



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Roma Project Annual Report – 2014



The Roma project works to:

- Promote Roma inclusion in policy development in order to support the realisation of Roma human rights and improve health outcomes in Ireland.
- Provide consistent and current policy analysis in relation to Roma issues, drawing from the Irish, European and UN framework and experiences.
- Support Roma inclusion and access to services. The project also works with service providers to support the development of inclusive services and to undertake intersectoral collaboration.
- Promote and support Roma leadership, community development and involvement in policy development in Ireland.
- Promote positive images of Roma and challenge stereotypes in Ireland.

Major events in 2014:

- Publication of Logan Report – July 2014
- Apology by Minister of Justice and Equality to Roma families for removal of children – July 2014
- Ireland’s examination by Human Rights Committee in Geneva – July 2014
- Attacks on Roma in Waterford – October 2014
- Department of Justice and Equality commits to the development of a new National Traveller Roma Inclusion Steering Group which will oversee the development of a revised National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy, to be chaired by Minister of State for Justice and Equality – December 2014
- Department of Justice and Equality commit to funding a needs assessment of Roma in Ireland in line with recommendation 4.2.3 of the Logan Report – November 2014

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○ Publication of the Logan Report	
○ Attacks on Roma in Waterford	

Including Roma in national policies with a particular focus on the development of a progressive National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy

Pavee Point have campaigned for a revised progressive and inclusive National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy since 2012 when Ireland's first strategy was developed. We emphasised that a strategy should incorporate the recommendations of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, which called on all Member States to develop Roma inclusion strategies; and the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion. Specifically we called for:

- Achievable national goals with targets for Traveller and Roma inclusion. These goals should address, as a minimum, the four EU Roma integration goals relating to access to education, employment, healthcare and housing.
- Actions to explicitly address racism towards Roma and Travellers and include measures to address gender inequality.
- Clear objectives, actions, impact indicators, time frames, clear lines of responsibility, funding mechanisms and strong inclusive monitoring and evaluation methods.
- A steering group with an independent/high profile chair to lead the process – consisting of representatives from relevant departments, agencies and civil society organisations.

We campaigned for the improvement of the National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy through direct contact with the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) and working with parliamentary representatives to highlight the issue. We developed and distributed a briefing paper for political representatives outlining clear recommendations for change. In parallel we also worked to increase accountability at the EU level through reporting to the European Commission on Ireland's National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy and through attendance and advocacy at the EU Roma Summit.

We made great progress on this during 2014 with a commitment by the Department of Justice and Equality to set up a steering group for a National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy in 2015 to be chaired by the Minister of State. This will consist of relevant departmental representatives and Traveller and Roma civil society representatives. **This will be first national policy forum with Roma representation.** It is envisaged that this body will work to revise the National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy in 2015, with the development of clear objectives goals, targets, indicators and clear lines of responsibility across Government Departments and Agencies. DJE have also committed to including anti-discrimination as a key component of the strategy. These were all key recommendations in our briefing papers on the National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy.



Building political and stakeholder support: Roma children's rights

One of our key aims in 2014 was to build political support for and place the issue of Roma human rights on the agenda. The conference *Realizing Roma Children's Rights* was our flagship event to do this and it was held in Dublin on 10 April 2014.

This conference was hosted on foot of serious concerns from Pavee Point in relation to the situation of Roma children in Ireland. Testimonies from Roma families, social workers, family support workers, teachers and many other practitioners tell a story of extreme marginalisation of Roma children in Ireland. They tell a story of high levels of child poverty and discrimination. The conference was hosted by Pavee Point in order to highlight human rights issues facing Roma children in Ireland and in order to develop strategies to ensure that Roma children will have their human rights realised in Ireland. The timing of this conference was important given recent cases of Roma children being removed

from their families due to their physical appearance differing from their parents.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs opened the conference and spoke about the importance of Roma inclusion and a set of three reports on issues facing Roma were launched by the keynote speaker, Professor Jacqueline Bhabha, Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health. A number of high profile speakers chaired panels at the conference including **Emily Logan**, Ombudsman for Children, **Audrey Carville**, RTE journalist and broadcaster and **Des Hogan** acting CEO of the Irish Human Rights Commission. **Gordon Jeyes**, Chief Executive of TUSLA addressed the conference as part of the panel on child welfare.

Other speakers included:

- **Iulius Rostas**, Visiting Lecturer at the Corvinus University, Budapest.

- **Tanya Ward** - Director, Children's Rights Alliance
- **Gabi Muntean**, Roma Community Worker, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

Attendees at the conference included policy-makers across Departments and representatives from Government agencies providing services in the area of education, health and children, along with non-government representatives. Roma volunteers who had participated in the seminars were also present. A number of high profile elected representatives across political parties also attended.

Significant media coverage of the conference gave a platform for Roma representatives to speak on current affairs programmes about Roma rights. This was quite unique as Roma in Ireland are rarely heard in such spaces. The Late Debate held a debate on Traveller and Roma rights in Ireland. ('Traveller and Roma Rights in Ireland' -

<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/the-late-debate/programmes/2014/0409/607910-the-late-debate-wednesday-9-april-2014/>).

This was also followed by a piece on Morning Ireland featuring Roma representatives speaking about access to

education for Roma in Ireland. (<http://www.rte.ie/news/player/morning-ireland/2014/0410/#page=2> from 41.20 – 46 mins). Human rights issues facing Roma were outlined in two national broadsheets following the conference.

Also, the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection in Ireland articulated a need for social welfare restrictions to be amended so that child benefit would not be subject to such restrictions, which would have a hugely positive impact on Roma in Ireland.

Two new reports published by Pavee Point on Roma in Ireland were launched at the conference. These were "Challenging barriers and misconceptions – Roma maternal health in Ireland" and "Roma and Education". The reports were described by Professor Bhaba as a valuable resource for progressing Roma rights and she commended the human rights based analysis of the reports. Along with the Child Protection report which was published in 2013, this set of reports provide a range of recommendations which would greatly improve living circumstances for Roma in Ireland.

<http://www.paveepoint.ie/resources/roma/>



Shaping policy

Alongside focusing on the development of a progressive and inclusive National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy we developed a range of submissions and policy papers and presented to groups for the inclusion of Roma in national policies. These included:

Ireland's examination under International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Pavee Point highlighted issues facing Roma with Human Rights Committee through provision of shadow report to the human rights committee. We then attended the 111th session of the human rights committee where Ireland was examined under the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We used this opportunity to raise issues directly with Committee members, including a call for recognition of Traveller ethnicity, the need for ethnic data collection, a for a national action plan against racism and a body similar the National Consultative Committee on Racism in Ireland. We also raised the need for the impact of the habitual residence condition on Roma women experiencing violence to be address and for a strong national plan for Roma inclusion. The Committee addressed all of these issues during the hearings and made the following recommendations to Government.

8. The State party should take further legislative as well as policy measures to ensure that all women, particularly women from vulnerable and marginalized groups, have equal access to protection against perpetrators of violence. It should also establish a systematic data collection system to inform current and future policies and priorities, and provide, in its next periodic report, disaggregated statistics on complaints, prosecutions and sentences regarding violence against women.

23.The Committee regrets the lack of progress in implementing its previous recommendations to recognize Travellers as an ethnic minority and to amend the Housing Act of 2002. It also expresses concern at the lack of data concerning the Roma community in the State party, and at instances of discriminatory acts against the Roma community, including the forced removal of Roma children from their families into State care on the basis of their appearance (arts. 26 and 27).

The State party should take concrete steps to recognize Travellers as an ethnic minority group, and amend the Housing Act of 2002 to meet the specific accommodation requirements of Traveller families. In light of the abolishment of the National Action Plan Against Racism, the State party should adopt an effective policy and action plan, developed in consultation with Traveller and Roma communities, to redress situations of inequality.

Following this we submitted a proposed list of issues to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights who will examine in Ireland in 2015.

EU Roma Summit

Pavee Point have consistently engaged on the progression of National Roma Strategies with the European Commission and in April 2014 were invited to attend the EU Roma Summit. This was an opportunity to participate in a stock take of progress made on Roma inclusion across the European Union and to influence recommendations for future action. Among the speakers were Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Vice-President Viviane Reding (Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship), Commissioner László Andor (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and Commissioner Vassiliou (Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth).

Pre-budget submission developed and submitted to the Department of Social Protection

In 2014 we submitted a pre-budget submission and attended the Department of Social Protection pre-budget forum in order to influence budget 2015. We highlighted the need to ensure adult social welfare rates were consistent with cost of living, to support and invest in community sector initiatives that support Traveller and Roma inclusion, to address the habitual residence condition, implement employment support measures and to adopt a human rights lens in budgetary decisions.

Presentation for British Irish Parliamentary Assembly

We presented for a Committee of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) on issues facing Travellers and Roma in Ireland. As part of this a Roma staff member presented at the Oireachtas for this first time. The Assembly is a forum for parliamentarians from Dublin,

Westminster, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with membership is composed of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, House of Commons, the House of Lords, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Pavee Point formally presented for the Committee as part of its evidence gathering in relation to the sharing of good practice across jurisdictions in respect of relations between local authorities, Governments, local community and Travellers and the Roma population. The Committee's focus was (i) access to health and education services for Travellers and the Roma population; (ii) provision of housing, and provision of temporary and permanent sites; and (iii) interactions between other local communities and Roma and Travellers.

Submission to the Department of Justice and Equality on a Migrant Integration Strategy

We developed a submission to the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to a new migrant integration strategy and following this met with the cross-departmental committee on migrant integration to discuss this submission. A key recommendation we made was that a migrant strategy should not be conflated with an anti-racism strategy, which is exclusionary of Travellers. We also noted the importance of linking Traveller and Roma issues, while being cognisant of Roma status as migrants but also recognising the experience of generations of racism and discrimination based on ethnicity. We reiterated that a migrant integration strategy is needed but an overarching national action plan against racism is required.

Increasing Roma access to and engagement with mainstream health services

Alongside policy work we also worked with individual Roma families and social workers in relation to access to health services or in relation to issues impacting upon health. Over 30 unique enquiries were received by a variety of service providers and Roma over 2014. Pavee Point Roma staff worked with service providers on emergency cases to communicate with Roma families and the relevant providers.

This work was supplemented with a series of workshops/presentations on Roma rights and practice for service providers in HSE, TUSLA and non-government organisations. These included presentations in Waterford, Wexford, Mayo, Donegal, Limerick – Trinity (Health), IFN, Belfast. For example we delivered a session on Roma rights to 60 social workers and other practitioners working with Roma in the Wexford area.

In order to spread learning among practitioners and to move to a more systematic approach to addressing issues, the Roma Rights Forum was set up in February 2014. The forum is a space for people working with Roma to come together to discuss ideas for addressing human rights and health issues facing Roma and to overcome challenges in this work. The forum aims to:

- Bring together people working with Roma throughout Ireland
- Provide a space for networking and seeking support for your work
- Discussing upcoming policy issues impacting on Roma
- Discuss progress with Ireland's National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy;

- Discuss the impact of existing policy on Roma and key policy 'gaps' or areas that should be addressed;
- Discuss current challenges of meeting the needs of Roma children in particular;
- Highlight examples of good practice and successful initiatives for Roma inclusion in Ireland and Europe;
- Discuss possible future initiatives and opportunities at both a local and national level.

Three forum meetings were convened in 2014. The first meeting focused on agreeing a memorandum of understanding, an update on Roma human rights and a national policy update. Focus groups with 40 participants were held on the future focus of forum meetings. The second forum meeting was held in June 2014 with 22 participants. This included a national policy update, discussion of issues arising from Roma practitioners and support needed and an update from participants on local and regional initiatives with Roma.

A thematic Roma Rights Forum was held in Pavee Point on 16 October with 35 participants. This thematic session examined the process of undertaking local needs analyses through a discussion of principles and approaches to working with communities. The following three areas were discussed:

- Human Rights Based Approaches – Fidelma Joyce, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

- Including gender – Jane Pillinger, Independent researcher and policy advisor.
- Community participation – Ronnie Fay and Mary Brigid Collins, Pavee Point.

Presentations and updates from the meetings were shared with the online Roma rights forum, which receives ongoing updates from Pavee Point.

In 2014 we continued our work in the delivery of Roma specific GP services in Tallaght as an emergency response to lack of access to medical cards (and thus primary care services) for Roma in the area. This includes a liaison role with Roma attending the GP bus in Tallaght and linking Roma in Tallaght with GP and vaccination services. The numbers attending this service are increasing year on year. As part of this work we are represented on the Tallaght Roma Integration Project.

Supporting strong Roma leaders, working from community development and human rights principles



In 2014 we established a Roma volunteer group with 10 members who meet in Pavee Point and contribute to the work of the Roma project. Members of the group attended Pavee Point events and participated in projects throughout the year. The group completed child protection training with the New Communities Partnership. Events were held to with the aims of progressing Roma

rights, but also facilitating and engaging Roma in community activism. A selection of events are outlined below.

Porajmos - Roma Holocaust Commemoration

To mark Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day (2 August) we held a memorial event in commemoration of the Roma who suffered during the Nazi era. This marks the anniversary of the extermination of 3,000 Roma and Sinti in the gas chambers

of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. Roma community members gathered to lay flowers and commemorate those who suffered in the Nazi era. The event was addressed by Minister O’Riordáin. The Porajmos commemoration is a stark reminder of the need to combat racism and intolerance, in particular that experienced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers today. This was highlighted in media coverage of the day

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/discrimination-forces-roma-to-live-on-the-margins-30478563.html>

Realisation of Traveller and Romani Women rights: Exploring Feminist Analyses



This event was organised by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre in partnership with The Centre for Global Women’s Studies (National University of Ireland, Galway). The event aimed to provide a space for Traveller and Roma feminists to discuss Traveller and Romani women’s rights from feminist perspectives.

Speakers addressed points including:

- Traveller and Romani women’s rights – experiences of intersectional discrimination.
- The role of feminist analyses and actions in challenging inequality.
- Traveller and Roma inclusion/exclusion in women’s movements.

- Recommendations for change – options for solidarity.

The event was opened by Anastasia Crickley, UN CERD and was chaired by Dil Wickrehasinghe of Newstalk. It was extremely well attended and will be followed up a seminar report and podcasts in 2015.

Photographic exhibition: One People – Many Lives



We worked as a partner with the Equality Authority in the development and subsequent launch of the photo exhibition “One People – Many Lives”. This exhibition was developed in collaboration with Roma in order to challenge perceptions and stereotypes about Roma. The exhibition was launched in City Hall on 28 February. The launch was a very successful event, which was addressed by Gabi Muntean and Manu Paun of Pavee Point. There were over 100 participants in attendance, including human rights commissioners and the Romanian ambassador. RTE did a short piece on the exhibition where the Roma people involved in developing this were filmed. Pavee Point staff also spoke on Morning Edition television news programme about the exhibition.

Throughout 2015, the exhibition was hosted in 30 different venues throughout

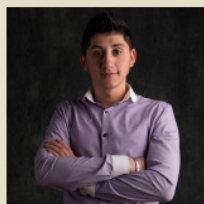
the country in 2014 along-side events and seminars. Reports of the exhibition were very positive and it was a space where Roma and the general public could interact in a positive way about the diversity of Romani culture and the need to challenge stereotypes.

Cultural event to mark International Roma and Traveller day

In 2014 we held a cultural event to celebrate International Traveller and Roma Day. This was addressed by Dil Wickremasinghe of Newstalk who spoke about her experiences coming to Ireland as a migrant. This was attended by Roma from throughout Dublin. Romani musicians played music and traditional food was prepared for the day.



ROMA: ONE PEOPLE – MANY LIVES



EXHIBITION LAUNCH

featuring photographs by James Fraher

Responding to issues

Logan report

Pavee Point staff supported the Ombudsman's office following their investigation into the cases of Roma children being removed from their families, in liaising with the families in question. Staff also met with the Ombudsman and Minister for Justice and Equality and the families for the public launch and apology by the State to the families. This was crucial in easing the trust and communication between the families and the State representatives.

Waterford

One of the issues in 2015 that required a response were anti-Roma attacks on Roma families in Waterford. Three families with young terrified children had to be brought to safety as up to 100 people gathered outside their home. Facebook pages that had been set up in the run up to these events included "Waterford against Roma" and "Get Roma Criminal Gypsies Out". These pages called people to action and were littered with comments such as "petrol bomb the all", "beat them out of Waterford with bats" and "burn them out". Comments referred to Roma as "Scum" and "like rats". Pavee Point worked to get these pages taken down as swiftly as possible. We met with the Gardaí in relation to these incidents and submitted a complaint in relation to the Facebook pages under the Incitement to Hatred Act. We also responded on TV and print media, including Primetime and made recommendations to avoid future similar situations.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/behind-the-news-anti-roma-protests-in-waterford-1.1983698>