
Ireland's National Traveller / Roma Integration Strategy

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1. Introduction

It is important to note that the term “Roma” as defined by the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as “Gypsies” .

From the Irish perspective, with regard to the definition above, the vast majority of Travellers/Roma in the Irish State are indigenous Irish Travellers. Figures from the 2006 Census show 22,435 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland. Many commentators maintain that the real population is somewhat higher than the Census figure, and further development of data sources is an important ongoing issue. In the context of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study the Traveller population on the island of Ireland was estimated at 40,129 in 2008; 36,224 in the Republic of Ireland and 3,905 in Northern Ireland. There are no official statistics on the number of Roma in Ireland. Different figures have been mentioned, for example 3,000, which would be approximately 0.07% of the population. This figure has been cited by the Roma support group.

The Roma Community in the Irish State is made up principally of persons of Romanian, Hungarian, Polish and Czech Republic origin, all of whom are EU citizens and, as such, in terms of immigration controls, are covered by the provision of the European Communities (Free movement of Persons) (No. 2) Regulations 2006. Such persons are not required to register their presence in the State. They have the same rights as any other citizen from their country of origin legally resident in this State.

The Travellers are Irish citizens that have the rights and responsibilities of any Irish citizen and are fully entitled to seek to avail of the various Health, Education, Housing and Employment services in the same way that any other Irish citizen does.

The Commission's Communication on Roma identifies four areas that are of strategic importance for overcoming Roma exclusion. These are:

- the employment situation of Roma,
- their education and
- poverty and social exclusion, going hand in hand with poor health and housing.

Ireland's national plan sets out the strategies already in place for the Traveller Community in the areas of Education, Accommodation, Healthcare and Employment. It also mentions initiatives in place in the same areas to assist the Roma community who are EEA citizens.

The national strategy is envisaged to be a living document and as time goes on there is nothing to prevent the development and inclusion of new actions in any of the sectors.

2. Travellers/Roma in Ireland

The Government of Ireland welcomes the opportunity to present our national strategy to tackle Traveller/Roma¹ exclusion. Current Government strategy in relation to Traveller Issues is set out in the Report of the High Level group on Traveller Issues (HLG), of March 2006².

The promotion and protection of human rights is central to Ireland's domestic and foreign policies. The Programme for Government, published in March 2011, requires all public bodies to take due note of equality and human rights in carrying out their functions.

As a Member State of the European Union, Ireland is bound by the European Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Charter recognises specific rights, freedoms and principles (economic and social as well as civil and political), to which EU citizens are entitled when the institutions of the Union and the Member States are implementing Union law.

The Government acknowledges the continuing need to combat discrimination against Travellers and Roma and is committed to maintaining and, as far as possible, improving the range of positive action measures already in place to support them. The Government supports the participation of Travellers in mainstream social and economic life, while continuing to acknowledge and respect the legitimate expression of Traveller culture and identity. The new *Programme for Government: Government for National Recovery 2011-2016*³ includes the commitment to “*promote greater co-ordination and integration of delivery of services to the Traveller community across Government, using available resources more effectively to deliver on principles of social inclusion, particularly in the area of Traveller education.*”⁴

¹ The term Roma used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as “Gypsies” .

² <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/HLGReport.pdf/Files/HLGReport.pdf>

³ http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2011/Programme_for_Government_2011.pdf

⁴ Programme for Government (2011) 23.

3. National Agreements and Plans

The Programme for Government highlights the need to improve the delivery of services to Travellers. The National Reform Programme for Ireland under the Europe 2020 Strategy lists Travellers among Ireland's most vulnerable groups and states that targeted social inclusion programmes will be aimed at them. The most recent national social partnership agreement between the Government and the social partners, *Towards 2016*, was published in 2006. It committed the social partners to give concentrated attention to achieving greater progress for Travellers and sets out a range of priority actions in the areas of accommodation, education outcomes, opportunities for employment and communication between Travellers and the settled community. It also led to the establishment of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee in 2007. While the current model of social partnership is changing in response to the unique challenges facing Ireland now, the new Government recognises the value of social dialogue as a way of maximising common understanding and engagement between all sectors of society. Closely linked to *Towards 2016* is the Government's *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2007-2016*⁵. It also contains a range of targets and actions to improve Traveller life experience through the provision of appropriate education, health and housing services and to remove any remaining barriers to the full participation of members of the Traveller community in the work and social life of the country.

⁵ <http://www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/NAPinclusionReportPDF.pdf>

4. Education

In Ireland, all children are entitled to pre-school, primary and post-primary education. They are in fact required to attend from age 6 - 16 years. In the context of integration, the Department of Education and Skills published its Intercultural Education Strategy in 2010. The aim of the strategy is two fold. It is firstly to ensure that *all students* experience an education that "respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership" (Education Act, 1998). Secondly it aims to assist *providers at all levels* to create a learning environment where inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm.

4.1 Travellers in Education

Mainstreaming is one of the ten key components highlighted in the Intercultural Education Strategy for Irish education. Historically, for example, many Traveller children and children with special needs were educated in segregated settings. *The Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006)* covers all aspects of Traveller Education from pre-school right through to further and higher education within a lifelong learning context. The core principle of the report is one of inclusion with an emphasis on equality and diversity and the adoption of an intercultural approach. The principle of "individual educational need" rather than "Traveller identity" will underpin future actions including allocation of resources. The Department's aim is to prioritise available resources to maximum effect across the education sector to enhance educational outcomes for all children and adults including Travellers. In the context of the *Programme for Government: Government for National Recovery 2011-2016* and in keeping with the report, the Government has taken a decision to provide educational teaching supports to Traveller students on the same basis as other students in schools. Additional tuition is provided through the existing learning support provision in schools.

The "*Survey of Traveller Education Provision in Irish Schools*" (2006) found *inter alia* that the majority of Traveller children in primary and post-primary school are not achieving at a level equal to their peers in the settled community. Accordingly, while integrated provision is provided in primary and post primary schools where Travellers participate on an equal basis with other service users, in some cases, however positive actions are needed as a short

term measure to enable Traveller students to gain the skills and competence on a par with their settled peers so that they can participate equally in mainstream education, training or employment. In order to assist schools with high concentrations of Traveller pupils, following the withdrawal of the Resource Teaching posts for Travellers, limited alleviation or adjustment measures are being provided. Furthermore Traveller enrolments have been included in the valid enrolment for the purpose of allocating additional staffing under DEIS from the 2011/12 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has established a Traveller Implementation Group which is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations in the report. The Traveller Education Strategy Advisory & Consultative Forum continues to identify issues, including obstacles, to the implementation of recommendations of the Traveller Education Strategy, examining appropriate responses to issues identified and reports to the Department's Traveller Strategy Implementation Group to highlight key issues of concern.

4.2 Roma in Education

A student's nationality is noted at both primary and post-primary schools. Whether a student from Romania or Hungary etc. is a member of the Roma community is not noted. If a student has identified educational needs such as gaining proficiency in the language of instruction or difficulties with literacy or numeracy then assistance is provided based on the students educational needs and not on their cultural background.

Particular support is available for Roma adults through dedicated further education provision by the City of Dublin VEC. All adult Roma are entitled to education in the same way as their Irish peers. If they are not EU citizens there may be some limitations.

The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration has allocated €9,000 for a pilot project in County Clare. The project focuses on engaging with the Roma community based in Ennis, particularly in the education and social sphere by hiring 2 part-time Roma community link workers and funding ancillary costs. Clare Immigrant Support Centre, Ennis Schools Completion Project and Home School Community Liaison oversee the project. The aim of the project, which will run until May 2012, is to ensure better uptake, understanding and outcomes of services by the Roma community.

5. Accommodation

Government policy in relation to the accommodation of Travellers is implemented through the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. All relevant local authorities are obliged, under the Act, to adopt and implement multi-annual Traveller accommodation programmes, with the aim of improving the rate of provision of accommodation for Travellers.

The term “Traveller” in relation to accommodation refers to Irish Travellers as defined in the Equal Status Act 2000:

“Traveller community” means 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.”

The first round of Traveller accommodation programmes covered the period 2000 to 2004. The second programmes covered the four-year period 2005 to 2008. In early 2009 local authorities adopted a third round of accommodation programmes which will cover the period 2009 to 2013.

The *Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998*, places a strong emphasis on consultation with all parties concerned. Traveller accommodation programmes are required to be prepared in consultation with other public authorities, community and other bodies, Travellers, via the local consultative committee, and the public in general. Travellers participate on advisory committees concerning Traveller accommodation at both national and regional level through the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

Significant funding has been made available for the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation. In the period covered by the first programmes (2000 to 2004), €130 million was expended on such accommodation (new and refurbished). In the period covered

by the second programme (2005 to 2008), an additional €142.55 million was spent on the provision of Traveller specific accommodation.

Accommodation expenditure for Travellers availing of standard local authority accommodation is provided separately through the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government's Social Housing Division.

Any eligible person in the State may apply to their local authority for standard local authority housing. Standard housing is allocated by local authorities on the basis of a scheme of letting priorities and Travellers have the same access to standard housing as the general population.

5.1 Private Rented Accommodation

There has been a significant increase in the number of families living in private rented accommodation demonstrating that the private rental market has become much more open to Traveller tenants. A considerable majority (over 96 percent) of the 2,380 families recorded as living in private rented accommodation receive assistance in meeting their accommodation costs either through the payment of rent supplement (by the Department of Social Protection) or through the Rental Accommodation Scheme. With the number of families accommodated using the Rental Accommodation Scheme continually increasing, private rented accommodation has become a viable and more secure long term accommodation option. Travellers living in private rented accommodation remain on their local authority housing list and are offered permanent accommodation in line with their needs assessment and the local authority's scheme of letting priorities.

In 2009, the local authorities adopted their third Traveller Accommodation Programme covering the period 2009-2013. Each programme contains annual targets and local authority performance is monitored, through annual progress reports, by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. In accordance with legislation, local authorities have been requested to undertake a mid-term review of their current Traveller Accommodation Programmes by the end of 2011.

5.2 Halting Sites

Travellers are free to express a preference for any form of accommodation, including halting site accommodation, through the statutory Assessment of Housing Needs carried out by local authorities. Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes are informed by this Assessment of Housing Need and show that the vast majority of Travellers have opted for standard housing or group housing. It should also be noted that the majority of Travellers already live in standard housing, either in standard local authority housing, private rented housing, in houses provided from their own resources or in private houses with the assistance of their local authority. Although some Traveller support groups argue that local authorities are not providing sufficient halting site accommodation, the Assessment of Housing Need shows that the demand for sites has declined considerably. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government has also received a number of requests, from Traveller residents, for the conversion of existing halting sites into group housing schemes.

5.3 Transient Halting Sites

Responsibility for the provision of Traveller accommodation, including transient sites, rests with individual housing authorities. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 specifically requires local authorities to have regard to the provision of transient sites when preparing their Traveller Accommodation Programmes. In August 2008, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government issued a memorandum to all local authorities requesting them to have regard to the need for transient sites in the preparation, adoption and implementation of their Traveller Accommodation Programmes for the period 2009-2013.

The issue of transient sites was considered by the third National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and is also included on the work programme of the fourth Committee. The Committee is investigating the possibility of transient facilities being arranged for major events which can attract large numbers of visiting Travellers, such as the Knock novena in August.

5.4 National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

The fourth National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee was appointed for a three year term on the 22 April 2010. Its membership comprises of government officials and Traveller representatives. Its governing legislation places a strong emphasis on consultation with all parties concerned. Therefore, Traveller accommodation programmes must be prepared in consultation with other public authorities, community and other bodies, Travellers via their local consultative committee, and the public in general.

5.5 Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee

Each local authority formed a new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee in 2009. Their membership consists of Travellers and Traveller support group members, elected members of the local authority and local authority officials. In 2009, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee held a seminar for the Chairpersons of these newly formed Committees to help them and their Committees become more effective.

5.6 General Housing Policy

The legislation governing social housing in Ireland is contained in the Housing Acts 1966 to 2009. While the legislation does not confer a statutory right to housing, the range and extent of measures implemented under the Housing Acts demonstrate the State's long standing commitment to ensuring that housing needs, especially social housing needs, are adequately addressed.

5.7 Entitlements of EEA Nationals and their families

The Roma Community in the Irish State is made up principally of persons of Romanian, Hungarian, Polish and Czech Republic origin, all of whom are EU citizens. Such persons are not required to register their presence in the State. They have the same rights as any other citizen from their country of origin legally resident in this State.

In general European Economic Area ("EEA") nationals are entitled to seek housing support from a housing authority on the same basis as an Irish citizen if they have been resident in Ireland for longer than three months and are working. Any EEA-national is entitled to

apply for social housing support from a housing authority in accordance with the following criteria:

- 1) they are in employment/self-employed in the State; or
- 2) where they are not currently working/employed it is because -
 - they are temporarily unable to work because of illness/accident;
 - they are recorded as involuntarily unemployed after having been employed for longer than a year, and they have been registered as a job-seeker with Department of Social Protection and FÁS.

After five years legal residence in the State an EEA citizen is entitled to seek permanent residency. In relation to a non-EEA national married an EEA national; he/she can be considered to have the same rights and entitlements as afforded their EEA-national spouse in relation to accessing social housing supports i.e. if the EEA national is assessed as being entitled to support then their spouse will have the same entitlements.

The rules for EEA nationals in Ireland apply to citizens of all Member States within the EEA although for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals these rules apply slightly differently. This is because of continuing restrictions on access to the Irish labour market for nationals of these two countries.

As a general rule, social housing support is not made available to those persons who are working in Ireland under an employment permit regardless of nationality. The rule is applied to Bulgarian and Romanian nationals. However Bulgarian and Romanian nationals who have had an employment permit for a continuous 12 month period are, after that 12 month period, free to work in Ireland without a permit and therefore are entitled to apply for social housing support from a housing authority in the same way as any other EEA national resident in Ireland.

This is the position in relation is an entitlement to apply for Social Housing Supports. The criteria for assessment of eligibility (including income limits etc.) and provision of supports apply equally to all once the requirements are met in respect of eligibility to apply.

The EEA includes the following EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom – and the following non-EU States: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

6. Health care

Traveller health and the provision of health services for Travellers is a priority for the Department of Health in partnership with the Health Service Executive, and considerable work has been undertaken in this area. Funding allocations for Traveller specific health services has risen to over €9.5 million per year. A wide range of specific Traveller dedicated health services, such as Traveller Health Units and Primary Health Care Projects, have been developed. Structures have been put in place to ensure the effective delivery of services.

The Traveller Health Advisory Committee advises the Minister for Health on policy in relation to Traveller health. The Committee comprises of representatives of the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Equality, the Health Service Executive, Travellers and Traveller organisations. In addition, Traveller Health Units operate in each Health Service Executive area. The units comprise representatives from Health Service Executive management and Traveller representatives. These units work in partnership with local Traveller organisations and the Travelling community. The significant investment in Traveller health has also allowed for the appointment of designated Public Health Nurses for Travellers and the roll out of Primary Health Care for Travellers projects which established a model for Traveller participation in the development of health services.

“Traveller Health – A National Strategy 2002-2005” was developed by the THAC and published in February 2002 with the aim of improving the health status of Travellers. Although the life-term of the Strategy has expired it still guides policy in the area.

A key element of the approach taken to provide targeted health services to Travellers was the development of a model for Traveller participation in the development of health services. This was achieved through the Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects which

play a key role in the delivery of health services to Travellers. The Projects are peer led initiatives and play an invaluable role in delivering measures aimed at improving the health status of the Traveller community.

Travellers, mostly Traveller women, are recruited from the Traveller community and trained to work as Community Health Workers in the Projects. This allows primary health care to be developed based on the Traveller community's own values and perceptions so that positive, long term outcomes can be achieved by enabling individuals to improve their health through informed health care, self help and mutual aid. The Projects are credited with bringing real and substantial benefits to the Traveller communities where they are located. The Projects began in 1994 and now there are over 40 projects involving over 450 participants. The core training modules for Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects were awarded accreditation at FETAC level 3 in 2008.

6.1 All Ireland Traveller Health Study

The commitment to Traveller health is also reflected in the significant resources allocated to the commissioning of the *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*⁶, the findings of which were published on 2 September 2010. It was the first such study of the health status of Travellers since 1987 and the first that involved Travellers from both the North and South of Ireland. It was jointly funded by the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland and supported by the Health Service Executive in the Republic.

One of the key findings from the study is that Travellers of all ages continue to have much higher mortality rates than people in the general population, with Traveller men now living on average 15 years less than men in the general population and Traveller women living on average 11.5 years less than women in the general population. Deaths from respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases and suicides were more markedly increased in Travellers compared to the general population. Among the positive results from the study were evidence of good access to health services and improvements in Traveller women's health.

⁶ http://www.dohc.ie/publications/traveller_health_study.html

The Traveller Health Advisory Committee and the Health Service Executive are working together to devise a list of priority actions which will focus service provision based on the findings of the *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*. This will build on existing structures and processes, in line with the findings of the study and form a platform to continue to seek to improve the health status of the Traveller community. Priority areas for attention in 2011 include:

- Mental Health;
- Suicide;
- Men's Health;
- Addiction/Alcohol;
- Domestic Violence;
- Diabetes;
- Cardiac Health; and
- Mapping of Traveller Health Unit work to Primary Care Teams and Networks.

Improving Traveller health includes acknowledgement that actions around this are underpinned by an approach in which socio-determinants of health are addressed.

A *National Intercultural Health Strategy* was developed by the Health Service Executive and launched in early 2008. This Strategy provides a framework through which both staff and service users may be supported to participate actively and meaningfully in designing, delivering and evaluating provision of health care in Ireland to service users from diverse cultural backgrounds. Travellers participated in consultations around this strategy. The pillars of this strategy focus on improving access to services, supporting staff in delivering interculturally competent services and improving data and information to ensure services are provided according to evidenced based planning. Work has been progressing on implementation of the recommendations of the strategy.

There is also the HSE National Traveller Health Advisory Forum which has a governance, advisory and coordination role in progressing traveller health priority actions.

The HSE has funded a Roma Outreach Worker to perform a dual role in facilitating their access to health services and developing an information base to inform further work in the area of Roma health. In conjunction with this, the HSE is co-hosting a series of seminars

where the issues, including barriers preventing access to health care, around Roma health are discussed.

7. Employment

There have been many calls for Travellers/Roma to be trained for administrative posts both to provide employment and to reduce discrimination. Ireland had two projects with this aim. The 2005–06 Special Initiatives on Employment for Travellers implemented by the National Training and Employment Authority (FÁS) provided over 50 full-time local authority jobs and over 150 training positions in four urban centres. The Department of Finance launched a *2006–07 Traveller Internship Programme in the Civil Service*, providing clerical work experience for 20 Travellers. In both cases some trainees went on to other jobs, others sought further education, while some returned to work with Traveller NGOs. FÁS evaluated the first programme with a view to developing a national Traveller training support strategy and the second project was also evaluated. These initiatives demonstrated that Travellers were willing to train for formal jobs and were capable of meeting employment requirements. They also showed that supportive government agencies working in partnership with Traveller NGOs could prepare offices to accept Travellers and train them successfully.

In 2005, FAS was invited to develop a special initiative to explore practical approaches to redressing the imbalance in traveller unemployment, support travellers already engaged in the traveller economy and provide a special training fund (small grants) to address the training needs of adult travellers.

The Initiative was piloted in 4 regions and then was extended out to other regions. The Special Initiative for Travellers is used exclusively to support projects emerging from the County Development Board Inter-Agency Strategies for Members of the Travelling Community by seeking to enhance local implementation and delivery of employment support to travellers.

Three models have developed:

- a) A Traveller Support Worker is employed through the CDB to provide employment, enterprise development supports;

- b) Enterprise Development – using a business model to create and / or formalise traveller enterprise the CDB contracts out the service;
- c) Supported Employment Model – Traveller specific Job Coaches are hired by Supported Employment Organisations to provide the service exclusively to Travellers.

Local authorities (in particular South Dublin and Clare County Councils) have provided more than 40 full time positions and a similar number of part time positions over the last three years. Work on a new pilot initiative to provide training/work experience for Travellers in South Dublin County Council is at an advanced stage.

Legally resident Roma have access to employment and training services in the State on an equal footing to other people.

The Roma Local Training Initiative Course (Roma LTI) is a FÁS part time pre development training course which incorporates personal development, language and literacy training. The purpose of the course is to provide the participants, representatives of the local Roma community, with a forum for understanding and learning, with a view to integrating marginalised members of the community more fully into local life and with the skills to access further training and or employment opportunities. The course has an annual budget for 16 participants and is facilitated by Pavee Point which provides full facilities free of charge.

8. Consultative Mechanisms for Travellers / Roma

An important feature, recognised in the Commission document relating to the development of this Strategy, is engagement with the relevant representative groups to discuss how all these objectives might be achieved. This is already in place in Ireland and we would see this as an important element to achieving a successful outcome.

The National Traveller Monitoring & Advisory Committee (NTMAC) was established and launched by the Taoiseach in March 2007 following a commitment in *Towards 2016* from all social partners to give concentrated attention to developing a more integrated approach towards the provision of services for the Traveller community, and to improve communication between Travellers and the settled community. Its terms of reference are as follows;

1. To serve as a forum for consultation on current issues of national importance affecting the Travelling Community.
2. To identify issues of national importance to the Traveller Community which might not be dealt with adequately through existing mechanisms.
3. To suggest appropriate responses to issues identified under 2 above, in cooperation with relevant state agencies and other stakeholders.
4. To monitor developments in the position of Travellers in Irish society generally and with particular reference to issues identified at 2 above.
5. To report to the Minister for Justice, and Equality every two years identifying key issues of ongoing concern.

Membership of the National Traveller Monitoring & Advisory Committee includes individuals drawn from different sectors, such as Traveller organisations, individual Traveller nominees, Government Departments and state bodies, and the social partners and other interests. It presented its first Advisory Report to the Minister in 2009⁷, and this Report was then laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Report outlines activities and developments since 2007 and identifies issues to be addressed. It also makes

⁷ http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Traveller_Policy_Division

recommendations across a number of areas including: implementation of public services for the Traveller community; progression and pathways to work; Traveller identity; conflict and disputes; and political participation and the Traveller community.

The Garda Síochána has developed a comprehensive approach to Traveller/Roma integration through the medium of the Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office, Community Relations and Community Policing Section - which designates responsibility for building partnerships with diverse populations. The '*Garda Diversity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2009 - 2012*'⁸ specifically prioritises the development of a robust and effective consultation model on diversity and minority issues. The Garda National Consultation Process combined with the local Garda management district consultation process complements normal daily interactions with Travellers/Roma through local Garda contact and through the medium of Ethnic Liaison Officers.

8.1 Additional Committees and Forums

In addition to the foregoing, the following are the other committees and fora that have been established to aid the development of services for Travellers (each committee and forum is elaborated in more detail under the relevant Sections of this Report):

- National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee;
- Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees;
- Traveller Education Strategy Advisory and Consultative Forum; and
- The Traveller Health Advisory Committee.

⁸ <http://www.garda.ie/Documents/User/DiversityStrat.pdf>

9. Conflict Management and the Traveller Community

Conflict resolution was a priority for the Department of Justice and Equality during 2010 and 2011. While there have been many attempts to address this issue in different parts of the country, it would appear that, up to early 2010, at best, the attempts had done little more than contain disputes for a time and the problems remained and escalated again.

Conflict within the Traveller community is complex and is affecting delivery of all services. The Irish authorities see the need for a comprehensive response and have been consulting with various stakeholders in an effort to inform our actions. The Department of Justice and Equality held a number of workshops in 2010 exploring conflict and the Traveller community. Prior to this, officials from the Department held preliminary preparatory discussions with personnel attached to the Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office. Priority was given to this area due to the negative effect on delivery of all services to the Traveller Community. The first workshop involved people who had carried out work in this area. The aim was to see what had worked and what hadn't in relation to each of their approaches. The second workshop was for Gardaí only. The purpose of this workshop was to enable exchange of information around the issue. The third workshop involved a group of Travellers only. Discussions centred on the causes of conflict and how these could be addressed. The ultimate aim, in partnership with all the key players, is to formulate a strategic approach in an attempt to prevent possible disputes from escalating in the first place.

9.1 Funding for conflict/mediation Initiatives

(i) Midland Traveller Conflict and Mediation Initiative (MTCMI)

The MTCMI grew out of the work of a Traveller Interagency Group. A Management Committee was established to oversee the implementation of the strategy with membership drawn from four Local Authority areas Interagency Groups and the Traveller Community. The strategy is based on a co-ordinated approach to tackling the underlying drivers of conflict and recognises that neither Traveller themselves nor those working with them have the capacity/skills to manage and resolve the underlying conflict. It also recognises that the level of conflict within the Traveller community has worsened in recent years and that the nature of conflicts has become more serious.

The strategy is based on a view that (i) an effective response to conflict requires a joined up approach that brings a mediation/conflict resolution approach to bear in tandem with a clear policing and enforcement strategy and (ii) addresses a range of issues which contribute to and exacerbate conflict between Travellers and between Travellers and the Settled Community.

The Department of Justice and Equality contributed €40,000 to a pilot initiative in 2009 with funding of €50,000 coming from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The Department provided further funding of €60,000 in 2010 and €70,000 in 2011.

Although the initiative has only been in existence for little more than eighteen months, all reports have been very positive. The MTCMI is a joined-up process that introduces an approach based upon mediation with a combined enforcement strategy. This service has been availed of quite often by the Garda Síochána to quell potential disturbances and violence and has been endorsed by Garda management as a 'way forward'. The mediation workers have made substantial progress in contacts with the local Traveller families and have also made contacts with the Gardaí, Probation Service, the Judiciary, the Prison Service, the Local Authorities, Sports groups, the Church, Traveller Training Centres, Primary Health Care teams and Traveller organisations in the four Midland counties.

(ii) Impact

The MTCMI project has only been in existence for eighteen months but there is no doubting its substantial contribution towards conflict management. An interim assessment of the project carried out on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality has shown that the level of violence in the area is nowhere as high, the numbers involved nowhere as many and the situation is nowhere as volatile as in 2007. There has been no reoccurrence of the original dispute which led to the setting up of the initiative.

(iii) Links with the Gardaí

The MTCMI mediators are much in demand outside the region as their reputation spreads among Travellers and agencies. The Gardaí are closely involved with the project with a number of Gardaí, including a Superintendent, on the Steering Committee. The Gardaí have stated that, previously, Gardaí felt they were the only agency responding to conflict in the Traveller community but now other sectors were involved, with which Gardaí could

cooperate closely, such as education, social welfare, the local authority and health. The Gardaí also make the point that along with all the normal policing duties, Gardaí were expected to mediate but now they had a dedicated support in this area. The Superintendent in Longford has stated that, from a Garda perspective, it is the way forward. The initiative has recently been endorsed by the Gardaí at Assistant Commissioner level.

(iv) Pavee Point Mediation Service

Funding of over €130,000 per annum was allocated by the Department to the Pavee Point Mediation Service from 2002 to 2008. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints this funding had to be reduced to €101,500 in 2009 and to €51,000 in 2010.

The purpose of the Pavee Point Mediation Service is to support better relations between Travellers and members of the settled population through conflict transformation initiatives and to enhance Travellers' capacity to develop new ways of dealing with conflict in their lives. One of the objectives of the mediation service is to bring together the various stakeholders who are concerned about conflicts, including local authority officials, Gardaí, politicians, community leaders, Travellers and Traveller support groups and resident associations and to encourage such people to develop new and constructive approaches to the resolution of disputes and conflicts. The service provides training and educational workshops which contribute to a greater awareness and understanding of a range of non-violent approaches for dealing with conflict. The service is available to members of both the Traveller community and the non-Traveller population who wish to find a solution to conflict through the process of mediation.

10. Racist violence and crimes

The Garda Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office encourages representatives of minority groups to advise those subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity to contact their local Garda Síochána Station and/or their local Garda Síochána Ethnic Liaison Officer and, if required, to employ the services of the Intercultural Office.

The 1989 Prohibition to Hatred Act makes it an offence to publish or distribute written materials or to use words, behave or display written material outside a private residence (or inside a private residence if such can be seen or heard by persons outside it) or to distribute, show or display a recording of visual images or sounds that are threatening, abusive, insulting and are intended or, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred. The Garda Síochána Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office encourages members of the Traveller/Roma to report to the Garda Síochána all suspected racist written material perpetrated against them (via the internet or otherwise). The Garda Síochána Racial, Intercultural and Diversity Office also supports members of the Garda Síochána to accurately record on the Garda computer system all incidents of racism. This support extends to advice and guidance in relation to required proofs pertinent to investigations where racism or hate has been the overriding factor.

11. Garda Diversity Strategy

In recognition of the benefit of increased diversity in the organisation the Garda Síochána are implementing the Garda Síochána Diversity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2009-2012 (the “Diversity Strategy”). The philosophy behind the Diversity Strategy is that the Garda Síochána should recognise and respect the needs, rights and dignity of all minorities. It aims for action beyond mere legal compliance and sets out a commitment to champion, value and accommodate, as far as possible, all aspects of diversity. The Garda Síochána recognises that diversity is not only about differences in terms of nationality or ethnic background. Difference includes issues such as gender, marital status, family status, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, race and membership of the Traveller community.

The Diversity Strategy is having a positive effect. For example, over 600 Ethnic Liaison Garda Officers have been appointed to link with members of ethnic communities and the Traveller community; a large increase (85 percent) in the recruitment of female members over the past six years, and the delivery of diversity training and development initiatives by the Garda Síochána Human Rights and Diversity Section at the Garda Síochána College.

12. Media

The Press Council of Ireland was established in 2007 to ensure an effective complaint mechanism was put in place that would take into account the concerns related to minority reporting, while fully respecting freedom of expression and editorial independence of the media.

The Press Council of Ireland in turn appointed the Press Ombudsman in September 2007. The Office of the Press Ombudsman started operations from 1 January 2008. As independent press regulation is the most objective, credible and transparent form of press regulation, both the Press Council and the Press Ombudsman are independent of government and, in operation, independent of the media. Independent press regulation works best because it operates with the cooperation of newspaper and magazine editors and journalists.

13. Access to places open to the public & Access to public services

In a range of legislative, administrative and institutional provisions, the Government has recognised the special position of Ireland's Traveller community. Travellers in Ireland have the same civil and political rights as other citizens under the Constitution. The key anti-discrimination measures, the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989, the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977, the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts specifically identify Travellers by name as a group protected. The Equality Act 2004, which transposed the EU Racial Equality Directive, applied all the protections of that Directive across all of the nine grounds contained in the legislation, including the Traveller community ground.

Funding

Travellers benefit from general social expenditure programmes, such as education, housing, health and social welfare programmes. The amount of such mainstream expenditure which is spent on Travellers is not known. There are, in addition to mainstream programmes, a number of Traveller-specific programmes across government departments. The following table shows estimated expenditure on such programmes for 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Specific Traveller Funding				
Government Departments	Programme	2008	2009	2010
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government	Traveller Specific Accommodation	€42,111,000	€26,775,000	€22,548,000
	Community Development Programme	€2,622,931	€2,327,445	€2,274,142
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	FÁS Initiatives	€957,000	€509,039	€574,997
Health Services Executive	Traveller Health	€9,361,322	€9,907,004	€9,560,259
Department of Justice and Equality	Traveller Interagency Fund, managed by Pobal	€848,236	€854,312 ⁹	€754,234 ¹⁰
	Traveller Mediation Service (Pavee Point)	€101,250	€101,250	€51,000
	Actions relating to Traveller Participation, Representation and Communications	€256,500	€145,850	€99,650
Department of Education and Skills	Traveller specific initiatives estimated outturn	€77,000,000	€79,539,972	€75,660,556

⁹ €375,000 Dormant Accounts funding included for Traveller Interagency Projects

¹⁰ €526,919 Dormant Accounts Fund 2010.

	expected			
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Irish Sports Council	Nil	€30,390	€20,360
Total for Traveller Specific Funding		€133,626,239	€119,335,950	€110,788,964

14. Monitoring arrangements

By and large, each of the areas covered by our National Strategy (Education, Health, Accommodation and Employment) has specific strategies in place in the relevant Government Department or Agency to implement and monitor the initiatives identified.

15.1 Education

The *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006)*¹¹ covers all aspects of Traveller Education from pre-school right through to further and higher education. The Traveller Education Strategy Advisory & Consultative Forum continues to identify issues, including obstacles, to the implementation of recommendations of the Traveller Education Strategy, examining appropriate responses to issues identified and reports to the Department's Traveller Strategy Implementation Group to highlight key issues of concern.

The Department of Education published its *Intercultural Education Strategy*¹² in 2010. The aim of this strategy is to ensure that all students experience an education that respects the diversity of values, beliefs, language and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership. The Strategy, which has a five year lifespan, contains the ten key components and five high level goals of intercultural education, which form the basis of the Strategy's implementation plan. This Strategy continues to be monitored to ensure implementation of its key actions.

15.2 Accommodation

Traveller accommodation programmes are required to be prepared in consultation with local public authorities, community and other bodies, Travellers via the local consultative committee, and the public in general. In early 2009 local authorities adopted a third round of accommodation programmes which will cover the period 2009 to 2013. Each programme contains annual targets and local authority performance is monitored, through annual progress reports, by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. In

¹¹ http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/des_recom_traveller_educ_strategy.pdf

¹² http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/mig_intercultural_education_strategy.pdf

accordance with legislation, local authorities have been requested to undertake a mid-term review of their current *Traveller Accommodation Programmes*¹³ by the end of 2011.

15.3 Health

*“Traveller Health – A National Strategy 2002-2005”*¹⁴ was developed by the Traveller Health Advisory Committee and published in February 2002 with the aim of improving the health status of Travellers. Although the life-term of the Strategy has expired it still guides policy in the area.

The findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study revealed a number of particular areas of concern relating to Traveller health, including but not limited to:

- Mental Health and Suicide;
- Men’s Health;
- Addiction and Alcohol;
- Domestic Violence;
- Diabetes; and
- Cardiovascular Health.

The Study was a valuable tool for establishing a baseline for the health status of the Traveller community. However, as it was over 20 years since the previous study, the data can only provide a snap-shot and does not provide a means to measure ongoing progress. The roll-out of an Ethnic Identifier in health data systems is believed by the Traveller NGOs to be a way to monitor Traveller health. However, such an identifier is a long way from being rolled out through the system and will likely only give a breakdown of what services Travellers access and will not be a proxy for health status.

In the 2012 HSE National Service Plan there are plans to have a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in the area of Traveller health. This will relate to the work of Traveller Health Units in facilitating their clients to access screening programmes. This is the only national metric that will be in place to measure Traveller inclusion in the health sector. There is also a new KPI in relation to the roll out of the Ethnic Identifier, however this comes under the area of Intercultural Health as it is not exclusive to Travellers.

¹³ <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,28665,en.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/traveller_health.pdf?direct=1

The Traveller Health Advisory Committee and the Health Service Executive are working together to devise a list of priority actions which will focus service provision based on the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study. This will build on existing structures and processes, in line with the findings of the study and form a platform to continue to seek to improve the health status of the Traveller community.

The National Traveller Health Advisory Forum is the governance structure for aspects of Traveller Health. This group was established at the beginning of 2011. Part of its remit involves providing advice on implementation of the National Strategy, including linking with and supporting implementation of prioritised recommendations of the Health Service Executive's *National Intercultural Health Strategy*¹⁵, with particular reference to actions contained in the HSE National Service Plan.

A *National Intercultural Health Strategy* was developed by the Health Service Executive and launched in early 2008. This Strategy provides a framework through which both staff and service users may be supported to participate actively and meaningfully in designing, delivering and evaluating provision of health care in Ireland to service users from diverse cultural backgrounds. Travellers participated in consultations around this strategy. The pillars of this strategy focus on improving access to services, supporting staff in delivering interculturally competent services and improving data and information to ensure

15.4 Employment

Local authorities (in particular South Dublin County Council and Clare County Council) have provided more than 40 full time positions and a similar number of part time positions over the last three years. Work on a new pilot initiative to provide training/work experience for Travellers in South Dublin County Council is at an advanced stage. Monitoring in relation to the Pilot project will be through the HLG on Travellers.

¹⁵ http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/SocialInclusion/National_Intercultural_Health_Strategy_2007_-_2012.pdf

15. National Point of Contact

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