



SUBMISSION

BY

**PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLERS' CENTRE**

ON

**THE RECRUITMENT OF ETHNIC
MINORITIES TO AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA**

August 2005

Pavee Point welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of initiatives to recruit members of minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, to An Garda Síochána.

Pavee Point is a non-governmental organization committed to the attainment of human rights for Irish Travellers. The group is comprised of Travellers and members of the majority population working together in partnership to address the needs of Travellers as a minority group experiencing exclusion and marginalization.

The key values which underpin Pavee Point's work include: human rights, equality, social solidarity, cultural diversity, community development, partnership and a recognition that issues facing Travellers are multi-dimensional and so require holistic responses to address them.

Pavee Point works at local, national and international levels, linking the experiences and learning arising within them to inform and develop approaches to address Travellers' socio-economic and cultural exclusion and subsequent non-observance of their human rights.

Introduction

The goal of the recruitment process is to ensure that An Garda Síochána reflects the diversity of the community that it serves and the cultural reality within which policing in Ireland takes place today. Recruitment of minority ethnic groups into An Garda Síochána has to be seen in the wider context of relationship building with different minority groups and diversification of the organisation. The recruitment has to be a long-term process and be accompanied by other measures to make it an integrated part of An Garda Síochána in the future.

The Recruitment process has to tackle the various barriers that Travellers have in relation to being a part of An Garda Síochána. Those barriers are visible both at an individual and structural level, and they include a general lack of trust and confidence among Travellers in the Gardai, fear of victimisation, widespread discrimination and barriers to Travellers' accommodation, education and participation in society as a whole. Travellers have

traditionally also preferred their own community for self-employment over salaried employment. It would be important to acknowledge that as with other communities where there is mistrust of guards, many members of the Traveller community do not see working in An Garda Síochána as either a realistic or desirable option for employment. Travellers who wish to train as Guards may find themselves coming under considerable pressure not to enter An Garda Síochána from their own community.

For its part, An Garda Síochána must endeavour to create an open and non-prejudiced environment in which people of all ethnic groups, including Travellers, could see a place for themselves. Part of this process is to develop good relations with Travellers and create a positive image of policing in the Traveller community by providing high quality, culturally sensitive and non-prejudiced every day policing.

An Garda Síochána also has to send out a message that, as an organisation, it is a welcoming and open working place which values diversity and the knowledge different minority ethnic groups bring to the organisation. This means developing models of open human resource management policies and practices to enable the development of a new inclusive work culture. It also means that the organisation has to consistently challenge racism and discrimination within An Garda Síochána, supported by clear and effective procedures for dealing with racial discrimination or harassment. A positive attitude towards cultural diversity should be added to An Garda Síochána's list of entry requirements, making it clear at interview stage that the organisation implements an anti-racist code of practice to which all its officers must adhere.

The "Rotterdam Charter: Policing for a multi-ethnic society; principles, practice and partnerships" (1996) aims to establish "a full set of instruments for an integrated and coordinated approach to the management of ethnic diversity in the interests of equality and social cohesion" (clause 6, opening remarks). Pavee Point recommends that An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with Travellers, members of other minority ethnic groups and relevant non-governmental organisations adapt the Rotterdam Charter to the Irish context and use it as a basis for achieving the necessary organisational change.

The recruitment has to be seen as a long term initiative, especially in relation to Travellers. Because of the current relationship with the Gardai, education level and general level of participation of Travellers in the society as a whole the first recruitment round may not see many Travellers applying or succeeding in competition. For this reason there has to be consistent procedures in place to continue to encourage Travellers to apply in the future, and to consider alternative entry routes.

Even after the recruitment process An Garda Síochána ought to review and look at the different barriers for members of the Traveller community for people working as guards. Noting these, the organisation ought to give support to those people working in it and encourage them to be proud of their identity and the place they work in. Mechanisms ought to be put in place to monitor the integration of members of minority ethnic groups within the organisation.

It is important that those Travellers who want to become Guards are not expected to police their own communities specifically. As noted in the Rotterdam Charter:

Police officers with different ethnic backgrounds should be assigned duties in exactly the same way as any other police officer. Generally, they should not be recruited to police their own individual ethnic communities, but rather to provide police services to the entire population. Specific posting with regard to their ethnicity will increase pressure from their own community. (Clause 11, Chapter 2 'Recruitment')

This policy should be clearly communicated to minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, when giving out information on the recruitment.

Actions to bring the Garda organisation closer to the communities

There are various ways to bring the organisation closer to the different minority ethnic communities it is trying to reach with its recruitment process.

➤ **Work experience placements in An Garda Síochána**

Instead of having only second level placement possibilities within An Garda Síochána there should be a variety of options available to get experience of working in the organisation. Since there are relatively small numbers of Travellers in second level education only a few would then have access to the placements. There should be other ways of accessing the work experience placements, for example, through Traveller youth groups. There should also be a possibility for work experience placements for adults, like those currently being made available for Travellers and asylum seekers and refugees in the Civil Service. This would offer members of minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, first hand experience of working in An Garda Síochána.

➤ **Visits to Templemore**

By organising visits for young people and other groups to Templemore Travellers would get to know the place, the training given in Templemore, and possibly also interact with some trainees.

➤ **Informal contacts between Travellers and the Gardai**

This could include contacts on or outside the Traveller sites, for example through sports, informal meetings, and information sessions about the organisation. There could also be a role for greater links between Juvenile Liaison officers and young Travellers and their families, as well as between Ethnic Liaison officers and Travellers. It would be helpful if the role of Ethnic Liaison Officers was a dedicated position instead of being an add-on. That way they could fully commit to relationship building with different minority ethnic groups.

➤ **Role of the local Guards/Community Guards**

Those Guards that are involved in certain designated areas should be more involved with those communities and encourage people to apply to An Garda Síochána, and in general be part of building a positive image of the Guards as an opportunity for employment.

It is important to ensure that the Garda efforts to build good relationships with the Traveller community should be mainstreamed throughout the organisation rather than be compartmentalised to only certain units.

Actions on recruitment

Especially since there is under-representation of Travellers in An Garda Síochána there is a need for special measures and affirmative action to promote recruitment.

➤ **The entry exams**

The purpose is not to lower the entry standards but to change those standards to be culturally appropriate: different forms and tests should be culture-proofed and designed to be as inclusive as possible. Also specialised training should be provided for personnel officers to help them select colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds. Principles from competency based recruitment processes should be introduced to ensure a fair and equal application process.

➤ **Information about the recruitment**

Information sessions should be organised in various places that are easily accessible for Travellers like in Traveller organisations, Traveller training centres and Traveller youth projects. Also the media that Travellers follow should be utilised. Radio adverts, newsletter articles etc. should be used to inform Travellers about the recruitment. Especially, existing positive examples of Travellers working in police forces should be used in advertising: one example of this could be a Traveller (or Gypsy) profile on someone working for the police, in Ireland or in the UK.

This should be accompanied by personal visits by Guards to schools, etc. which Travellers and other minority ethnic groups attend in order to give talks on recruitment.

➤ **Support in applying**

There should be different support mechanisms in place to help Travellers in the application process. Giving out clear information about what is needed from the applicants in the entry exams and what the procedure is would be the first step. A pre-access training course for Travellers and other minority ethnic groups to build up their skills and knowledge and prepare for the exams would be essential.

➤ **Role of Traveller Organisations**

Traveller organisations have a role in encouraging Travellers to apply for and access a whole range of jobs, including in An Garda Síochána.

Other actions for employment

Training. The Rotterdam Charter highlights the need for police to include NGOs and/or people from minority ethnic communities in training. This is essential for professional policing. To employ Travellers as part of a training team would help to promote equality and diversity in the Garda training. This could be done on a contract basis rather than through the standard entry competition. The planned Diversity Awareness Training Unit could provide opportunities for employment of co-trainers from the Traveller community and other minority ethnic groups to work alongside Garda trainers.