care and management of horses is an important consideration.
- 4. The multiple disadvantages faced by Traveller and Roma women should be addressed.**  
There is much work to be done to integrate Travellers and Roma women more fully into Irish mainstream society while at the same time respecting their specific cultural values and aspirations and maximising their contribution to the labour force. In particular, for the younger generation of Traveller women this means having more

targeted training and pathways to work options geared towards their specific cultural values and aspirations.

**5. Traveller and Roma women should be supported in key areas including education, employment and economic development.**

Endemic discrimination combined with under-education appears to nullify the effect of emerging education, training and employment policies targeting Roma and Travellers. Traveller and Roma women almost certainly continue to be denied employment opportunities due to their ethnicity or the perception of their affiliation with Roma or Traveller communities or groups.

**6. In particular, the incidence of violence against Traveller and Roma women should be tackled.**

This is somewhat self-evident in that any violence against women (or men) needs to be tackled.

**7. LGBT Travellers and Roma are included, accepted and protected**

Again, this is somewhat self-evident in that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is prohibited by law.

**8. Traveller and Roma men have opportunities for lifelong education and training.**

There is much work to be done to integrate Travellers and Roma men into mainstream education and training. This requires additional targeted training and pathways to work options geared towards their specific cultural values, aspirations and skill sets.

**9. Access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in education should be on a par with those for the majority community.**

Census 2011 showed that 55% of Travellers leave school before the age of 15 and only 1% of Travellers attain a third level qualification – this is a significant equality issue which needs to be addressed.

**10. There should be a positive culture of respect and protection for the cultural identity of Travellers and Roma within the education system.**

Travellers and Roma want their culture recognised, want their dignity respected and they want to be full citizens of this country. Travellers want to be part of mainstream society while retaining their cultural identity. An inclusive society does not mean that Travellers and Roma must be assimilated into the dominant culture through their participation in the mainstream educational system.

- 11. Equal employment and training opportunities for Travellers and Roma.**  
The United Nations has stated that the principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each and every individual are of equal importance, that those needs must be made the basis for the planning of societies and that all resources must be employed in such a way as to ensure that every individual has equal opportunities for participation --- this thinking should be at the heart of all employment and training opportunities for Travellers and Roma.
- 12. Positive public service recruitment to train and employ Traveller and Roma in public services.**  
This is an area where more research and analysis is required in order to identify pathways to employment in the public services for Travellers and Roma taking into account the likelihood that there are a range of attitudinal and social barriers that need to be identified and addressed.
- 13. Entrepreneurship and self-employment are supported and facilitated.**  
Travellers have a strong record traditionally in entrepreneurship and related economic activity working from a home base in a service economy that included trading, recycling, tinsmithing, blacksmithing and dealing in horses. This enterprise culture needs to be supported to maximise its potential in a fast- changing economic and goods and services sales environment.
- 14. There are clear links and progression routes between education and employment.**  
This evidently applies to members of the Traveller and Roma communities in the same way as it does to the population in general.
- 15. Travellers and Roma have access to mainstream financial services such as savings and affordable credit options.**  
It is widely recognised that access to financial services is a key component in social inclusion and that some people, e.g., welfare dependent families and /or indebted households, may experience difficulties in securing access to financial services, including basic banking services. People who find themselves excluded from the range of financial services and products generally available to consumers are likely to be further marginalized as on-line banking and financial transactions become the norm. Travellers and Roma almost certainly continue to be disadvantaged in this regard.
- 16. Traveller and Roma children should be consulted appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services, in keeping with the objectives of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision making, 2015-2020.**  
Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that the rights of all children be protected without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of race,

colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Article 12(1) refers to the right of the child to express his/her views freely on all matters affecting him/her and Article 13(1) refers to the right to freedom of expression, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information. In 2012, the Irish Constitution was amended to include a requirement that the views of children be ascertained and given due weight according to their age and maturity in proceedings affecting them.

**17. Traveller and Roma families receive appropriate and culturally sensitive supports to enable children to live in a safe and secure environment, in particular vital early and preventative services.**

Traveller and Roma families like the rest of the population require an affordable quality childcare infrastructure. Delivery of this essential infrastructure for the population as a whole will provide a framework for meeting the specific additional needs of Traveller and Roma children and their families. Such provision would create a context for identifying and developing other cultural sensitive supports that may be required.

**18. Traveller and Roma children and young people have opportunities to participate in non-formal education opportunities that meet their needs.**

Census 2011 showed that 55% of Travellers leave school before the age of 15 and only 1% of Travellers attain a third level qualification. Targeted early intervention at both informal and formal levels is a likely to be a key factor in addressing this issue.

**19. Travellers and Roma should have improved access, opportunities and outcomes in the health care system.**

The All Ireland Health Study (2010) showed that life expectancy is 15 years less for Traveller men and 12 years less for Traveller women than those in the general population. According to the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010), over 2,700 Travellers do not have access to running water. This is a matter of significant ongoing concern.

**20. Health inequalities experienced by Travellers and Roma should be reduced.**

This is clearly an area where more resources are required to redress the imbalance in access to health services and related inequitable health outcomes

**21. Health services should be delivered in a way that is culturally appropriate.**

Where people have particular health support requirements relating to their culture and ethnicity, every effort should be made to accommodate these where they are reasonable and can be met.

- 22. The rate of suicide and mental health problems within the Traveller and Roma communities should be tackled.**  
This is a problem that is likely to require targeted intervention in the context of overall mental health and suicide prevention policies.
- 23. Incidences of discrimination are addressed through targeted interventions for Travellers and Roma.**  
Since any discrimination against Travellers or Roma in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, disposal of premises and education and any related harassment is prohibited by law, it is clear that there is need for more public discussion around this issue at both national and local levels. Additional participative mechanisms at local level involving Travellers and Roma are required for this purpose.
- 24. Robust measures to address racism and hate speech in the media and public sphere should be adopted.**  
This is an area where society in general needs to develop a more inclusive approach which embraces and respects all cultures and identities. Clearly, the media have a central role in promoting a more integrated and tolerant society.
- 25. There should be access to redress mechanisms in a timely and accessible manner.**  
Timely access to appropriate redress mechanisms is applicable to members of the Traveller and Roma communities in the same way as to the rest of the population.
- 26. Travellers and Roma who come into contact with the criminal justice system are supported throughout their sentence and post release to reintegrate into the community.**  
This is likely to be an important and relevant factor in reducing recidivism.
- 27. Increased provision of accessible, suitable and culturally appropriate accommodation is available for Travellers and Roma.**  
The link between health and housing conditions is widely acknowledged and housing rights encompass amenities essential for healthy living. It is accepted that everyone has the right to a standard of housing adequate for health and well-being. "Everyone has the right to access of safe drinking water, electricity and lighting, heating (if necessary), sanitation and washing facilities, cooking facilities, food storage, ventilation and drainage' and the removal of garbage". This obviously applies to Traveller and Roma families.
- 28. Delivery of Traveller accommodation is underpinned by a monitoring and evaluation framework, ensuring full expenditure of funds allocated to Local Authorities for Traveller specific accommodation.**  
It is generally acknowledged that accommodation factors and related supports impact positively or negatively on people's quality of life. The right to adequate accommodation is an integral part of social and economic rights. This right assumes

a particular significance for people who cannot find accommodation either at all or accommodation that meets their specific housing needs. Therefore, it is imperative that any monies allocated by Government for Traveller Specific Accommodation is spent by local authorities in a planned and equitable manner. This is clearly an area where more monitoring at central level is required.

**29. Travellers and Roma are supported to participate in political processes at local and national level.**

Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life is at the core of active citizenship. Effective participation requires an engagement with all aspects of social, economic and political life. Political activity (involvement in local or national decision making through voting or membership of a campaigning organisation) is at the very core of participative democracy.

**30. Traveller and Roma organisations are resourced to support and facilitate political engagement and leadership in the Traveller and Roma communities.**

Participation in decision-making is an essential dimension of social inclusion and, therefore, full and meaningful consultation with Travellers and Roma is key to a socially inclusive model of responding to the social welfare, health, housing and educational needs of the Traveller and Roma communities.

Travellers and Roma clearly and understandably want to have a voice. They want mechanisms put in place that will genuinely enable that voice to be heard so that they can partake as full and equal citizens and contribute to the shaping of decisions that directly affect their lives.

**31. A strong Traveller and Roma infrastructure, underpinned by community development principles is supported and resourced.**

There are a number of dimensions of social inclusion which are particularly applicable to Traveller and Roma communities and which need to be addressed from the 'bottom-up' using a community development approach:

- Access to public goods, services and public spaces on an equal basis with others
- Experiencing valued social roles and being trusted to perform these
- Belonging to a local community
- Income supports commensurate with need
- Access to adequate and appropriate housing
- The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and access to health services accordingly
- The right to education (at all levels)
- The right to employment, including training and job activation measures

**32. Government agencies and Traveller organisations collaborate to protect and support the Traveller community in addressing conflict, feuding and anti-social behaviour.**

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides an opportunity to allocate explicit responsibility for integration to the new Local Community Development Committees and, thereby, provide ongoing impetus to existing collaborative initiatives and facilitate the local-level, long-term approach to dealing in an integrated manner with issues affecting the Traveller and Roma families and their connectedness with local communities.

**33. In particular, there should be an effective and sustained programme, in partnership with the Traveller community and all relevant Department and agencies, to bring feuding to an end definitively over a period of time.**

Addressing the feuding issue is clearly something that needs to be done in a manner which actively involves the Traveller community. It could be included as part of an agenda for a community development approach to identifying and developing a multi-faceted social supports infrastructure for Travellers as referred to in Q.31 above.

**34. Travellers and Roma organisations are consulted on and meaningfully involved in the design**

Full and meaningful consultation with Travellers and Roma is key to a socially inclusive model of responding to the social welfare, health, housing and educational needs of the Traveller and Roma communities. It is generally accepted that consultation should go beyond individual comment and should generate forums in which the relevant parties participate and where there is a collective sense of what is appropriate and needs to be agreed upon.

Travellers and Roma clearly and understandably want to have a voice. They want mechanisms put in place that will genuinely enable that voice to be heard so that they can partake as full and equal citizens and contribute to the shaping of decisions that directly affect their lives. In particular, Travellers want to be actively involved in decisions relating to their living space and environment and Government Guidelines positively support Travellers being involved in the designing of Traveller specific accommodation from the initiation of the project through to the implementation stage. Participation is key to the protection of ethnic and cultural diversity.

**35. Relevant public services staff are trained in anti-racism and cultural awareness and understand their obligations under the section 42 positive duty in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act.**

There are three areas where public services staff require additional training:

- Cultural identity and ethnicity

- Organic, developmental and inclusive participation
- Enhancing equality of access to housing, health and education

**36. Public services are provided in a way that is non-discriminatory and respectful of Traveller and Roma culture and identity.**

Discrimination on grounds of ethnicity is prohibited by legislation but more attention is required to ensure that public services are always fully respectful of cultural identity.

**37. Data disaggregated by ethnicity is consistently collected by all Government Departments and statutory agencies to support evidence-based policy-making.**

There is relatively little accurate and reliable data available about Roma in Ireland because the data collected is based on nationality and not ethnicity. There is a need to ensure that there is a transparent system to collect adequate data on persons from minority groups in order to address direct or indirect discrimination.

Collecting 'ethnic' data for the purpose of combating racism and xenophobia is essential in order to develop sound policies and to ensure that they are implemented effectively. There is also a need to ensure that there is a transparent system to collect adequate data on persons from minority groups in order to address direct or indirect discrimination.

**38. Collected data is used to monitor and evaluate the impact of existing policies and strategies and to inform the development of any future policies or strategies.**

Effective ethnic monitoring is required in order to ensure a knowledge and understanding by public services of ethnic diversity and to highlight any inequalities or discrimination based on ethnicity in the take up of the service and in the outcomes for service users.