



# PAVEE POINT

## TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Submission to the Department of Employment  
Affairs and Social Protection on the forthcoming  
Pathways to Work Strategy 2020-2024

Date: September 2019

### 1. Introduction

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre is a national non-governmental organisation working to improve the quality of life, living circumstances, status and participation of Travellers and Roma.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's (DEASP) call for submissions on the next Pathways to Work strategy for the period 2020-2024. We also welcome the fact that it is the DEASP's intention that the forthcoming strategy will continue with a key focus on 'active inclusion' and "increasing labour market participation and improving employment outcomes" of groups most distanced from employment, and that members of the Traveller community are specifically named in this regard.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Summary of Recommendations**

Recommendation 1. Travellers and Roma should be named as a distinct target group in the forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy.

Recommendation 2. Data systems to monitor progress on the forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy, should include an ethnic identifier to ensure specific outcomes for Travellers and Roma can be measured.

Recommendation 3. The forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy should set out a number of targeted actions and mainstream approaches aimed at increasing the efficacy and quality of Traveller and Roma engagement with, and outcomes from the Public Employment Service.

Recommendation 4. The forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy should set out the DEASP's intended approach to discharge on its obligations under the public sector statutory equality and human rights duty.

## **3. The Situation and Experience of Travellers and Roma**

Travellers and Roma access to, and participation in employment is stymied by a range of barriers that individually and cumulatively have a significant impact on these communities. Key issues in this regard are: significantly lower levels of educational attainment, at all levels, in comparison to the majority population; high levels of reported discrimination in accessing education, employment, and key supports and services; failure by statutory stakeholders to accommodate cultural difference; and levels of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage that hinder access to education, training and employment networks and opportunities. For the Roma community there are additional barriers, namely: lack of access to state supports and benefits where Roma fail to satisfy the

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<sup>1</sup> Public Consultation: Pathways to Work Strategy Call for Submissions, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (website accessed September 2, 2019).

Habitual Residence Condition and/or where they cannot prove a right to reside;<sup>2</sup> low levels of proficiency in the English language; and for some Roma, low levels of literacy and numeracy in their language of origin.

### **3.1 Labour force participation**

Data from Census 2016 indicate that there were 10,653 Travellers in the labour force in 2016. Of these, 8,541 were unemployed and 2,112 were employed, giving an unemployment rate of 80% for Travellers, compared with 13% for the general population.<sup>3</sup> These data indicate that the labour force participation rate among Irish Travellers is 57%, compared with 61% for non-Travellers. Regarding Traveller women's participation: 972 were at work while 2,938 were looking after the home, representing 30% of Traveller women aged 15 or over.

Almost 1 in 8 (11%) Travellers indicated they were unable to work due to a disability, nearly three times the equivalent rate for the general population (4%).<sup>4</sup>

A 2018 report by the National Economic and Social Council examined the experiences and services interaction of those in households where no-one is working or where there is only marginal attachment to the labour force. The report notes that the groups most likely to be facing multiple reasons for unemployment were Travellers and African migrants. Multiple factors such as: literacy issues, lack of work experience, childcare responsibilities, and in some cases family disabilities, compounded the distance these households are from employment. Traveller women were identified as having the greatest number of employment barriers in this regard.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.2 Educational disadvantage**

Educational disadvantage and consequent poor levels of educational attainment are key factors accounting for the significant employment gap between Travellers and Roma and the majority population.

Census 2016 data indicate that: 13% of Traveller women are educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69% of the majority population; and 57% of Traveller men are educated to at most Primary level, compared to 14% of the majority population. A 2017 report by the ESRI, indicates that: 91% of Travellers leave school at age 16 or younger, compared to 25% of non-Travellers; and 28% of Traveller children leave formal schooling

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<sup>2</sup> [Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and the Department of Justice and Equality \(2018\). Roma in Ireland: a National Needs Assessment.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Census 2016, Profile 8: Irish Travellers, Central Statistics Office.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> National Economic and Social Council (June 2018) [Moving from Welfare to Work: Low Intensity Households and the Quality of Supportive Services.](#) NESDO No 146. Page 19.

before the age 13, compared to 1% of non-Travellers.<sup>6</sup> As of March 2019, there were only sixty-one Traveller students participating in higher education.<sup>7</sup>

National data on the Roma community indicate significant levels of educational disadvantage for adult Roma, with the average duration of schooling being only five years.<sup>8</sup> In addition, 39% of adults in households reported that they had never been to school, with a marked gender difference in this regard (41% of women reporting they have never been to school, compared to 22% of men).<sup>9</sup> An additional barrier for Roma adults is the low levels of proficiency in English (71% of respondents reported having difficulty in reading English forms).<sup>10</sup> This, coupled with low levels of educational attainment, mean that employment supports to Roma need to consider literacy issues as well as language barriers for this community.

### 3.3 Employment-related discrimination

Discrimination plays a significant role in regard to the employment gap between the Traveller and Roma communities and the majority population. The ESRI 2017 report on the situation and experience of the Traveller community found that while almost two-thirds of the employment gap, between Travellers and non-Travellers, is accounted for by educational disadvantage, when the data are adjusted to account for education, age, gender, marital status, and the presence of children, the gap still remains significant. The authors note that additional barriers such as “direct discrimination and generalised prejudice” are “undoubtedly” a factor.<sup>11</sup>

They conclude that “mainstreaming employment services in a context where prejudice and educational disadvantage persist may well be premature.”<sup>12</sup>

Data for the Roma community indicate that 79% of Roma reported being discriminated against in attempting to access employment.<sup>13</sup> In addition, 84% of Roma reported being discriminated against in attempting to access social protection and almost two-thirds of Roma who were successful in obtaining a social welfare payment, felt they were discriminated against in accessing payments. Roma with fluent English were less likely to report experiencing discrimination in accessing social protection, than Roma with limited English.<sup>14</sup>

## 4. Recommendations and Rationale

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<sup>6</sup> Watson, D. Kenny, O. and McGinnity, F. (January 2017). [A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland. 71: Research Series Number 56, 15](#). The Economic and Social Research Institute, Dublin. Page 29.

<sup>7</sup> Data supplied by the Government of Ireland to the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (28 May 2019). “Comments of the Irish Government of Ireland on the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Ireland”.

<sup>8</sup> Pavee Point and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018) op cit. Page 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid Page 70.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Page 69.

<sup>11</sup> Watson, D. et al (2017) op cit. Pages ix and 40.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 77.

<sup>13</sup> Pavee Point and the Department of Justice and Equality (2018) op cit. Page 51.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Page 52.

**Recommendation 1.** Travellers and Roma should be named as a distinct target group in the forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy.

**Recommendation 2.** Data systems to monitor progress on the forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy, should include an ethnic identifier to ensure specific outcomes for Travellers and Roma can be measured.

### **Rationale**

The significant and entrenched levels of employment and educational inequality and discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma require that these groups are named, as requiring targeted measures, in the forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy.

The current Pathways to Work Strategy 2016-2020 reflected a shift in focus from 'activation in a time of recession' to 'activation in a time of recovery'. This involved the introduction of the principle of 'active inclusion', as part of the DEASP's strategic orientation to address the needs of those most distanced from employment. At the conclusion of the current Pathways to Work Strategy, with the economy experiencing almost full employment, it is appropriate that the forthcoming strategy would continue with a primary focus on active inclusion and addressing long-term unemployment and the needs of specific groups that are most distanced from the labour market.

In the context of the DEASP's pivot towards the principle of 'active inclusion', a number of specific groups were identified in the 2016-2020 Strategy: lone parents, people with disabilities, young people, and people with caring responsibilities. It is disappointing, however, that Travellers and Roma were not named as target groups. It is also regrettable that the recently published Future Jobs Ireland 2019, which outlines the strategic approach to employment to 2025, does not reference Travellers and Roma as specific target groups, within pillar four: increasing participation in the labour force.<sup>15</sup> Given the exceptionally high levels of unemployment and employment-based discrimination for these communities it is imperative that they are named as target groups in key employment strategies.

In order to measure progress on targeted measures for Travellers and Roma, included in the forthcoming strategy, an ethnic identifier should be included in data gathering systems. The provision of data disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity will allow for improved equality monitoring and evidence-based policy development and programme planning.

**Recommendation 3.** The forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy should set out a number of targeted actions and mainstream approaches aimed at increasing the efficacy and quality of Traveller and Roma engagement with, and outcomes from the Public Employment Service.

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<sup>15</sup> Government of Ireland (2019) [Future Jobs Ireland- 2019- Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy](#). Department of the Taoiseach and the department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

## Rationale

Labour market interventions to address unemployment, during and after the recession, had little or no impact in achieving positive outcomes for members of the Traveller and Roma communities. While employment services can be effective in supporting access to the labour market for the majority population, they are inadequate to respond to the multiple and compounding barriers to employment and training that Travellers and Roma continue to experience and they are inadequate in responding to people of working age who are not in the jobseeker cohort.

The specific issues facing Travellers and Roma of working age, as outlined in section 3. of this submission, underscore the need for tailored approaches by the Public Employment Service (PES) and its delivery agent Intreo, in order to improve Traveller and Roma employment and training pathways. This includes extending the PES beyond jobseekers to address the needs of others of working age, such as members of the Roma community who may be deemed ineligible for welfare payments due failure to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition and/or where they cannot prove a right to reside.

The current situation, of almost full employment in the state, allows for an orientation of the PES to more effectively focus on the needs of distinct groups that are most distanced from employment. This is in keeping with the first pillar of the DEASP's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020, which commits to putting the service user at the centre of policy and service delivery. It is also in keeping with the current Pathways to Work Strategy and its reorientation towards the principle of 'active inclusion'.

In order to more effectively address the needs of marginalised people of working age, including Travellers and Roma, the following actions could usefully be incorporated in the forthcoming strategy:

- the key elements of the PES: Intreo, JobPath and the Local Employment Centres could usefully undertake an equality impact assessment, of their services, to include a focus on how their values and approaches address the specific needs of Travellers and Roma. This impact assessment, and subsequent actions, could constitute a key deliverable under the DEASP's public sector duty obligations.
- the cross-departmental working group, established in 2016, under the current Pathways to Work Strategy<sup>16</sup> could usefully develop targeted initiatives to support:
  - Traveller and Roma enterprise, in conjunction with the Local Enterprise offices,
  - an increase in Traveller and Roma participation in apprenticeship, in conjunction with employers, Solas and education and training boards,<sup>17</sup>
  - the development of Traveller and Roma training and employment pathways through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, and mainstream employment services.

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<sup>16</sup> This working group includes representation from the DEASP, the Department of Education and Skills, Solas, and the Higher Education Authority.

<sup>17</sup> This is in line with the recent review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship, which sets out five areas for action to increase the diversity of participants on apprenticeship schemes. SOLAS (November 2018). [Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship](#). SOLAS, Dublin.

**Recommendation 4.** The forthcoming Pathways to Work strategy should set out the DEASP's intended approach to discharge on its obligations under the public sector statutory equality and human rights duty.

### **Rationale**

The DEASP's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 makes reference to the Department's commitment to discharging on its obligations under the public sector duty. The Strategy is silent, however, on how this is to be achieved.

In compliance with its statutory requirements under the S42 equality and human rights public sector duty,<sup>18</sup> the DEASP, and the bodies under its remit, are required to undertake an assessment of the relevant key equality and human rights issues for policy beneficiaries and service recipients and to make public that assessment and a related plan of action to address the issues identified.<sup>19</sup> This includes an assessment of the key equality and human rights issues for members of the Traveller and Roma communities.

Many of the key issues of relevance for these communities are outlined in opening section of this submission, key issues in this regard are:

- high levels of discrimination experienced by Traveller and Roma job seekers,
- high levels of discrimination experienced by Travellers and Roma in accessing education and training,
- disproportionately higher levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities, in comparison to the majority population,
- poor educational outcomes for Travellers and Roma, in comparison to the majority population,
- Travellers of working age are three times more likely, than their settled counterparts, to report having a disability,
- the impact of regulatory barriers (the HRC and the right to reside) prevent many Roma from accessing employment and training-related payments and services,
- low levels of proficiency in the English language and low levels of literacy and numeracy in language of origin, present additional barriers for Roma attempting to access employment and related information and services,
- Traveller and Roma participation in Community Employment and community development-based initiatives are important sources of developing and enhancing employment pathways for these communities,
- there is insufficient attention to the identity, situation, and experience of Travellers and Roma, in the planning, design and delivery of employment services, and
- the absence of an ethnic identifier, in key data collection systems, hampers equality monitoring of key policies and services.

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<sup>18</sup> S42 The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

<sup>19</sup> S42.2(a)(b) The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The above issues could usefully form the basis of the DEASP's assessment of equality and human rights issues for Travellers and Roma, as part of its work to implement the public sector duty.