



**Towards a National Action Plan
Against Racism for Ireland Public
Consultation 2021**

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July 2021

Background

Founded in 1990, the Irish Traveller Movement is the national advocacy and membership platform which brings together Travellers and representative organisations to develop collective solutions on issues faced by the community to achieve greater equality for Travellers. We represent Traveller interests in national governmental, international and human rights settings. We challenge racism-individual, cultural and structural which Travellers face and promote integration and equality. We are led by our grass roots community membership, deliver expertise in shaping organisations locally and promote community leadership ensuring Traveller's voices are to the forefront of all discussions.

We are mandated by our membership of over 40 local Traveller groups to bring forward policy and related matters to national structures and are represented on national government led fora and strategies and across National Traveller policy, health, mental health, policing, accommodation, education, anti-racism and in equality, anti-racism, community and children's rights bodies.

The Irish Traveller Movement welcome the opportunity to submit to the Consultation toward a National Action Plan Against Racism.

- In a related context we endorse the recommendations contained in the November 2020 Interim Report of the Anti-Racism Committee and commend the body of work being undertaken to bring about a Plan.

We refer in this submission to 6 of the thematic focuses being considered by the Committee as follows;

- A. Access to Justice
- B. All forms of media and communications, including new technologies
- C. Education, Accommodation and Employment
- D. Inclusion and Participation

Recommendations

The recommendations related to this submission across the themes, Access to Justice, All forms of media and communications, including new technologies, Employment, Education, and Accommodation, and Inclusion and Participation are contained in a supplementary paper attached with this proposal.

Application of ethnic equality monitoring across the submission

The Irish Traveller Movement note and endorse the following recommendation of the Anti-Racism Committee *'We recommend that a standardised ethnic identifier be adopted and rolled out across all routine administrative systems, state agencies and surveys. This is in line with CERD Recommendation 6 (December 2019). This would help to ensure timely availability of the disaggregated data essential for successful implementation of the NAPAR. As this initiative will take time to design and implement, we recommend work begin immediately on this. (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concluding observations on the combined fifth to ninth reports of Ireland).'*

In that context the broadest application of the ethnic identifier is essential, to the proposals made on the themes submitted.

Terms:

NAPAR National Action Plan Against Racism.

EDI – Equality Diversity and Inclusion

NTRIS: National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

BAI: Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

PSM: Public Service Media

HEI's: Higher Education Institutions
NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
UNCRC: UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

Context

Travellers are one of the most excluded and discriminated groups in Ireland. High unemployment, poor educational outcomes, chronic disproportionate ill-health, social exclusion and racism is widespread. 73% of the population is under 35yrs ⁽¹⁾ with life expectancy 15 years less for men and 11 years less for women compared to the general population. Suicide is six times the national average accounting for 11% of all Traveller deaths ⁽²⁾. Over 2,000 families live in inadequate, and unsafe conditions, many without access to running water or a toilet and almost 1,000 families live in overcrowded / shared housing ⁽³⁾. Only 1% of Travellers have ever progressed to third-level education across the State, with 55% overall leaving school by the age of 15⁽⁴⁾. Long term exclusion, and experience of discrimination has had a detrimental effect on Traveller's life chances, health status and is evidenced in poor outcomes from birth to death

Census 2016 showed 30,987 Travellers self-identified, but a closer estimation of population is found in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, (DHLGH) last available data 2019, where 10,809 families were enumerated (approx. 45,397 to 57,287 people (family or household size)) throughout the 31 local authority areas.

1. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>
2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b9c48a-all-ireland-traveller-health-study/>
3. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Annual Count of Traveller Families 2019 <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departement-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>
4. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c2a87f-the-statistical-spotlight-series/>

Access to Justice

Hate Crime

The forthcoming Hate Crime legislation is welcome and urgent given the lack of protection for Travellers considering widespread discrimination, anti Traveller hostility and evidenced by 10% of hate crimes reported to iReport in 2019 ⁽⁵⁾. The introduction of the specific indicators in crime reporting by An Garda Síochána are urgently required and specific attention to digital and online offences against Travellers a priority.

Access to justice for Travellers is problematic given:

1. a legal aid system which does not sufficiently provide cover for Travellers
2. punitive and regressive legislation which impacts either specifically or more particularly on Travellers, causing an undue burden and more frequent need for legal recourse for e.g., Criminal Trespass Act, and specifically Section 19 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003
3. adjudicating tribunals which do not provide equity of access across all equality grounds
4. poor understanding among judiciary, legal aid board and legal professionals on equality and lack of Traveller cultural competency, bias and institutional racism within the legal system and in policing.

Specific Barriers

(a) Travellers have no legal representation in taking a case to the Work Place Relations Commission (WRC).

(b) Cases appealed under the Equal Status Act from the (WRC) are heard at the District Court where legal representation is required at a cost, and perceived unfair judgements made due to local bias in areas of District Courts.

(c) Travellers have no recourse under the Legal Aid scheme when served with eviction notices due to restrictions under s.28 (9) of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995

(d) No legal aid is available on claims of discrimination under the Equal Status Acts, access to services, housing, accommodation and education and for social welfare appeals, as well as in employment cases.

Lack of visibility of Travellers in Law

- a) **At entry level:** Given educational disadvantage as outlined, there are limited numbers of Travellers progressing to a career in law. Evidence suggests less than 7 people have a law qualification. A lack of visibility for similar role models within Law, has an impact. Can't see it, can't be it.
- b) **Education pathways:** Deficits are evident, where post primary to third level retention of Traveller pupils is low, also where law as a career choice in schools where Travellers are, is non-existent and where there is lack of ambition by teachers of Travellers, consciously or unconsciously, than for non-Travellers.
- c) **Meeting the Status Quo:** Mentoring opportunities are limited / non-existent and self-financing restrictive, when barriers are overcome.
- d) **Diversity is not reflected in law practice, across The Bar, Law Society, Courts and Library and Information Services,** and where there is a mono cultured norm not widely reflective of Ireland's diversity. In seeking Counsel, the State and its services, has a role too in reflecting and ensuring greater diversity within legal services and instructions and commissions.

Bias in Policing.

The Irish Traveller Movement have long reported concerns and studies show ingrained negative views towards Travellers within policing, in community engagement, civil and legal matters, of racial profiling and an inconsistent response to the community where policing is required, sometimes during times of trauma and bereavement. These have impacted in some part on Travellers ability to have confidence in policing supports and police protection.

The findings of a study (undertaken in 2014 but unpublished) highlighted by a journalist in 2020 by the then Garda Ethnic Liaison Office⁽⁶⁾ found high levels of negative attitudes towards Travellers at the time and established all Gardaí interviewed, held those attitudes in advance of taking up positions and remained negative as serving Gardaí.

Conscious or unconscious bias has been catalogued in national studies of Travellers own attitudes where 70% have felt discriminated against by the Gardaí 48%⁽⁷⁾ in the past year

- a) The Public Attitudes Survey (PAS) does not include Traveller views and other underrepresented groups, as it is undertaken using a national representative sample.
- b) Participation of Travellers in Joint Policing Committees and links between Local Traveller Organisations and the Ethnic Minority Liaison Officers, is not pervasive, yet guidelines recommend inclusion of Travellers.
- c) Concerns have been raised by the Irish Traveller Movement regarding monitoring and maintaining Garda digital platforms and those which intersect between the Gardaí and the Public, where anti-Traveller and racist comments from members of the public were unmoderated.

5. https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2019_iReport_Final.pdf
6. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/garda%C3%AD-have-negative-view-of-travellers-survey-finds-1.4334274>
7. <https://itmtrav.ie/key-reports/>

All forms of media and communications, including new technologies

The Irish Traveller Movement refer here also, to our submission to the **Future of Media Commission** on related matters.

We outline in this section difficulties encountered for Travellers in having fair access to and portrayal of, matters related to Traveller life. Lack of visibility in media content, production and presentation and of the inadequate protection of Travellers within media reporting, despite the existence of the broadcasting regulator and the Press Council.

Promotion of Traveller visibility and improved reporting on matters which reflect and impact Traveller life, is particularly important to how Travellers are publicly viewed, and to combat racism. By and large Travellers are subject to interviews about being a Traveller, have no decision-making status in media and Traveller views on a wider range of subjects across media, is non-existent.

The Irish Traveller Movement continue to raise concerns about the sometimes offensive, misrepresented and unbalanced treatment of Travellers by some media and their reliance on specific reporting styles and dominant themes. Despite the existence of the broadcasting regulator, the BAI and the Press Council, it is an ineffective remedy.

However, in the last ten years improvements have been noted, especially across some broadcast outputs and in a section of print media, since the establishment of the Press Council, and efforts by NGOs to enhance media opportunity and engagement, but the greatest offences still prevail in commentary and opinion columns, radio programmes and in the lack of moderation of online media. The opportunity now under the NAPAR, a new Online Regulatory Framework and Online Safety Commissioner, and recommendations arising from the Future of Media report make possible greater regulation of outstanding concerns.

The lack of visibility in content, structures and delivery Media content is consciously bias towards a majority view and Travellers are **mostly invisible** in broad media content- in presenting and articulating news – or within drama and entertainment. Where visible, Travellers are largely typecast to a topic rather than across content and on other topics. **Travellers are invisible too in media structures and management.**

Propagating stereotypes Poor standards have improved recently, from the long-term approach adopted by broadcasters, of Traveller engagement on panels to refute claims against their community in a one size fits all trope and in the last decade, “so called fly on the wall documentaries”, a cause of mistrust about media left many unwilling to take part in future programmes.

Lack of input into content means Travellers have almost no say in what they see / hear / read and into what is articulated about Traveller life, which is produced in their name, with some few exceptions. This invisibility reinforces Travellers as being “different” and unusual at best. At worst broadcast media

features position Travellers as subjects, the balance of power firmly the Programmers, in deciding on the topic, the edit and therefore a True account.

Offence and harm

The historical context of deeply ingrained and systemic anti Traveller bias in media reporting remains evident and embedded cultural practice towards the othering of Travellers still exists in whole sections of media, newspapers, among editors, programmes and producers, and stations. Travellers are reliant therefore on communications advocates in the Traveller sector and individual champions in media to promote changes internally. But the changes needed are co-dependent on mandatory positive measures and greater regulation of the sector.

Entrenched practice.

The decades long negative and offensive reporting examples in print media are numerous and have contributed to anti-Traveller bias, engendered in the wrongful association with crime. Also pervasive is insensitive and intrusive reporting of events in standards out of sync with norms on personal matters, the racial profiling of Travellers in anti-social matters, and generalised ethnic profiling across news and criminal justice matters, without necessary cause. Newspapers and radio programmes still currently choose these editorial strategies. Several radio stations, and programmes, profile Traveller related stories as part of ongoing programme content through a negative narrative citing listeners to comment and engage in debate. These concerns have been raised with specific stations and programme producers to no avail.

Hate Track found *'News articles about Muslims, Roma, and Travellers appear to elicit dehumanising racism, irrespective of the article's context. The way mainstream media frame and present news is likely to have an impact on the type of comments that are likely to appear, with sensationalist headlines attracting a large volume of hateful comments.'*⁽⁸⁾

Media Regulation

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland have a significant role to play, but its guiding principles, functions and codes do not go far enough, and the Irish Traveller Movement believe the broadcasting complaints process can be unconsciously stacked in favour of broadcasters, and the burden of proof onerous on the complainant. The code of Programme Standards (BAI code) states *"The way persons and groups in society are represented shall be appropriate and justifiable"* at 3.4.2 the code continues *"Programme material shall not support or condone discrimination against any person or section of the community in particular on the basis of...membership of the Traveller community"*. This was a welcome inclusion for Travellers but does give enough protection in practice.

Applying a monitoring function within the BAI in addition to a complaint one, would give greater protection and remedy and should now be considered as essential to licensing, where there is repeat offending and obvious racial profiling on topics in radio and tv.

It was shortsighted for Travellers not to be named within the Broadcasting Act or within BAI's Code of Fairness. This and other related matters featured as a part of a submission made by ITM to the BAI under Public Consultation on a Draft Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs in the Broadcast Media 2012.

In her contribution to the Seanad hearing in 2019, Brigid Carmody said *"While we do not have the resources to monitor these fully, we have been informally recording some of the public comments that follow pretty much any mention of Travellers, good or bad. Following a story of a Traveller family in need of accommodation, there were comments like "Inbreeding does not make you a race, sweetheart", "Blacks are human, knackers are not", "Burn them out", "Just*

bring in a tank of slurry and start spraying", "Bring them to the shooting range - good target practice for our boys in green" and "A few litres of petrol and a match will sort them out". It is unrealistic to expect Travellers and Traveller projects to police and report every single racist comment on social media pages, in newspapers or on radio stations. This needs to be done by the newspapers and radio stations that also broadcast their news online and through social media. They must be obliged to pre-moderate comments on their pages and remove hate speech and racist comments."

Online hate speech

The greatest cause of concern in the last decade has been hate speech directed at Travellers in digital forums. The Irish Traveller Movement note the sharing of hate speech on social media is to become a criminal offence under Government proposals to combat racism.

We have observed an inconsistent approach in how media, host and moderate online content and concerns brought to an online news site where Traveller related articles consistently provoked significant hate. However, despite improved moderation, the problems persisted and so in advance of these stories appearing editors agreed to close comments on their site but uploaded the same story on their Facebook site, which attracted hateful commentary there. The Editors in reply to concerns said

"Unfortunately, Facebook goes by its own rules when it comes to its comments platform it doesn't give us the option to turn off comments on a particular post. And we don't have the resources to monitor comments on public platforms like Facebook or Twitter - again, that lack of an 'off' button is a big problem for us all! "Our only real solution to stopping people publishing negative comments is to not put up the post at all. But if we do that, it means that we don't get to highlight news stories and projects on the challenges facing the Traveller community."

There is clear ambiguity and a need for a solution given a lack of consistency and direction for media broadly on their obligations towards hate speech online and without governance given the press ombudsman and the Press Council of Ireland do not have jurisdiction over online pages of their media members.

Public Service Media

The opportunity to depict a more diverse society, including Travellers, should be at the heart of what a Public Service Media would seek to achieve.

Notwithstanding the current media market, and the determinants of success in **Public Service Media** which are predicated on market and audience share, advertising revenue and an infrastructure which seeks to justify the licence fee. The self-governing way of how media is created, which consciously or unconsciously excludes minority interests and perpetuates a majority representation, should be given considerable consideration in the Report of the Future of Media Commission.

Overall there has been limited proactive engagement from the PS Broadcaster with the Traveller and community organisational sector, in ways in which Traveller visibility, broad inclusion and representation can happen in a proactive and planned way. Changing that pervading ideology is not underestimated, but there is scope to adapt to a more democratic and therefore inclusive design.

RTE Diversity and Inclusion vision and strategy; *"RTÉ is determined to create relevant content that reflects the diversity of an ever-evolving nation and explores the differing experiences and realities of Ireland's people. To do this effectively, we will ensure that there is fair and authentic representation of*

gender, age, social experience, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disability, civil and family status, religious beliefs and membership of the Traveller community in our content and on our services.

- a) The RTE 2018-2022 Diversity and Inclusion commitments under: Represent and reflect the voice and diversity of Ireland, it proposes
 - o A 50/50 gender balance across RTÉ and, where possible, within key levels of management
 - o 5% rising to a minimum of 10% of persons from a non-Irish background
 - o 5% rising to a minimum of 8% of persons with a disability
 - o A minimum preliminary goal of 4% of persons who identify themselves as members of the LGBTQI community

The opportunity to include Travellers as a targeted quota was a considerable misstep and demonstrated a poor understanding of diversity by aiming to increase a quota of “10% of persons from a non-Irish background”, in exclusion of other ethnic minorities.

- b) The Irish Traveller Movement while commending RTE’s other Diversity and Inclusion commitments 2018-2022, the associated Action Plan comprehensively addressed broad actions and did not include targeted approaches or Traveller engagement or inclusion.
- c) Some improvements are noted over the last five years in the efforts of largely independent productions commissioned by RTE to make greater visibility of Travellers mostly, with limited exceptions, arose from well-intentioned individuals in the documentary area and tied with BAI funding streams.
- d) The interaction of news media in representing Travellers and related topical matters, is driven by an active community sector, competing at the same level as other communications stakeholders. Some editors and presenters of shows have maintained interests in ongoing Traveller themes, but the consistent consideration of these items benefits from long time engagement and interest of reporters, allies in areas, and therefore subject to change as personnel change.

The Sound and Vision Scheme

Public Service Media PSM have a duty and a cause, to act as a protector of that culture as a public service.

Given that Public Service Media has a statutory remit to provide widely-accessible content which has a distinct public value and *one part of which is to inform, educate and entertain the Irish public with regard to matters of Irish culture, identity, sport, language and other matters inherent to Ireland and the Irish people*, it is therefore incumbent on the PSM to ensure proportionate content representative of all parts of Irish society and its diverse cultures.

We note the value and importance both to broadcasters, and the public of the scheme for new television and radio programmes which deal with the themes of:

- Irish culture, heritage and experience;
- Improving adult or media literacy;
- Raising public awareness and understanding of global issues impacting on the State and countries other than the State; and/or
- Any of the above in the Irish language

- a) *“Irish culture, heritage and experience”*, give potential to produce Traveller related content. The value of Traveller’s unique culture and heritage in the national perspective is mostly invisible and undervalued. Yet understanding Traveller history, culture and heritage in our Irish story is valuable for all its public, and part of a shared history of our island. It has not been focused on enough, with limited exceptions in music documentaries.

- b) The Public Service Media and the BAI as regulators, have a duty and a cause to safeguard culture in the scheme and ensure programme content, commissions and funding, is proportionately representative of all parts of society and its diverse cultures.

8. <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/11/HateTrack-Tracking-and-Monitoring-Racist-Hate-Speech-Online.pdf>

Traveller Education

The Irish Traveller Movement endorse and refer the ARC to submissions made by the Yellow Flag Programme and further recommendations therein.

Of 1 million pupils enrolled nationally in Ireland in 2019, primary and post primary, **11,000 were Travellers, 3,000** of whom were in in second level. **In 2020 it's estimated 300 Travellers** took the leaving cert, half for the traditional exam and half for the Vocational or Applied Cert.

Gaps in Traveller participation, progression and achievement in education compared to their settled counterparts are significantly lower and many decades long showing;

- In 2016 only 13% of Travellers had **completed senior cycle at second level** ⁽⁹⁾
- 57% of Traveller boys had only primary-education** compared to 13% nationally ⁽¹⁰⁾
- 13% of female Travellers were educated to upper secondary** or above compared with 69.1% of the general population ⁽¹¹⁾
- Of those who left second level education early, **55% left by the age of 15** ⁽¹²⁾.
- 4 out of 10 Travellers** said they or their children had been bullied in school because of their identity as Travellers ⁽¹³⁾

Barriers

- a) **Department of Education policy**, the Traveller Education Strategy developed in 2006, had no associated action plan or budget and remained dormant until the actions of the NTRIS 2017 reasserted some of those.
- b) **Impacts from cuts to Traveller education supports in 2008 have** taken more than a decade to erase, and little evidence of improvements in completion rates since then despite recommendations by the Committee to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ⁽¹⁴⁾.
- c) **There are no ring-fenced monies now or at any time, allocated specifically** to Traveller primary and post primary education, as a whole approach.
- d) **There is no emphasis on targeted supports or a national oversight plan** in second level to ensure Traveller students are supported across the lifetime of their education to enhance the possibility of improving retention and attainment. But [ring-fenced funding of €300,000](#) for 2020 in Higher Education, reflected an increase due to low uptake of targeted schemes in previous 3 years, for transfer and progression within higher education.
- e) **Parental experience of the education system**, low literacy, education levels and lack of confidence in the system is common.
- f) **Identity based bullying**, and low-level expectation of schools of Traveller pupils, is long standing.
- g) **A reduced timetable for Travellers is widespread and Department guidelines for schools have not been advanced in 2020 as planned** and as they are, require greater oversight by an independent central body with responsibility such as TUSLA or the School Inspectorate, which is not currently planned for.
- h) In 2020/21, €16.2 million was allocated to DEIS grants for schools, **but only half of all Traveller pupils are in DEIS schools**. The **Capitation Grant for Travellers was marginally enhanced** last year but well below the level of other named groups.
- i) **The specific Educational disadvantage caused by covid aggravated an already poor situation, with inequities in accessing broadband and digital supports** acknowledged by Government but

Travellers were not named in supports applied to vulnerable pupils. The impact on Travellers pupils in leaving cert 2020 and for 2021 is unknown, but anecdotally suggests some pupils dropped out from education, without reconnection in some areas in 2021.

- j) **Addressing interculturalism and anti-racism in schools and in Teacher Training is also critical** with a report of the Teaching Council due to be published. However, the module planned is limiting to the task, and should be made mandatory to the Continued Professional development for all teachers.
 - k) **Expediting the anti-bullying research report commissioned by the DE is important now** and applying a mandatory requirement to current anti-bullying guidelines and recommendations, should be featured in actions going forward.
 - l) **There is a lack of visibility of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum and in teaching practice.** Progress toward curriculum inclusion by the NCCA of Traveller history and culture, (and called for as protected right in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the UNCRC), is critical but has no plan or Ministerial direction beyond the first year. Amendment at Committee stage is required to ensure protection in legislation
 - m) **The report of research commissioned by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to establish a baseline of the experiences of Traveller and Roma in school, has not been published, and should be expedited and actioned now.**
 - n) **There is no direct investment by the State and for Yellow Flag Programme,** the only innovative programme of its kind in Ireland with a whole-school approach tackling racism at social and institutional level, and a framework to support schools in becoming more inclusive of all cultures, ethnicities and religions.
9. CSO, Available: <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>
 10. Ibid
 11. Ibid
 12. Behaviours & Attitudes (2017), Traveller Community National Survey. <https://itmtrav.ie/key-reports/>
 13. Ibid
 14. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016), Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland. Available: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsvOufvUWRUJILHiLHKqpXZxUGOtzQF0l%2B37QzAKosbh7yc40d4J3lynFaWf0Egu6J99RK6Y%2FTHjpped5r1H3f3KQIiFieFkoeAPALAwKpbZ>

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Traveller Accommodation

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998⁽¹⁵⁾ mandates all Local Authorities to deliver culturally appropriate accommodation in all its forms, including: halting sites, group housing schemes, standard houses and transient accommodation in the Republic of Ireland to Travellers, under their Traveller Accommodation Programmes.

Traveller families in the Republic in need of accommodation has more than doubled and currently over 2,000 families living in inadequate, unsafe conditions in shared and overcrowded accommodation or on roadsides. Travellers also account for 10% of all people in emergency accommodation nationally.

Insufficient data: According to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, (DHLGH) (last available data 2019) there were 10,809 families (between 45,397 and 57,287 people) throughout the 31 local authority areas. However appropriate data collection is inconsistent with some councils counting families and other households, for annual assessments of need. (Traveller family size ratio 4.2 and households 5.3 Census 2016)⁽¹⁶⁾. Therefore, as a basis for establishing accommodation need nationally this lack of accurate data is problematic especially as population growth has not been adequately catered for worsening the crisis in accommodation and underestimating need.

The basis of the first ever Traveller Complaint to The European Committee of Social Rights set forth the widespread failure on the part of the State to provide Traveller-specific accommodation, while simultaneously introducing increasingly regressive evictions legislation. In its decision concluded that there was a violation of Article 16 of the Charter on the following grounds:

1. Insufficient provision of accommodation for Travellers; **2;** many Traveller sites are in an inadequate condition; **3.** the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994 (as amended) provides for inadequate safeguards for Travellers threatened with eviction; **4.** the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 (as amended) provides for inadequate safeguards for Travellers threatened with eviction and **5.** evictions are carried out in practice without the necessary safeguards.

To date no remedy has been advanced by the State and a reminder of the Violations held against Ireland in 2020.

The Government commissioned Expert Review of Traveller Accommodation ⁽¹⁷⁾ was commissioned in 2019 and found *'(local authorities) failed to meet the full scale of accommodation need among the community, 'evidenced by the extremely high rate of Traveller homelessness, the increase in numbers of Traveller households sharing accommodation and living in overcrowded conditions, and the uneven record of delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation among local authorities and 'also by approved housing bodies'.*

Making 32 recommendations and endorsed by the Traveller sector, the NTACC and the then Minister with responsibility Damien English TD, expected the first phase of implementation in 2020. However, delays occurred due to the change of Government, the late appointment of the Minister to the portfolio, and demands of Covid.

The Expert Report provides a clear road map toward progress and commitments undertaken by the Minister and the Department so far, have given confidence that ambition is being realised. The Programme Board is advancing the first phase of actions, giving confidence that ambition is being realised.

Underestimating the need in plain sight

a. Despite a Road Map, the current Plans (Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024) are inadequate to meet demands and ameliorate the crisis, worsened by covid. Nationally only 22 authorities plan to deliver to the 2,871 families currently in need during their Programmes.

b. In 2020 just **16 new units** of Traveller specific accommodation were built or refurbished. **7 houses** and **9 welfare units**. So far in 2021, **just 2.4 million euro has been drawn down** of the 15.5 million capital budget, a repeated pattern by local authorities since the beginning of the Programmes, of low intent.

c. A national audit of current Programmes shows widespread inconsistencies in assessing Traveller need, in targets set, no redress for emergency or homeless needs, under planning of culturally appropriate accommodation including transient sites, and inadequate planning for future growth. There is overreliance on private rental, and the Housing Assistance Payment as modes of delivery and no indication of budgetary proposals for new builds and little site identification.

Homelessness and Inadequate Conditions

- 1. The poor condition** of sites must be viewed in the context of overcrowding and the lack of delivery broadly, especially of Groups Housing Schemes, as well as the structural apathy preventing more rigorous maintenance of sites, and deficiency in building quality.

2. **Homeless:** Traveller families are overrepresented, and yet most are not counted within TAPs, and not collected by ethnicity in the Pathways System. Exacerbated by Travellers' arbitrary and often discriminatory access to private rental accommodation and inadequacies of social housing availability, they account for 10% in emergency accommodation nationally and as high as 50% in some counties. Some families are four years in emergency accommodation, miles from their hometown, driving 80-kilometer round trips to keep their children in school.
3. Thousands more families are trapped in **hidden homelessness** caused by grossly inadequate and overcrowded accommodation. Some are sharing bays, houses or dilapidated caravans where damp and mold, leaking roofs and rats are common and forced to share one portaloos with 15 other people is not uncommon, often in local authority owned sites. Despite only comprising 1 per cent of the population Traveller children accounted for 12% of the homeless children residing in emergency accommodation ⁽¹⁸⁾
4. **In total** over 2,000 families (approx. 8,400 - 10,600 people - see above) are living in inadequate, unsafe and impermanent conditions stacked against their health, education, employment and life opportunities, well below basic human rights standards.
5. **Overcrowding:**
 - o Some councils acted to reduce overcrowding on sites in 2020 due to covid 19 through new serviced mobile homes and fast-tracking housing applications, where a preference, but most did not alleviate very overcrowded large sites.
 - o Sites are not viewed as originally planned, for smaller occupancy, and local authorities have not sufficiently allowed for future growth. Without standardised and adequate data collection it is not possible to accurately assess future need nationally.
 - o Approximately 60% of Travellers are under 25. 31% aged 15-29-years are married, compared with 5.8 per cent nationally. Many TAPs acknowledge this but don't allow for growth in their projected targets. (Census 2016)

Underspending, lack of delivery and intent

1. **Delivery:** From 2000-2018 local authorities delivered only 68% of total delivery planned and between 2008 and 2019 underspent over €72 million. From 2016 -2020 ⁽¹⁹⁾ only €38.5 million was drawdown across the 31 local authorities in total.
2. **Government Investment** was €120 million for the first TAP (2000-2004) down to €33 million for the 2014-2018 programme and the annual budget reduced from €40 million in 2008 to €14.5 million in 2020, of which € 4,415,958.47 was used to supply basic sanitation and supports during Covid-19.
3. **Refurbishments instead of new builds:** There is a clear proportion of Travellers who opt for social and standard housing provision, including many families who have reduced their expectation of living in Traveller specific accommodation, advised by their local authority that option is not a realistic choice based on the length of time to build and lack of available land. Refurbishments accounted for 54.1% of output between 2006 and 2018, rather than new output, still evident in current TAPs. ⁽²⁰⁾

Obstacles in Planning Process

1. **Nationally, regionally and locally,** the Expert Group review identified 12 problems in the Planning Process.
2. Traveller accommodation is not included in the **National Development Plan** or in respect of County and City Development Plans.

3. **Part 8:** The view of the Expert Group noted many local authorities failed to meet delivery targets, some over long periods due to opposition from residents and councillors and cited the challenges of Part 8 of the process, this is evidenced on grounds of discrimination against Travellers. There is no provision for Traveller accommodation by means of direct route planning permission, unlike other social housing.
4. **Land Allocation:** Traveller accommodation is not currently included in the draft Land Development Agency Bill.

Discrimination in Practice

Pandemic exposure: Travellers are extremely vulnerable to covid infection with higher occurrence in the community of chronic diseases and conditions deemed at “risk” and exacerbated by inadequate living conditions. Incidence in overcrowded accommodation was a problem. Despite government supports, local authority implementation of these were inconsistent given the evident and disproportionate outbreaks in the community

On site conditions identified during Covid in 2020

- **High prevalence of families forced to live in day units** (originally designed as very small structures, adjacent to a trailer for cooking and with toilet facilities), as an alternative when a trailer becomes dilapidated and unsafe. In 2020 an elderly man receiving treatment for cancer and a family of 10 were effectively living in a one room structure.
- **Families are sometimes assigned empty bays on halting sites**, i.e. without provision of a mobile home or caravan, evidenced last year in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown.
- **Leaks through windows and ceilings, rotting floors**, dampness are frequently reported in trailer accommodation and there is a reported lack of supply of good quality mobiles available for purchase in some local authority areas, for example Cork City, where budgets allowed have been set too low to meet adequate full-time living standards.
- **Infestations** of rats and mice are frequently reported, a risk to mental and physical health.
- **Storms** in recent years, for example Storm Ellen in 2020, led to damage of trailers on several sites, including in Cork City, where families waited, in some instances, several months for replacement.
- In Cork County, **electricity supply** was so weak on a site it could not be safely used to power electric heaters and other essential items. Families were reliant on expensive gas heaters which cause a build-up of condensation and increased risk of mould developing.
- Local authorities **refuse to provide generators** due to perceived health and safety issues, meaning families left without a stable electricity supply, even in cases where essential medical equipment such as nebulisers are required.
- When local authorities **fail to plan for future need evident nationally**, green spaces on sites are often used to facilitate extra trailers. This means there is often little or no green space for children on the sites to play safely.
- **Disability:** Many instances where families are waiting long periods for upgrade works on sites to facilitate a disability or additional need. One example, a man who was waiting years for a walk-in shower to be provided, essential for his medical hygiene treatment.

Overcrowding

- At Spring Lane, Cork City, 45 families live on a 10-bay site and St Anthony’s Park 33 families on a 16-bay site. The provision of mobile homes to ease overcrowding was delayed for some months, despite the severe overcrowding and families provided with portable toilets, were

advised they must be returned after covid-19, despite having no other access to a toilet than where shared with another family. A report by the Ombudsman for Children on conditions experienced by children resident was published in June 2021 and revealed gross neglect by Cork City Council.

- In one Dublin City Council site, there are 40 more families than there are bays or houses, including families with significant additional needs, including spinal disability.
- Travellers in unofficial situations on official sites are still charged rents in some instances, without having security of tenure or facilities of their own.
- Travellers pay **excessive prices for basic services** not available on site. One large family in Meath on an unofficial site pay up to €80 a week on laundrette services.

Discrimination in policy

1. Thresholds: Many Traveller families are statistically likely to have larger family sizes. This has led to situations where families reliant on social protection payments as their sole income still find themselves over the income threshold for social housing. Results of a government review has been released (19/4/2021), indicating a change to reflect the position of larger families but despite these changes there are still some families who find themselves marginally over the threshold and thus excluded from availing of social housing supports.
2. Social Housing Needs Assessment is found to be inadequate and the review to provide an ethnic equality question and accord to the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, has been delayed. This question is critical to ensure Traveller homelessness is captured and remedied nationally.

Lack of Monitoring

1. **Inconsistencies across current Traveller Accommodation Programmes**: A national audit of Programmes shows widespread inconsistencies in assessing Traveller need, in targets set, no redress for emergency or homeless needs, under planning of culturally appropriate accommodation or for transient sites, and inadequate planning for future growth by local authorities. There is overreliance on private rental, and the Housing Assistance Payment as modes of delivery. But there is no central oversight body to monitor or safeguard against current and future delivery failure.
2. Traveller accommodation is **not grounded in the Social Housing Construction Projects Status Reports**.
3. **Underspending over continuous Programmes** and in the year 2019, finds many councils do not plan to meet their own current targets to supply, without oversight or intervention.
4. No provision for transient sites and almost none planned for and use of **Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002** prohibiting nomadism, still in practice.
5. **The Office of the Planning Regulator**, is not a policy making body, is without regulatory enforcement does not oversee the planning functions of local authorities. In the **absence of a national monitoring body** to oversee Traveller accommodation, the quality and maintenance of provision by local authorities has relied on weak structure using the informal and inadequate process of obtaining feedback through site caretakers. This was evident in the Expert Group report who recommended a review of the role caretakers. Also, maintenance requests are long fingered, with widespread frustration, with many citing discriminations as a contributory cause.
6. **The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019** currently does not include halting sites, transient, temporary and permanent halting sites in its remit.

7. **Structural quality:** According to the Government Review of Funding Report 2017 it showed 11% of Traveller accommodation properties demolished were built 12 – 16 years ago, suggests a significant rate of deterioration, suggesting systemic undervaluing.
8. **Traveller housing neglect:** 1,000 families are sharing with one or more others in local authority provided Standard Housing, the extent of the problem has been seriously neglected. This is most likely an underestimate due to fears of being identified as unofficial tenants in some cases, with the subsequent threat of eviction.
9. In June 2019, the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** undertook an equality review of local authority provision to Travellers – published on July 14th, 2021, and found institutionalised and systemic failure by local authorities and a consistent undermining of Travellers' needs

Eviction without adequate legal recourse

Travellers are subject to evictions disproportionate to any other group in society, and legislation has been framed which in practice, unevenly impacts given nomadic traditions and due to widespread under delivery of Traveller accommodation across all types.

Currently there is no eviction register in Ireland, and so determining the extent of Traveller evictions is not possible, undermining the problem and preventing adequate redress.

- a. The Collective Complaint in the case of Traveller evictions contended the Government had not outlined where, when or how, when carrying out evictions, local authorities comply with obligations under the Charter, and that Ireland's legislative framework does not provide for compliance with the Charter.
- b. The Committee in March 2021 upheld those concerns again reminding the State that legislation permitting evictions fails to provide for consultation with those affected and does not ensure reasonable notice of and information on the eviction. Nor does all the legislation require the provision of alternative accommodation or provide for adequate legal remedies. And there is no legal aid for those threatened with eviction.
- c. Travellers access to Justice is limited, with shortcomings in the Legal Aid scheme, and no state resourcing for a Traveller specific Independent Law Centre advanced, as noted earlier.
 1. The Residential Tenancies Act 2020 didn't provide a protection for Travellers from eviction, other than where resident in the private rented sector or in approved housing body tenancies. During that period Travellers were evicted / or threatened with, causing avoidable hardship and risk.
 2. The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994, amended by Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 provides for the eviction of persons without alternative accommodation. For some families their belongings and mobile homes have been impounded causing financial burden, and distress for parents and children.
 3. Section 19 (c) of Part II A of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994, without any form of judicial oversight, monitoring or intervention, is of concern. The arbitrary nature of this legislation is a specific burden and applied largely to Travellers, without oversight and regulation of its use. In effect this legislation has prevented nomadism and curtailed a central cultural right.
 4. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation Act) 1998 recognised the need for transient sites as one of a range of accommodation options for Traveller families. There are fewer than 50 Transient sites in the republic and almost all are in use for emergency accommodation and in the current TAPs, no local authority has made provision within their plans.

5. For Travellers who have been moved into Private Rented, they are further disadvantaged as deemed to have their needs met there, they no longer qualify on paper for Traveller specific accommodation and move down to the end of the list, if later needed. Many families can't access Private Rented and are 22 times more likely to experience discrimination in doing so, in the first place. ⁽⁸⁾
6. Only a very small proportion of social housing and private rental stock consists of large dwellings which would be suitable to accommodate larger Traveller families. (The average family size is 5.3 persons.) This means when a tenancy is due to end, families cannot access another rental property, and many have then been rendered homeless, and face eviction.
7. The current eviction procedure, which allows for the removal of families within 24 hours, is inhumane and often conducted at times when families cannot access legal services, such as on Friday afternoons. This is not possible without access to a dedicated service, and many families would not be familiar with legal services or have finance to seek private legal services.

Case study examples of threatened evictions despite guidance by the Minister for Housing to local Authorities during covid 2020 /2021

- In March 2021 a family of 9 were served a warning to vacate private lands they have resided on for seven years. The family have difficulty securing legal representation and options of alternative accommodation have not been provided by the Council
- In the South East two young couples and their young babies were served notices from a private car park in early December, with nowhere to go. They were not deemed homeless by the Council when they tried to register and given only temporary accommodation over Christmas
- In the north east in November 2020 a couple were served with notice for a caravan they were living in adjacent to the man's mother's home (which was standard social housing). Gardai came to ensure the caravan was moved. Agreement was reached through dialogue with the council, to remain temporarily.
- In August 2020 a threat of eviction was imposed by Dublin City Council on a young mother and two young children (one of whom has autism). Interventions by local Traveller organisations and councillors resolved the matter, for that time.

15. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/33/enacted/en/html>

16. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>

17. https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2019_july_expert_review_group_traveller_accommodation-final_reportrt_00.pdf

18. <https://rm.coe.int/findings-ecrs-2020/1680a1dd39>

19. <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2020-11-24a.958&s=%5B38700%2F20%5D#g959.q>

20. https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2019_july_expert_review_group_traveller_accommodation-final_reportrt_00.pdf

Employment

To date the State has not established a dedicated national Traveller employment strategy to look at innovative and ring-fenced programmes needed to reduce Traveller unemployment and future proof Traveller's social and economic protection. Traveller targets and engagement in Labour Market Activation Support is not available without a system ethnic identifier, but employment was measured at 15%, and among lowest rates in all countries surveyed in a European wide study ⁽²¹⁾

No specific measures under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 were identified to tackle high unemployment rates, or targets set in the Youth Guarantee or the Pathways to Work strategies up to 2020.

Employment comparisons

- Traveller employment is 84.3%, an increase from 74.9% in 2006.⁽²²⁾ 10,653 Travellers were in the labour force and 8,541 were unemployed of these 972 women were working external to the home and 2,938 looking after the home, accounting for 30.4% aged 15 or over.
- 11.3% of Travellers were unable to work due to a disability, nearly three times the rate nationally.
- Compared to groups in other EU countries Travellers are the least likely to have paid work. 17% of Traveller women and 13% of Traveller men have paid jobs compared to 68% of Irish women and 80% of men generally. 70% of 16-24yr olds are not in employment, education or training, the highest of all groups across the six countries. This is almost seven times more than young Irish people generally (11%).⁽²¹⁾
- Of the 30 % in the community employed, 5 in 10 are in part-time jobs and only 3 in 10 full-time. Only 26% have a permanent contract⁽²¹⁾.

Pre and post austerity the disproportionate impact of employment was evident but was without positive discrimination and employment initiatives for Travellers during national drives to redress austerity. Also, energies in the Department of Social Protection were diverted during covid on the short term unemployed nationally, and Travellers have not been prioritised.

- a) There are 13 Actions towards Employment and the Traveller Economy within the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 7 of these are under the direct responsibility of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection DEASP, however these and other initiatives have been scattered with a lack of cohesion and accordant priority focus, therefore poor progression and completion. There is no executive lead within the Department where those actions are ring-fenced. For example, DESAP reporting to NTRIS noted of one action, “to develop targeted initiatives to increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training services. DESAP does not disaggregate the information by Travellers/Roma, so “we do not propose to report on them regularly”.
- b) In Ireland’s country Report to the EU Commission under the Youth Guarantee, Traveller youth who represented the largest unemployment group pro rata to population size and earliest school leavers, were not included in data provided and no specific monitoring undertaken, due to the lack of an ethnic identifier.
- c) To date there have been 1,185 (2% of total caseload) Travellers supported through the Social Inclusion Programmes 55 got a job, and 42 set up their own business. In 2019 681 Travellers were supported, 33 progressed into employment.
- d) There is an unexpected lower rate of referral of Travellers by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to the SICAPs, 12% vs 29% of other users and there is greater ambition needed throughout the programmes for promotion to Travellers. It is noted that Local Development Companies are taking long-term and collaborative approaches with other agencies to build relationships with the community.
- e) Recent commitments made in Pathways to Work 2021 – 2025⁽²³⁾ are critical inclusions including “ring-fencing 1,000 places on public employment programmes for disadvantaged and minority groups, including Travellers and Roma, and a bursary programme, to fund up to 100 apprentices per annum. But no quotas have been identified, or action plan to deliver these. The ““consideration” of making the higher-level Jobs Plus subsidy available to all employers who recruit an unemployed person of Traveller or Roma ethnicity and “Explore the feasibility

of introducing Traveller (and/or Roma)-specific Group Information Sessions over the lifetime of the strategy”, are welcome, but weakened by the lack of robust commitment.

- f) No progress towards the comprehensive Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan outlined in the Programme for Government 2020, is evident yet.

Barriers to employment

Traveller participation in the labour market is marked by perceived stigma associated with being a Traveller and discrimination in recruitment both direct (i.e. refusal to hire or provide services) and indirect (i.e. poor education).

Nationally only 17% of the public said they would employ a Traveller ⁽²⁴⁾ and Travellers are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination in seeking work ⁽²⁵⁾. As no legal aid is available on claims of discrimination under the Equal Status Acts in employment cases, the extent is also unclear. Opportunities for self-employment are also limited leaving many Travellers long-term unemployed.

Education disadvantage is a significant barrier, as outlined earlier, and training initiatives in place over many years have led to poorer than expected outcomes. 66% of Travellers participated in at least one, but on average 2.4, training schemes. However, only 30% had progressed to employment as a result ⁽²⁴⁾.

21. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-roma-travellers-six-countries_en.pdf

22. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>

23. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1feaf-pathways-to-work-2021/>

24. National Traveller Survey 2017 <https://itmtrav.ie/key-reports/>

25. <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2017/11/Who-experiences-discrimination-in-Ireland-Report.pdf>

Inclusion and Participation

We refer here also to the broad consultation carried out for the Seanad Public Consultation Committee on Traveller’s Post Ethnicity Recognition, for further recommendations ⁽²⁶⁾

Broad inclusion

Travellers are recognised as one of the most excluded and discriminated groups in Ireland, endemic individual and institutional racism are reflected in life, social, health, housing and accommodation, educational and mortality outcomes.

State recognition of Traveller ethnicity was a symbolic moment for Travellers and in the State’s history. Enhanced engagement and dialogue with the Department of Justice central to the national Traveller and Roma inclusion strategy was welcome, but despite good intent, progress across the Strategy has been slower than anticipated, with only incremental changes seen.

(b) There are concerns only 9 actions are complete, 15 to start and others ongoing at varying rates of achievement. The allocation of only €5 million in 2021 an additional €1 million from 2020 ⁽²⁷⁾ was necessary but no additional specific resources to deliver NTRIS actions have been advanced.

(c) Concerns on the Strategy include

- actions are dispersed across departments, without a central fund or monitoring authority to oversee performance and delivery, no staff assigned to specific related actions in some areas.
- no ethnic equality monitoring applied, progress not benchmarked to key performance indicators and inadequate monitoring models.

In decision making

1. One campaigning goal in seeking Traveller ethnic minority recognition was an opportunity to enhance cultural and community respect, **with the potential to shape new relationships with the settled population, and combat racism.**
2. However, fostering inclusion and dialogue is multifaceted, **must be cross-cutting, proactive and aligned to targeted goals in all other strands of Irish life.** It must happen at a local community level, in education settings, in employment, both private and public, in civil society, in public services and the national narrative of the culture, heritage and history and the inclusion of Travellers in the articulation of public interest matters.
3. Efforts to do that have proved to be most effective, using the example of gender, when it is made conditional and incumbent. **Traveller quotas** cannot be compared pro rata due to the size of the population. However, Traveller specific targets can be applied in a setting via affirmative actions. There is also an opportunity for collaboration with other minority groups
4. There are many reasons that have either stopped or curtailed **Travellers from accessing and contributing to key decision-making structures locally and nationally.** The biggest is social exclusion and discrimination and therefore alienation from mainstream systems of governance. Ironically those decision-making structures have been at the heart of further marginalisation of Travellers by either imposing draconian and curtailing laws, such as those of culture and nomadic traditions, or in not singling out Travellers for inclusion.
5. **Traveller's political representation since the foundation of the Irish state is invisible** in power and leadership structures, until the nomination to the Seanad in 2020 of Senator Eileen Flynn, on back of much advocacy and campaigning for that inclusion.
6. **The invisibility of the diversity, capacity and insight which Travellers can contribute to across all aspects of Irish life,** is contradictory to an open inclusive democracy and is not coherent with recommendations by the Advisory Committee for the Protection of National Minorities, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, who note the Irish State has not adopted positive action measures to improve the representation of Travellers in political institutions and decision making.
7. There are many strong Traveller advocates, some of **whom are participating in Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees, however often their role is not valued,** they've not been listened to or heard and often patronized, with no positive outcomes from their participation.

In political democracy

The establishment of an Electoral Commission and related provisions connected to that, can make way for broader engagement of Travellers, minority and underrepresented groups, and ensure a principle objective of The Durban Programme of Action. In the 2019 Local and European Elections 5 Traveller candidates ran, the most significant number to date, and there's hope future years will see more candidates. However, the reality is competing in an environment of anti-Traveller sentiment is challenging and limits success. Obstacles to political participation include:

- a) Low voting engagement, lack of political awareness and apathy to the political system which as a duty bearer, has underserved Traveller need and dented trust, in many settings.
- b) A lack of sanction for running candidates and elected representatives who have over many years articulated racism and anti-Traveller sentiment in electioneering matters and often housing decisions, some of whom openly canvassed against Travellers as a vote getting strategy.
- c) Structural obstacles are a problematic. Right now, there are 45,000 to 57,000 Travellers resident in the Republic, 60% are under 25 and just 3% over 65 years. Given the population size and age – the electoral system of proportional representation statistically disadvantages Travellers when competing with non-Travellers in elections. A more

successful gateway for some Travellers was election to town councils, unfortunately abolished now.

- d) Other obstacles to achieve presence in constituency settings through the normal pathways to politics, such as through social and civil engagement, sporting and cultural arenas, are also a restrictive barrier, based on exclusion and discrimination.
- e) Travellers also encounter residual and deeply ingrained prejudice across every setting, including nominations by political parties and groups.

In Language and Culture safeguarding

As Traveller children are de facto recognised as an ethnic minority they should now be facilitated by the State under Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁽²⁸⁾ to acquaint with their own culture and use their own language.

There is also an opportunity to restore Traveller's unique language, Gammon or Cant in a language or Traveller-specific culturally appropriate setting.

The value of Traveller's unique culture and heritage has a valuable place in the national perspective and is both invisible and underutilised. The National Museums and Library collections hold unique cultural assets and ephemera where Travellers have limited access. Making these spaces more welcome to Travellers and other minority groups could be central policy. Cultural, philosophical ownership is a vital underpinning element.

26.

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/seanad_public_consultation_committee/reports/2020/2020-01-23_report-on-travellers-towards-a-more-equitable-ireland-post-recognition_en.pdf

27. In 2020 funding to support Traveller and Roma inclusion was 3.8 million and ensured core funding to existing supports, 6 Traveller NGOs, a Traveller Mediation Service, 7 Roma Employment Projects and 6 inclusion ones, the Special (employment) Initiatives for Travellers (SITs) and Roma in 7 locations, the two- year education pilot in 4 locations, and €60,000 towards Traveller pride week events

27. UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html> [accessed 13 June 2019]

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