



**Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts,
Sports and Media on the Development of Local and Community Arts**

March 2023

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('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 majority population, who work together in partnership to address the needs of Travellers and Roma as minority ethnic groups experiencing exclusion, marginalisation and racism. Working for social justice, solidarity and human rights, the central aim of Pavee Point is to contribute to improvement in the quality of life and living circumstances of Irish Travellers and Roma.

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Overview & summary recommendations: Irish Travellers have a unique position in the history of arts, culture and heritage of Ireland. Promoting Traveller arts and cultural heritage and Traveller participation and engagement with local authority cultural work requires a dual approach whereby Travellers are included in mainstream events and institutions but, in addition, specific and targeted measures are needed to counteract the impact of systemic racism and exclusion. Traveller projects need to be respected as producers and makers of cultural heritage in terms of traditional Traveller crafts and, also, Traveller participation in music, song, media, visual arts, poetry and drama among others. Traveller access to Traveller culture and heritage is also an important aspect of an overall intercultural approach that would see minority cultures and identity within local authority areas being affirmed, celebrated and facilitated.

Recommendations

- 1. Explicitly name Travellers & Roma as minority ethnic groups** in local authority and national arts and culture plans and identify the investments that are required for these communities to engage and participate in the arts.
- 2. National Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (NTRIS):** Local authority arts and culture plans need to be linked with the forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) and the National Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (NTRIS) based on the new 2030 EU Framework for Traveller & Roma Participation which reflects EU FRA research on discrimination and racism against Travellers and Roma. Resource, design, develop and monitor the plans with Travellers, Traveller organisations & Roma participation.
- 3. Celebrate, promote and make visible Traveller arts and cultural heritage** within the arts and cultural heritage work of local authorities through their spaces, cultural events and cultural experiences. Promoting Traveller arts and cultural heritage and Traveller participation and engagement with local authority cultural work requires mainstream and targeted measures.
- 4. Ethnic Data & Equality monitoring: public bodies,** including local authorities, should collect and use ethnic data across administrative systems, in a human rights and culturally sensitive manner, to inform policy and provide culturally appropriate, mainstream and targeted arts and culture services and supports for minority ethnic groups including Travellers & Roma
- 5. Funding streams:** local authorities, local arts infrastructure and LCDs / LDCs should be resourced to provide arts funding streams, directly available to local Traveller organisations and groups, to underpin the importance of collective community development for real rights realisation & recognition and inclusion of community development work as human rights practice – ‘working with, not for, people’. Funding should also be provided (in conjunction with NTRIS) for community development projects for Roma in areas where there is a sizeable Roma population.

6. Gap between EDI strategies and implementation: Travellers are a named group in some local authority and in a range of organisations' equality and diversity statements in line with Arts Council EDI strategy, NTRIS and IHREC Act 2014 - this is a very welcome development, but a gap is arising between the positive intention behind this commitment and implementation of schemes, bursaries, opportunities for participation on courses, workshops. Arts bodies have invited applications, emphasising that Travellers and other excluded groups are encouraged to apply but few do. Additional measures are needed to bridge this gap and build engagement strategies in conjunction with Traveller organisations. Recommendations for local authorities and arts bodies:

- Explore how best to develop collaborative work with Travellers and Traveller organisations and improve the community development aspect of collaborative art practice
- Create conditions whereby Travellers have ownership over the interpretation and articulation of their identity (contemporary understandings) and culture, including engagement with the arts
- Develop long term sustainable approaches to building relationships and capacity in local authorities to encourage and support Traveller participation in the arts - in conjunction with Travellers and Traveller organisations
- Provide ring-fenced funding at both central and local level for Traveller arts projects led by Travellers and Traveller organisations
- Support Traveller representation and participation on relevant advisory and decision-making bodies at local level
- Promote clear anti-racist messaging in relation to projects funded by local authority and especially through its arts infrastructure.

7. Intersectionality & Sexism in the arts is now more widely known and acknowledged. Traveller women have noted the lack of opportunities for Traveller women but also when the arts sector seeks to build Traveller inclusion initiatives, it tends to defer to Traveller men as if they speak for the whole community. Avoid gendered expectations especially at local level and support Traveller women to be involved in the arts. It's a difficult space for any woman but especially Traveller and Roma women.

8. Create spaces and opportunities for collaboration. Often non-Traveller artists can avail of collaborations to work with Travellers, but it is they who are funded and power dynamics in such situations need to be acknowledged which means naming racism and unconscious bias.

9. Resource Traveller and Roma organisations and explore mechanisms to support Travellers and Traveller organisations arts and culture work - to be part of local and national festivals and other cultural endeavours, for example, local authorities' 'Per Cent for Art Scheme' (1% of the cost of a capital construction project) for commissioning a work of art could target Traveller artists to participate or include Travellers in the artist in residence schemes.

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('Pavee Point') welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports and Media on the Development of Local and Community Arts. We also commend the Committee for ensuring the visibility of Travellers in the work of the Committee.

Introduction

Our submission gives a brief overview of Pavee Point engagement with Traveller arts and culture. It also highlights our concerns at the marginalisation of Travellers in the arts and culture sector and the need for the explicit inclusion of Travellers in mainstream institutions and activities also in addition to the need for targeted measures and resources to support this work.

Pavee Point's priority is to collaborate with other actors in the field to promote policies that focus on Traveller and Roma inclusion by creating conditions for their participation and for supporting traditions, living arts, culture and evolving identities. Pavee Point seeks both targeted and mainstream measures for Traveller and Roma artists and arts workers. We have direct experience of the value and potential of the arts in programmes related to specific issues of human rights and social justice, and as an essential component in the collective community work approach which underpins all our work. Art can also play an important role in self-determination and self-expression.

Our work in this area is informed by a number of international instruments and national frameworks:

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

In those States, in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

The UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 23

...positive measures by States may also be necessary to protect the identity of a minority and the rights of its members to enjoy and develop their culture and language and to practise their religion, in community with the other members of the group.

UN Framework Convention on National Minorities

Article 5: Support for the preservation and development of Irish Travellers' identities and culture

Recommendation 33: The Advisory Committee calls on the Irish authorities to continue supporting civil society organisations working with Travellers and Roma in their efforts to preserve and develop their identities and cultures including nomadism, and to consult them on the possibility of creating a permanent cultural centre with sustainable public funding, one important task of which would be to collect and preserve the history stories, legends, songs and identities of Travellers, including in the Cant language.

The National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (currently being reviewed), has three objectives and nine actions on Traveller and Roma Culture and Identity. The objectives are:

- Traveller culture, identity and heritage is supported and valued within Irish society.
- Travellers and Roma should be supported to develop, preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
- Intergenerational learning, cultural continuity and positive self-identity for Travellers and Roma should be facilitated.

There is also a commitment to support Traveller and Roma cultural heritage centres and communications media to develop and promote their culture, stories and music of Travellers and Roma, including support for accessible cultural archives, to ensure that Travellers, Roma and members of the settled population can utilise and engage with materials on Traveller and Roma cultural heritage

Government's Culture 2025 Policy Framework (updated May 2021)

champions the right for citizens across Ireland to participate in the cultural and creative life of the nation and recognises the value of creativity to individual and collective wellbeing.

Culture Ireland Strategy (2022 – 25)

commits to putting 'equality, diversity and inclusion at the centre of decision-making', with the goal of developing "a plan to ensure the inclusion of artists from underrepresented sectors of society, including new communities."

Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre and Arts and Culture Work

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre is a national NGO committed to the realisation of human rights for Irish Travellers and Roma in Ireland. Established in 1985, the aim of Pavee Point is to contribute to the improvement in quality of life and living circumstances for Travellers and Roma by working for social justice, solidarity and human rights using a collective community development approach.

One of Pavee Point's Strategic Goals is to develop better knowledge and understanding of Traveller culture and identity to promote (a) pride and engagement with and by Travellers and Roma with their culture and the arts overall and (b) better awareness and acknowledgment of Travellers culture contributions nationally. Pavee Point has promoted this work since its inception and believed a community work approach could empower and develop self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence to enable greater participation in Irish society. Pavee Point then commenced a series of activities to promote Traveller culture and identity often incorporating arts work. This included promoting Traveller musicianship and singing¹, the Traveller language Cant, publications including 'Travellers Nomads of Ireland'

¹ • Whisht Irish Travellers Folktales and Songs, The Cassidys 1967 (2002)
• Travellers and Fellow Travellers - Keepers of the Flame 2005
• The Rainey's 2006
• Songs of the Irish Travellers (2007)

1997 and 'Traveller Ways Traveller Words' 1992, and running events to highlight Traveller storytelling and other cultural elements as part of our Cultural Heritage programme in the 1990s. An important validation and symbolic recognition occurred recently when Cant and tin smithing were included in the national inventory of intangible cultures. In 1995, Pavee Point hosted the National Traveller Arts Festival and, and since then various initiatives have celebrated Traveller culture including Citizen Traveller, Traveller Focus Week – now Traveller Pride, St. Patrick's Day Parade and other events.

Over the years, Pavee Point has worked with prestigious cultural institutions in arts and culture projects on Traveller tin smithing and the Beady Pocket with the National Museum of Ireland; several plays with the Abbey Theatre, Fighting Words with Roddy Doyle and young Travellers, Traveller EU Culture 2000 programme re-enacting life on the road including journeys, music and stories; Artist in Residence in Fire station Buckingham Street, Traveller Collection with the Dublin Municipal Gallery the Hugh Lane, CREATE and artist Seamus Nolan; Pavee Roads Home with Dublin City Culture Company and the National Library of Ireland and Traveller Community Mapping with Maynooth University Geography Department and the Irish Research Council.

Pavee Point has also attended events organised by Travellers and Traveller organisations including plays, concerts, book launches, poetry reading, festivals, awards and arts exhibitions.

Pavee Point Partnership with the Arts Council

Pavee Point contributed to the development of the Arts Council Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy & Strategy and recently commenced a partnership with the Arts Council to increase Traveller inclusion, visibility and participation in arts, culture and support and promote the associated contributions of Travellers and Traveller organisations in Irish society.

The aims and objectives of this partnership are to:

- build on the current arts activity of Traveller organisations to support the future development of ambitious arts initiatives and practices
- support individual members of the Traveller community, to engage in the arts as professional artists and as other arts workers, project participants, audience members and volunteers
- promote mainstreaming and inclusion of Traveller arts and culture in cultural institutions.

As part of this, Pavee Point is currently undertaking a mapping process of current and past Travellers arts and cultural practice and provision nationally. Consultation with Travellers and Traveller organisations is also a vital part of this process to contribute a better understanding and analysis of Traveller experience in current policy context for arts, culture and heritage.

When completed, this process will help to inform and shape further development in terms of Traveller arts opportunities and that local and community arts infrastructure, services,

resources and facilities can develop measures to support access, participation and positive outcomes.

As one Traveller musician has noted “There isn't a young upcoming generation on the professional music scene. Therefore, it would be very important that we nurture talent and start inspiring projects that can bring in young Travellers.”

Marginalisation of Irish Travellers and the Need for a Community Development Approach

Travellers are among the most marginalised groups in Ireland and experience systemic racism and discrimination, resulting in inequality of access, participation and outcomes across all policy areas. For example, educational attainment among Travellers continues to lag significantly behind that of non-Travellers. Among Traveller females, just 13.3% were educated to upper secondary level or above, compared with almost 7 in 10 (69.1%) of the non-Traveller population. Nearly 6 in 10 male Travellers (57.2%) were educated to primary level at most, compared with just 13.6% of non-Traveller males.

In terms of employment, the vast majority of Travellers, 8,541 (80.2%), are unemployed. According to Census 2016, almost 1 in 8 Travellers (11.3%) reported being unable to work due to a disability, which was almost three times the rate of the non-Traveller population (4.3%).

In the context of marginalisation and exclusion there is a particular need for inclusion measures, including through the arts, that empower Travellers and help to build effective participation.

Paramount to this is working in partnership with Travellers and Traveller organisations – many of whom are already engaged in arts and cultural activities. The current national and local Traveller organisations began to emerge from the early 1990s onwards, many supported on their development by Pavee Point initiatives of the day. They represent a strong Traveller infrastructure rooted in community development principles and which aim to achieve collective outcomes for Travellers. They are well placed to engage with the Traveller community on arts and culture activities, projects, capacity building, training but need to be resourced to do this work, for example, to develop their own arts projects, navigate funding applications, build capacity and skills such as curation and other more technical skills and build links with other organisations to ensure Travellers are part of the arts community.

Some Traveller organisations are making great strides in this area – but others, while interested may need support.

Traveller organisations engaging in arts work include Navan Travellers Living History project, Cork Traveller Women’s Network’s ‘Toraig an Tobar’ Traveller culture exhibition in Cork Public Museum, Donegal Travellers Project exhibitions with Donegal County Museum and the Regional Cultural Centre, the Misleór Festival run by Galway Traveller Movement which

celebrates nomadic cultures and creates a platform that allows people who share similar historical backgrounds to meet, explore each other's cultural heritage and share it with the wider public.

Such initiatives have the potential to create professional work opportunities and inspire artists. They can also actively involve Travellers through community engagement and develop further projects and initiatives such as Misleór on Screen, a symposium to explore opportunities for Travellers in TV and film.

Agencies like the Irish Writers Centre, amongst others, invite Travellers to apply for grants, bursaries, to participate in writers' workshops or seminars, but few Travellers if any apply. Sometimes, the lack of time for ongoing outreach to Traveller organisations and vice versa can be problematic given limited resources and with many groups to be targeted.

Active participation and engagement with Traveller organisations to identify the supports required to further develop this work will be crucial in building Traveller inclusion in local and community arts. This will require building on and facilitating ongoing opportunities for participation, skills development, mentoring and leadership opportunities. The mapping process begun by Pavee Point, as part of our partnership with the Arts Council, aims to contribute to this wider goal and to give added value to the work in arts and culture currently underway by Travellers and Traveller organisations.

Local and Community Arts Structures

Local authority arts officers: There are 31 arts services in City and County Local Authorities across Ireland. Arts officers are employed to deliver equitable access by all of the many and diverse communities to excellent arts practice, as practitioners, participants and audience members. There is greater openness and genuine interest in recent years from government, the Arts Council and local arts services, which is a welcome development.

However, the number of Traveller artists and Travellers engaging with art activities on both professional and community levels remains generally low – while there are notable exceptions.

Travellers must be explicitly named as a target group in plans and strategies in order for positive action to take place. Furthermore, stronger links need to be built between arts services and Traveller organisations to close the gap between policy commitments and implementation.

In addition, to understand the lived experience of Irish Travellers, anti-racism and anti-discrimination training in line with the new National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) needs to be delivered to local authority and other key stakeholders including arts and cultural service personnel, including librarians, heritage officers, LCDCs and LDCs.

Useful lessons can be drawn from a recently published 'Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making' published by the Department of Rural & Community Development and Pobal and with input from Pavee Point and other Traveller groups. The Guide puts forward the following suggestions for effective engagement of Travellers in decision making arenas:

- **Take a partnership approach**
Engage Travellers early in any process to set the agenda and identify key issues, priorities and solutions.
- **Understand racism and discrimination**
Incorporate anti-racist approaches into policy, practice and staff training.
- **Put ethnic equality monitoring in place**
Collect ethnic data using a human rights framework.
- **Make sure policies are inclusive**
Travellers need to be named specifically in policies. Undertake special measures where necessary to address inequality and offset the negative impacts of discrimination.
- **Ensure adequate resources for effective participation**
Make sure all stakeholders have parity of esteem and that there is space for capacity building and shared learning for all involved.

Local Arts Centres: Recent decades have seen the development of a nationwide infrastructure of arts centres, many initiated and funded by local authorities and the Arts Council and supported through central government capital schemes. Like the points above, Travellers need to be a named target group in the work of arts centres to develop effective engagement with Travellers and Traveller organisations.

Artist in the Community Scheme, CREATE funded by Arts Council: The Artist in the Community Scheme offers funding to enable artists and communities of place/or interest to work collaboratively on contemporary arts projects. This scheme is managed by Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in social and community contexts, on behalf of the Arts Council. In the context of this scheme and the wider area of collaboration, there is a need to develop and promote ethical principles of collaboration. It is important that collaborations result in benefits and positive outcomes for Traveller communities and leave a sustainable legacy that can be developed. There is often a power differential between Travellers and those in the general population seeking collaborations which can result in exploitation and, more often, expenditure of time and energy with little or no collective benefit to the community.

Visual Artists and Writers in Prisons: Travellers are an over-represented group in prison (IPRT reports) and visual artists and writers working in prisons are an important resource for social inclusion. Anti-racism training and the importance of a community development approach to engage and work with young as well as older Traveller prisoners, including women, are essential tools to address systemic racism.

Basic Income for the Arts: This new pilot scheme offers artists with a proven record of arts and culture work an opportunity to apply for approximately €330 per week on top of what they earn as a self-employed artist. However, the pilot scheme with 2,000 places received over 4 times the number of applications. It would be positive to see this initiative mainstreamed with special targeted measures included.

Traveller Wellbeing through Creativity – Pilot Initiative

Traveller Wellbeing Through Creativity is a new initiative that has been developed by the Department of Health (Healthy Ireland Programme), the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Creative Ireland Programme), the HSE, the National Social Inclusion Office and the Arts Council working in partnership to support Traveller health and wellbeing through creative engagement.

This programme works specifically with Travellers and Traveller organisations, which is very welcome. It has funded five projects to date and has recently opened another call for applications. While it is too early to assess the benefit of this scheme some initial observations can be made:

Duration: So far, the scheme operates within a 6-month period and organisations must start and finish the project within 6 months. However, for meaningful work and for organisations to build on their work and skills in this area – a more sustained approach is needed.

Building capacity: Not all Traveller organisations have resources to run art projects and there is a need for Traveller organisations to be supported to do this.

Ethnic Data Collection: Ethnic equality monitoring, inclusive of a universal ethnic identifier (in line with human rights standards) is required to identify discrimination, combat racism and promote equality. Ethnic data would also enable arts, culture and heritage policies and measures to be monitored to inform and shape further policy making. Pavee Point advocates for the collection of disaggregated data on basis of ethnicity (inclusive of Travellers) within a human rights framework which means:

- a universal question must be asked of everyone, not just minorities, which is answered voluntarily and on the basis of self-identification
- collected data is aggregated and anonymised to avoid identification of specific individuals.
- Data must only be used for the purpose for which it is collected, be available in a timely manner and be analysed in consultation with organisations representing minority ethnic groups.

Data on ethnicity is an important equality tool in monitoring and evaluating outcomes in terms of minority ethnic groups. Pavee Point is currently contributing to the development of the National Equality Data Strategy.

Traveller Women in the Arts: Traveller women experience discrimination as women, as Travellers and as Traveller women. Women within the arts often struggle within a male dominated sector. This struggle is even more difficult for Traveller women who face sexism layered with discrimination from the general population and sexism also in their own communities. Traveller women need special measures to support and include them in arts initiatives including local and community arts.