



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Submission to Department of Education

Statement of Strategy

November 2020

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Introduction

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('Pavee Point') welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Department of Education as it prepares its forthcoming Statement of Strategy.

Pavee Point has been working to challenge racism and promote Traveller and Roma inclusion in Ireland since 1985. The organisation works from a community development perspective and promotes the realisation of human rights and equality for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The organisation is comprised of Travellers, Roma and members of the general population, who work together in partnership to address the needs of Travellers and Roma as minority ethnic groups experiencing exclusion, marginalisation and racism. The central aim of Pavee Point is to contribute to the improvement in the quality of life and living circumstances of Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

From our start (as Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group) in 1985, Pavee Point has given central importance to pursuing full and equal participation for Travellers throughout the education system. This was and is based on our understanding of education's key importance for human dignity and rights. Our work has since expanded to include Roma, and was significantly enhanced through the services of an education worker, made possible until 2017 by a philanthropic organisation grant.

The Statement of Strategy undertaken by the Department of Education has the potential to address the intergenerational educational inequalities and poor outcomes faced by the majority of Travellers and Roma. Travellers' historic marginalisation within all levels of the education system and in society has been well documented and there is much work to do. The very modest progress to reverse the consequences of the 2008 recession now stands in danger of being obliterated by COVID-19, leading to a lost education generation particularly at higher education levels. We look to the Department of Education to ensure this does not happen and to work alongside us in building on the rightful education ambitions of Traveller and Roma. Such ambitions are impressively evident in the growing numbers completing third level, and in the inputs of the Traveller participants and other stakeholders in the recent forum, organised by Pavee Point in association with the National Traveller Women's Forum, to reflect on the education situation of Travellers in this pandemic. Evident also was the concern that the already fragile relationship many Travellers and Roma have with formal education is under serious threat in these times.

The Programme for Government contains important commitments in regards to advancing the educational rights and opportunities available to Travellers and Roma, including developing a National Traveller Education Strategy and a plan to improve access to Higher Education for members of the Traveller Community. In our recommendations in this submission we reference only key actions, including commitments in the Programme for Government, under the remit of the Department of Education, for Traveller education. We urge the Department to adopt our recommendations in its Statement of Strategy.

Specific recommendations for a Statement of Strategy

1. Indicate a priority and timeline for the development and implementation of a National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy

This is required to fulfil the commitment given in the 2020 Programme for Government. It will involve developing and implementing a holistic overall National Traveller Education Strategy with education actions with targets, timelines, appropriate monitoring processes and associated budgets; building on the Third Level Action Plan, and incorporating the NTRIS (National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy).

Traveller representative organisations must be directly engaged during consultation processes informing the development of the strategy. The partnerships, engagement and initiatives necessary for Traveller and Roma transfer and progression throughout the education system, at whatever time in their lives and whether on a full or part-time basis must also, with immediate effect, be put in place and secured.

2 Commit to special measures essential for Traveller and Roma educational equality

Pavee Point has always supported fully integrated education for Travellers. However, special measures to engage Travellers communities with the school system are essential to support effective integrated fully equal education for Traveller and Roma learners at all levels. Such special measures are fully in line with the recommendations of the international human rights bodies including the UN International Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination in their reviews of the field of Traveller education in Ireland

3 Commit to collection of disaggregated data and setting of clear targets for ensuring Traveller and Roma equality of access, participation and outcomes in education

An ethnicity question (the one used in the National Census) has been introduced, for purposes of identifying support needs at point of enrolment. Responding to this question (with parent/guardian consent) is voluntary.

In the DES statistical report on Traveller enrolments (2017) Traveller ethnicity data is correlated with the following variables: sex, age and standard (school class), school status (DEIS/non-DEIS; language of instruction), and Local Authority Area. Apart from ethnicity, age and school standard, no multiple correlations are done. Enrolment, attendance, attainment and retention levels are key issues driving Traveller educational inequalities and poor outcomes. The Department of Education does not publish disaggregate data on attendance and attainment; enrolment and retention levels can be roughly inferred by comparing the age profiles of Travellers on roll and in census data. No data are published on Travellers in provision for children with assessed special needs.

The merging of data on Travellers into the national profile has been defended as in keeping with inclusion policy; however, clear analysis of needs and potential based on analysis of disaggregated data are essential to effective inclusion, delivering equal opportunities to all learners. Respecting human-rights principles, personal autonomy and privacy rights poses challenges when analysing data on small populations, but it can be done, and would be an invaluable aid to developing targeted actions to deliver Travellers' and other minority members'

equality and education rights. Achieving this clear analysis of Traveller participation and progress in education should be included as a goal of the Traveller Education Strategy.

4 Commit to promoting anti-racism throughout the school system

The Strategy needs to contain a firm commitment to address and confront all racism and discrimination, whether on purpose or in effect, in the education system, if the laudable efforts to promote schools' anti-racism policies are to be effective. An important tool to tackle this is anti-racism education inclusive of anti-Traveller and Roma racism, for all education personnel: we would be happy to engage with your Department regarding this.

The Department of Education also must actively engage with the Anti-Racism Committee in the development and implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism.

5 Commit to resourcing with timelines for additional Traveller and Roma Educational Supports

According to the 2016 Census (Central Statistics Office, 2018) there are about five thousand Travellers aged 15-19 years old in Ireland. DES Statistics (2017, Table 12) on Travellers in post-primary schools show that over half are in non-DEIS schools, but they comprise almost 2% of all students in the DEIS sector, as against 0.5% of all students in the non-DEIS sector. Traveller enrolments in second-level schools peaked at 2,699 students in 2010 (over twice the 2000/01 enrolment). The Visiting Teachers for Travellers service is credited, including by the Task Force on Travellers (1995), with driving this enrolment growth. However, it and a Traveller-targeted scheme of additional teaching hours for second-level schools were terminated in 2011. Travellers' support needs were to be absorbed by the general educational support services.

Traveller education has only just started to recover from these cuts and still has much ground to make up. *Young Travellers in Ireland* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2020) shows Travellers comprise 0.8% of the secondary school population with the Leaving Cert which reportedly would have been sat by approximately 300 Travellers this year, half for the traditional examination and half for the Vocational or Applied Cert. Additional resources must be spread across schools where Traveller children are attending, and not just focused on DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools which cater for less than 50% of Traveller children. In addition, education resources for Traveller parents and children must be returned to pre-2011 levels.

6 Commit to taking immediate and direct measures to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Travellers' engagement with education at all levels, from early years on.

This requires ongoing engagement by education providers with Traveller and Roma organisations. All Department of Education guidance regarding the pandemic must directly name the need for providers to address the needs of Travellers and Roma.

7 Commit to reinforce partnerships with Traveller and Roma organisations, essential to achieving their equality

The Reports on the recent Education Forum and Roundtable organised by Pavee Point give further testimony, already visible in NTRIS engagement to the capacity, commitment and

concern of Traveller organisations to engage promote and work on Traveller and Roma education progress at all levels. Local organisations continue to seek to document and address the effects of COVID. The Dept needs to ensure that Traveller and Roma organisations both local and national are included essential partnerships with schools, education providers and policy makers, and that their voices are heard and reflected in their deliberations and outcomes.

8 Commit to using NTRIS and the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030, to secure full educational equality for Travellers and Roma by 2030

This will require speeding up implementation of the NTRIS education actions, development and full implementation of Irish education's actions in response to the EU Framework including targets and timelines with appropriate resourcing for achievement of full educational equality for Travellers and Roma by 2030. Education equality is an essential pre-requirement for full participation and citizenship.

9 Given Traveller and Roma marginalisation and negative experiences and perceptions of the education system, commit in the Strategy to measures in support of adult Traveller learners including particular measures for women

The figures on Travellers' non-transfer and non-completion of senior cycle speak for themselves. These need to be addressed to ensure that Traveller completion rates are in line with the rest of the population by 2030. In the meantime, those who have been previously excluded or whose life path meant they pursued a different route need immediate and ongoing learning opportunities both in their own right and in light of the recognised leadership roles adult Traveller learners and graduates play in promoting education outcomes for their community.

Closing Comment

This is a key moment for Travellers in education. We recommend that the Department commit to comprehensively registering this in the forthcoming Strategy. We note with concern that Travellers are only mentioned once in the current Strategy. Recognising the importance of the Strategy for the Department's work in the period ahead, and the urgency of addressing Traveller education concerns, we urge you to ensure that these concerns are addressed comprehensively under all headings, including strategic goals, in the forthcoming Strategy.

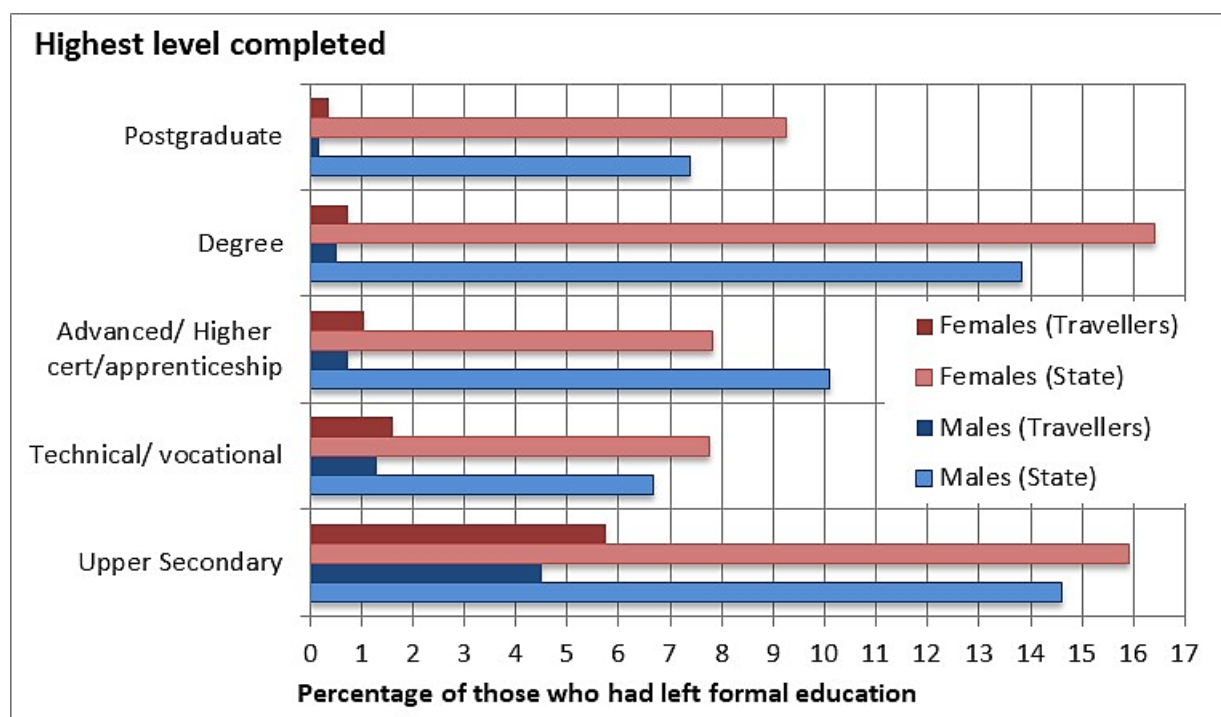
In light of all the above and the recognised exacerbation of existing and deep-seated Traveller and Roma educational disadvantage, we suggest, in addition to the goals outlined in the current strategy a further goal which reads:

Secure the right to equality of access participation and outcomes for all throughout the mainstream education system through targeted and resourced special measures to mitigate the education disadvantage experienced by marginalised and minority groups including Travellers and Roma.

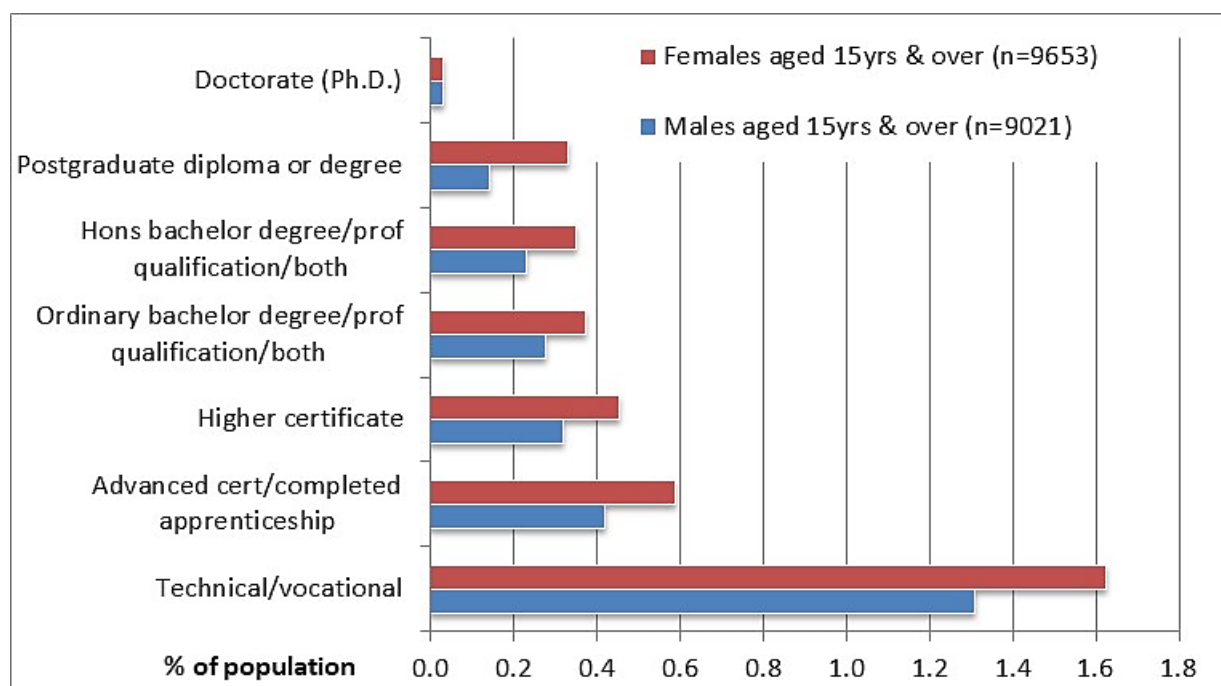
Appendix

The following charts (data from the 2016 Census) are indicators of the statistical profiles for Traveller education. Such data indicate the situation warranting the recommendations and arguments presented in this submission.

Comparative profiles of the national population and the Traveller population aged 15 years and over who have completed their education, by highest level completed



Travellers who have completed their education, by attainment level



Selected References

Central Statistics Office (2017). *Census 2016 Profile 8 - Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion*. https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Profile%20%20-%20Irish%20Travellers%20Ethnicity%20and%20Religion/Profile%20%20-%20Irish%20Travellers%20Ethnicity%20and%20Religion_statbank.asp?SP=Profile%20%20-%20Irish%20Travellers%20Ethnicity%20and%20Religion&Planguage=0

European Commission (2020). *Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, 2020-2030*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu_en

EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2020). *Roma and Travellers Survey 2018-2019*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2018/roma-and-travellers-survey-2018-2019#:~:text=The%20Roma%20and%20Travellers%20Survey,Swe-den%20and%20the%20United%20Kingdom.>

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Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the National Traveller Women's Forum (2020). *The Implications of COVID-19 for Traveller and Roma transfer to and progression within Higher Education*. Forum Report, May 2020. https://mcusercontent.com/ec6adb4654614b5b60b768f5c/files/4ec9e9bd-8128-4cdb-a65a-165840b3bf6a/Covid_Traveller_Higher_Education_v2_RESIZE.pdf