



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Report of Pavee Point Travellers and Roma in Education and Training Roundtable

November 22nd 2023



RETHINK
IRELAND

SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



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Introduction

This Report of the Pavee Point Education and Training Roundtable held in Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre Dublin on November 22nd 2023, seeks to provide an overview of the inputs observations, and discussions as well as the recommendations made then. It is very difficult in these pages to capture adequately the commitment and concerns which informed the lively dialogue of the day, an in-person event in which over eighty persons from all over the country participated.

The format for the Roundtable sought to make space for plenty of participation so the report includes a number of the comments made during the early buzz groups, provides a synopsis of the workshop recommendations and in Appendix 1 provides accounts and feedback from the workshops. The comments from Departmental officials who participated are also included. All participants were especially concerned that the upcoming Traveller Roma Education Strategy would make real progress for Roma and Traveller Education rights, and real progress in addressing the barriers including systemic racism and discrimination already recognised in the National Action Plan against Racism, in achieving this.

We thank our funders and in particular, thank each of you present for your varied and diverse contributions. We hope the report will be of some value in bringing your work forward at this time.

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Tracey Reilly – Community Worker, Education Programme Pavee Point

Tracey thanked participants for attending the Roundtable and welcomed the broad range of stakeholders present including Traveller and Roma organisations and people from the education sector.

She said that the Roundtable builds on Forums held in association with the National Traveller Women's Forum during COVID and on Pavee Points education and training Roundtable in 2022. This work she said, reflects Pavee Points ongoing priority focus on education since its beginnings as Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group and its first education programme from which a number of respected Traveller leaders and workers including Martin Collins, Pavee Points Co-Director emerged.

Tracey said that in the year since Pavee Points last Roundtable, we have seen a number of challenges as well as developments for Traveller and Roma education rights. This Education and Training Roundtable, she said, aimed to provide an opportunity to discuss, share views and hear about ongoing and new initiatives at all levels from Early Years through to First and Second Levels and Further and Higher Education, including the National Traveller Roma Education Strategy, the Further and Higher Education Equity of Access Plan and associated extension of SUSI grants. The event reflected Pavee Point's vision for parity of education access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in a



truly inclusive transformative system which acknowledges and addresses barriers including racism and discrimination.

Tracey then welcomed Senator Eileen Flynn, thanked her for taking the time to be present, acknowledged her concern about education rights and asked her to address the Roundtable.

Senator Eileen Flynn

Eileen thanked Pavee Point for inviting her to speak and noted the importance of keeping the conversation on Traveller education alive.

She reflected on the importance that Travellers have placed on education and described how in the early 1960's a school developed by Travellers themselves in Dublin was knocked down by the local authority. She spoke of the efforts of Traveller women to ensure that their children went to school and the extra efforts that they must make to get their children through the education system. Travellers have waited too long, she said for the development of an education strategy that will ensure equal outcomes for them.

Implementation, she said is key as many Travellers have experienced strategies being developed without implementation and do not want to see a repetition of this in the new education strategy. The challenge is to ensure that Traveller and Roma voices are heard in the implementation processes building on all of the good work that has been done by Traveller organisations through the decades.

Eileen spoke of the mental health crisis in the community and the rise in drug use as key problems that need to be addressed. She highlighted the vicious circle of poverty, trauma, and incarceration that many Travellers are caught in that could be avoided if the education system served them as it should. *"We need to value our young people and our older people who are looking for a better quality of life"*, she said, *"life should not be so hard in 2023 to get our children a good education...we need to normalise Travellers in works places, in the local supermarkets, working as solicitors as nurses, doctors whatever it may be."* Eileen noted that over 12% of Traveller students in secondary school are on reduced timetables. These are not just statistics she said, they are children who are being pushed to the sidelines of our education system.

She highlighted the need for further work in ensuring strengthened engagement of the Roma community in all aspects of work on Traveller and Roma rights.



Anastasia Crickley – Chairperson, Pavee Point

In her opening remarks Anastasia underlined the current time as a key and crucial moment for Roma and Traveller education and training rights and for making progress at all levels from Early Childhood Education and Care to Doctoral as well as in the Training and Lifelong Learning spheres. In the Training and Lifelong Learning arena, the Literacy Strategy provides a new space, as does the Apprenticeship Strategy, she said, but a Traveller and Roma Training Employment Plan is needed. In the Higher Education Sector, the National Access Plan for Equity of Access 2022 - 2028 like its predecessor has Traveller targets and a commitment to Roma participation. The Traveller targets have not been met to date, she said, but have put a clear focus on Traveller participation with consequent requests to universities and higher education institutions to support this participation and associated resources from DFHERIS for both Traveller students and colleges.

Such targeted initiatives linked to the mainstream, she said, need to be a key part of the National Traveller Roma Education Strategy announced by the Minister for Education in July, and for which consultations with Travellers and Roma will soon be starting. The Strategy while a commitment in the Programme for Government has, she reminded participants, been campaigned for since 2006 including by many in the room today.

The inclusive approach to the development of the Strategy promised by Department of Education is to be welcomed, but it will need considerable capacity to hear sometimes hard messages if it is to be carried through, as well as ongoing work with the Traveller and Roma Advisory Group. The Traveller Roma Education Strategy, needs to put parity of access participation and outcomes for Roma and Travellers at all levels at its centre, alongside attaining visibility and positions for Travellers and Roma in the diversity of roles which exist throughout the system; inclusion in and de-colonisation of the curriculum as it pertains to them and addressing of historical and current discrimination and systemic racism whether on purpose or in effect.

To achieve any of this the Strategy needs to be informed by disaggregated data collected from *all* pupils by personnel, trained and comfortable in its use using a human rights-based approach, to provide the basis for essential ethnic equality monitoring. The data now becoming available which will be presented in the paper being produced by our colleague Mairin Kenny shows that despite the barriers outlined, Travellers are making education progress - arguably faster than the non-Traveller population did over the past one hundred years but still far below the education ambition that Travellers are entitled to hold. The lack of reliable data on Roma participation needs to be addressed and another key priority for Roma participation is availability of child benefit irrespective of the Habitual Residence Condition.



The problems with education providers and their associated power dynamics she said, also needed to be tackled in law, policy, and system reform which will require among other things, mandatory and examined pre-service education and training on racism as well as ongoing in-service updates, again as outlined in the Governments National Action Plan against Racism. This can be supplemented and reinforced by appropriate inspectorate interventions and involvement throughout the system.

We need, she said, to acknowledge in the Strategy and in other Education and Training initiatives the progress and attainments which have been made, the individuals who against the odds have made their way through the system and attained the highest awards, and the initiatives which have supported them including in particular the initiatives by national and local Traveller organisations.

The collective role of Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma using a Community Work approach has helped shape a rights agenda and sustained the ongoing work required to action its implementation and impact. Anastasia said looked forward to the morning and committed Pavee Point to sharing the days discussions with all participants and all concerned with making policy for rights and progress.



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Traveller & Roma Education and Training: Your Experiences & Issues

Buzz Groups

Hiding identity is common for Roma children in schools – children don't want others to know their identity *"They have to hide who they are"*.

Maintaining Travellers and Roma in ETB programmes can be difficult.

Roma should have a chance to shape the education strategy to ensure the needs of Travellers and Roma are met.

Travellers lack opportunities in getting work experience because of who they are and in many cases, hide their identity.

Roma girls who adhere to traditional dress norms feel they can't go through the system.

Many question what will be there for them when they leave school.

Parents of children transitioning from primary to post primary are missing information and getting little support.

Language is a significant barrier for the Roma community.

Lack of expectations of Travellers remains as does+ lack of engagement of parents including on management committees.

Roma mothers especially experience discrimination – schools know they are Roma because of how they dress.

Experiences at 3rd level can involve feelings of isolation and unconscious bias leading to lack of progression.



Rudolf Simonic – Roma Community Worker, Pavee Point

Rudolf explained his role in Pavee Point as being about the promotion of Roma rights to education and employment. As a father of 3 children who have gone through the education system in Ireland, he spoke of how he has seen first-hand, the importance of and need for, dedicated supports and policies for Traveller and Roma children in education. In this context, he highlighted the importance of looking at the whole education system from early years through to further education and training and higher education.

He described how many of the Roma families he works with face difficulties in accessing education due to poverty and social exclusion. In 2018 the Pavee Point Roma Needs Assessment¹ found that 25% of Roma children had gone to school hungry and almost 60% struggled to pay for uniforms and books. According to the Needs Assessment, many Roma families are unable to access the child supports available in the state such as child benefit and back to school allowances if they are not deemed to be habitually resident and they are also ineligible for social welfare payments. Poverty, Rudolf pointed out, can also lead to Roma children leaving school early when they feel they need to contribute to their household.

Parents, he said, may also have had their own negative experiences of racism, discrimination, and segregation in school, or may not have had any formal education themselves which impacts on their engagement with schools. This is something that schools need to be aware of. They also need to ensure that there are language supports/interpreters and a greater understanding of the needs of the Roma community.

He highlighted the experiences of racist bullying that Roma children can face in schools, with many hiding their Roma identity as a result. Some Roma also report that schools have lower expectations of them because of their identity and are not encouraged or treated equally in the school system.

Rudolf concluded *“this is why it is important to have a dedicated Traveller and Roma education strategy that can address the systemic issues of racism and discrimination and lead to better outcomes for Traveller and Roma children”*.

Hughie Collins - Education Programme, Pavee Point

Hughie has been working as an education programme worker in Pavee Point since October 2023. He spoke of his own experiences of the education system, how he left secondary school while in 5th year and went to Youthreach. Following that he got a job in the security sector working in an empty building. He enjoyed work at the beginning but got tired of the boredom, began to look up courses to see if he could improve his working conditions and found the Solas Further Education and Training website offering a variety of lifelong learning education options for anyone over the age of sixteen.

¹ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Dept Justice and Equality (2018) Roma in Ireland a National Needs Assessment



Hughie completed a number of Level 5 8-week courses including a Level 6 course in professional development and 4 other courses at Level 6. He was then accepted onto an Equal Ireland online part time BA in Enterprise, Business and Community Development and is now in his 2nd year. He is also completing a Major Level 6 in management development through FET courses also developed by Solas.

His experiences of primary and post primary education he said, were mixed, *“some bad experiences but some ok”*. He noted that, *“It got harder as I got older. I know many Travellers who had very negative experiences of education, from teachers having little or no expectations that Travellers could succeed in education, to bullying from other students”*.

Hughie said that there remain a range of ongoing issues in ensuring positive outcomes for Travellers and Roma from education; outcomes that would give choice and more opportunities, a system where Travellers and Roma felt they belong and are valued for who they are, their culture, way of life, ethnicity and history. He concluded by saying, *“I would like to see open access to education, regardless of what community you are from. I would like to see more support in helping to achieve what you want to achieve in life. In the future I am hoping my kids will stay in education to get to a degree level”*.

Policies, Strategies and Issues Informing the Roundtable

Historical context 1963-2023: Martin Collins – Co-director, Pavee Point

Martin began by recalling the strong focus on education that Pavee Point has always had from its establishment as the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group in 1984 including the first education programme run by DTEDG which he himself participated in, along with a number of Travellers who are still active and playing pivotal roles in the struggle for justice and equality for Travellers.

It is difficult to speak about current policies he said, without reflecting on historical ones. 2023 is the 60th anniversary of the publication of the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, *“a systematic, structured co-ordinated effort by the state to get rid of Travellers. Policies, programmes initiatives and legislation were put in place to rid society of the so-called itinerant problem”*. This approach he said, had implications for education policy through the decades, as it gave rise to segregation and the policy of Traveller only schools and classes. The fact that some changes are now happening *“is a testimony”*, he said, *“to many in this room, many who cannot be in the room and others who have passed away such as John O’Connell and Ronnie Fay and others who played a pivotal role in resisting policies of assimilation and offering a new analysis in relation to human rights, equality and respect for cultural identity which culminated in the recognition of Traveller ethnicity on March 1st 2017”*.

Martin noted that the first shift in analysis regarding Traveller education began to emerge in 1995 with the Report of the Task Force on the Traveller Community, which named racism and discrimination, reflecting on Traveller culture in the school curriculum, parental involvement, inclusion, integration and mainstreaming. It was the beginning of the end of the system of segregation



in education for Travellers. In 2006, the Report on Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy was produced, to support the development of an education strategy which never materialised. Since then Traveller organisations, local and national have been advocating locally, nationally and internationally, for a Traveller Education Strategy which was a commitment in the 2020 Programme for Government.

Whilst new and better structures have been developed since 1995, a key question must be asked, ‘Has the culture in the education system changed?’ Current experiences of racism and bullying, he said, would suggest we have a way to go before we will see profound cultural change with strong anti-racist policies, Traveller culture reflected in school curricula and Travellers becoming teachers and principals. He expressed his hope that the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy announced in July can make good progress towards this. He also cited research by the ESRI which found that if all things were equal in terms of Traveller access to and outcomes from education, Travellers are still nine times more unlikely to secure employment than the settled population. Employment for Travellers must therefore become a key priority in terms of outcomes from education.

Our job now, he said, as Traveller and Roma organisations and Traveller and Roma supporters is about *“restating that collective ambition for an education system for Travellers and Roma that takes a human rights based approach, is about respect, inclusion and interculturalism and is about creating the conditions where there can be positive outcomes from the education system and where the individual potential of all Travellers and Roma can be fully nurtured and fully developed to play their role in society”*.

Recent strategies and current situation and issues: Maria Joyce – Co-ordinator, National Traveller Women’s Forum

Maria spoke of the difficulties of speaking about Traveller education in the current context without being conscious of the historical context in relation to the segregation and racism underpinning that system. Also, when we talk about segregation, she said, we must look not just at the past but also the current situation. She noted the contemporary forms of segregation of Travellers in education today including reduced timetables which exclude Traveller children for whole school days or parts of school days and examples from around the country that show schools clustering Traveller children together and excluding them from mainstream classroom activities.

She referred to the first National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS 2017-2021), noting that none of the actions in the strategy had targets or indicators against which to measure progress. Maria said that the actual impact of those actions has been limited and that Travellers *“still have a mountain to climb”*. However, improvements in the past six years including improved working relationships between Traveller organisations and the Department of Education and increased recognition on the part of the Department of the importance of combining targeted actions with a mainstreaming



approach. She referred as an example, to the Traveller and Roma education pilots² operating in 4 areas regionally including associated baseline research and an evaluation currently underway.

Maria went on to say that more targeted resources have been provided to Traveller organisations through the Dormant accounts, better engagement with the Inspectorate and the development of guidelines on the use of reduced timetables. She added that Traveller participation in consultation in the development of the first National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy will be an important part of that process.

Even with all of these developments Maria said, *“we can clearly see that there’s a long road to go”*. The lived experience of Traveller children in school today she said, is still not a positive one. Travellers can testify to negative experiences, their own, their children’s or their grandchildren’s in the education system including experiences of blatant racism by teachers and principals. Almost a year to the day after the launch of the Government Action Plan on Bullying, Maria noted that all Traveller and Roma children have a right to every opportunity the education system can afford and also a right to a positive experience in their education.

Regarding NTRIS 2 and the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy, Travellers and Traveller organisations want to see an education system that is ambitious for our Traveller students and supports them to the highest level. *“Getting it right for our children is essential”* she said, and noted the importance for Travellers of lifelong learning, including for Traveller and Roma women and the need to focus on that aspect.

Maria finished by asking the Department of Education and education providers in the room to think about what they can do differently in the light of the next NTRIS and the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy, to ensure real change and positive outcomes for Traveller children.

Further & Higher Education: Megan Berry - Traveller Outreach Officer, Maynooth University

Megan began by thanking Pavee Point for the opportunity to speak at the Roundtable. She set out key elements of relevance to the Traveller and Roma communities in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science - Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022 – 2028.

She highlighted in particular, the establishment of PATH 5, a three-year pilot to provide additional support for access, participation and success for students from the Traveller and Roma communities in Higher Education. She said Higher Education Institutions are accessing the funding and using it in different ways from supporting students directly through the provision of funding or through the employment of outreach officers.

² Supporting Traveller and Roma (STAR) pilot projects, established in 2019 under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) with the aim of improving attendance, participation and school completion in specific Traveller and Roma communities – operating in Galway, Dublin, Cork and Wexford.



Targets established in the Plan were to go from 33 Traveller entrants in 2022 to 150 Traveller entrants to Higher Education in 2028, with a commitment to having sufficient Roma data during the programme to set targets for them.

Megan highlighted changes, to include part-time students in the SUSI grants due to come into effect in 2024. These will be helpful, she said, for all Travellers and particularly helpful for those with families who are seeking to participate in education but only in a position to undertake part time courses. SUSI will now for the first time cover the costs of these at undergraduate levels from Sept 2024 and will be open to people with incomes below £55,924.

She concluded by saying this would potentially ensure more meaningful and viable options for Travellers and Roma in accessing and completing Higher Education. It will also mean, opportunities to further explore choices where Travellers and Roma can grow personally and professionally and feel more included in Irish society.

In thanking Megan, Anastasia noted that Pavee Point is advocating that any Traveller who gets a place on a higher education programme should automatically be eligible for a SUSI grant *“as a way to do something about the appalling divide that exists there”*.

Further Education, Training and Employment Initiatives: Rudolf Simonic - Roma Community Worker, Pavee Point.

Rudolf referred to the joint Pavee Point, Maynooth University research published last year entitled, *“Roma in Ireland: Access to Fair and Decent Work”*. The research showed that when Roma had low educational attainment or didn’t speak English, they were particularly at risk of workplace exploitation, experiencing very poor working conditions including pay exploitation, zero hours contracts, being at increased risk of injury where safety protocols were not followed and losing their jobs when their Roma identity was discovered.

The report found that Roma in Ireland have a strong motivation and desire to work but that there are significant barriers in the way. Racism and discrimination impact all aspects of life in terms of accessing education, training, employment and supports as well as regulatory barriers such as the Habitual Residence Condition which excludes many Roma from accessing basic social protection leaving them unable to access employment supports and further education or training.

However, the research also found that some second-generation Roma in Ireland had better outcomes. This occurred when young people had access to primary and secondary education and opportunities for progression to further or higher education. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone. Where families were marginalised and experienced unemployment, poverty, and racism, where educational opportunities could not be accessed, opportunities were further limited for young people and families.



All the above Rudolf stated, are reasons to ensure the development and implementation of a Traveller and Roma Education Strategy and the Traveller and Roma Training and Employment Plan which was committed to in the Programme for Government. These he pointed out are needed to ensure that there are clear pathways to social protection, mainstream employment services and further education and training for Roma, sustainable funding for Roma projects to ensure long-term meaningful engagement with Roma on issues of education and employment and that supports to address the costs associated with attending school are accessible and available for Roma children experiencing poverty.

Rudolf explained that he is starting on a new education journey having returned to further education this year.

Workshops: From Issues to Action

Five workshops considered key issues for Traveller and Roma education: Traveller and Roma visibility, Access to Roles and Jobs in Education and Training; Discrimination and Differentials e.g. racism, reduced timetables, lower expectations, language supports; Equality of Access, Participation, and Outcomes - Early Years; Primary and Post Primary; Further, Higher and Lifelong Education. Each had a note taker and facilitator, and all were asked to discuss the following: Why is action needed now in this area? What changes are needed? What actions are needed to make these? Who needs to take these actions? What do we need to be careful of or watch out for? Feedback was by way of a Feedback Wall with the comments from each workshop posted on the wall and the facilitator and note taker at hand to answer questions. All the workshops were well attended, and some very interesting and important remarks made and repeated throughout.

The need for resources for Traveller and Roma organisations to develop and implement education programmes and reinforce and continue those they are already, with good progress involved in came up again. The importance of anti-racism training for all those involved in the provision of education was called for along with stronger accountability mechanisms, mainstream and targeted interventions and positive action measures, increased support for parents and respect for and visibility of Traveller and Roma cultures across the curriculum.

The detailed feedback from the workshops is in Appendix 1.



Responses from Government Departments

Kathryn O' Riordan – Assistant Principal, Access and Inclusion Section, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Kathryn welcomed the invitation to attend the Roundtable, participation at which she said was very important for the Department. She said that the Equal Participation Model is being developed in the Department and that Pavee Point and the National Traveller Women's Forum have been extremely helpful in informing the consultation process. For the first time the ethnic identifier has been included as children register for preschool and the National Childcare Scheme which provides better information on the uptake of places by Travellers and Roma. From the Departments perspective and from a rights perspective she said, every Traveller and Roma child should have access to preschool education.

Gráinne Cullen – Principal Officer, Head of Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education

Gráinne spoke in her capacity as lead for the development of the Traveller Education Strategy in the Department of Education.

Grainne outlined the progress to date on the development of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy. While each of the Departments involved will focus on their own areas of responsibility one of the key areas is the development of strong linkages at the transition points from Early Years to Primary, from Primary to Post Primary and on to Further and Higher Education and Training. At the heart of the strategy must be the rights of the child to education. Gráinne noted the challenge in developing a cradle to grave strategy but welcomed the collaboration and support of Pavee Point and other Traveller and Roma representative organisations and emphasised the opportunities that exist to ensure children and young people have access to a quality and inclusive educational experience. She noted all of the work that has been done by the Traveller community to date and the many reports that have been written setting out the issues. She emphasised that it's important now to build on all of this work to inform the work of the strategy. She stressed the importance of engagement with Traveller organisations and acknowledged Pavee Point's offer to support the consultation process. Consultation will be held with the Traveller and Roma communities, with children and young people and with the school communities. One of the consultation strands will examine the learning from schools where outcomes for Travellers have been found to be particularly good and the development process will also include learning from the STAR projects. Analysis of the current data will be an important part of the strategy development process.

The Department are currently pulling together the information from the 400+ responses to the public consultation and these will be independently analysed. The community consultation will take place in the New Year building on the consultation process recently undertake for NTRIS 2. The timeline however is tight because the target is to get the strategy development work completed by



June. The Advisory Group for the strategy which has a number of Traveller representative groups is looking to a strategy to 2030 in recognition of the need for a strong vision and of the fact that change takes time. The proposal is to have 2-year rolling action plans allowing for the strategy to have short, medium, and long-term actions.

Themes coming through from the consultations so far include the experience of the child in school, the success of the child through the system, the relationships that underpin successes, the conditions in out and around, the enablers (funding and resourcing) and the importance of learning from things like the STAR projects.

Concluding Comments

Stephanie Mc Dermott – Education Co-ordinator Pavee Point

Stephanie Mc Dermott who had just commenced work on the Pavee Point Education Programme thanked colleagues and participants for their support. The Roundtable, she said had provided a great opportunity to hear about Traveller and Roma lived experience of exclusion, marginalisation, segregation, humiliation, and racism and has been a real and a stark reminder of the inadequate and inappropriate responses to Travellers and Roma realising their right to education.

It has been useful she said, to hear about the many initiatives enacted to improve Traveller and Roma access to and retention in education while also being reminded about the crisis in mental health, poverty, low levels of employment opportunities and poor educational outcomes.

Addressing the barriers faced by Traveller and Roma communities requires a multifaceted and collaborative approach, she said. This involves an inclusive curriculum where Travellers and Roma see themselves reflected, parental involvement, flexible learning environments, wider community engagement, engagement with local Traveller and Roma organisations, community leaders and advocates in the educational process. Improvements at all levels were acknowledged, she said from Early Years through to First and Second levels and Further and Higher Education.

The Roundtable has recognized the mistakes and misguided policies of the past as well as the current issues and impediments to equal access and outcomes. It has also recognised, she said, the transformative power of education and a commitment to working towards equitable educational practices, which should unlock the full potential of Travellers and Roma. The morning illustrated good will, commitment from policy makers and key stakeholders, including the Department of Education.

She concluded by saying that creating inclusive spaces for dialogue and collaboration will lead to positive change, empowerment, Traveller and Roma education rights, and ultimately a fairer and more inclusive society for all.



Closing Remarks

Tracey Reilly

In her closing remarks, Tracey noted the progress in terms of Travellers and Roma completing Junior and Leaving Certs and remembered also those including herself who have or are attending 3rd level as mature students. She spoke about the significant barriers that poverty can cause in relation to access, participation and outcomes from education and referenced in particular, the barriers imposed by the Habitual Residence Condition on Roma families. She closed the Roundtable by thanking everyone for attending.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all speakers at the conference who shared their insights, experience and expertise with us. In addition, we would like to thank all who provided support and assistance on the day and in the lead up to the event. Thank you to Rachel Doyle for compiling the report of the Roundtable.



Appendix 1: Feedback from Workshops

1. Traveller and Roma visibility, access to roles and jobs in Education and Training				
Why is action needed now?	What changes are needed?	What actions are needed to make these changes?	Who needs to take these actions?	What do we need to be careful of?
<p>Visibility is needed in all areas including as board members, teachers, principals, university lecturers and an environment needs to be created for this to happen.</p> <p>Travellers are hiding their identities with a serious impact on mental health.</p> <p>Visible allies are needed.</p>	<p>Good employment is crucial following education.</p> <p>Apprenticeships should include women and gender should be a factor in all actions.</p>	<p>Systemic change and accountability including abolition of reduced hours.</p> <p>Role models at 3rd level and the FET sector including as tutors.</p> <p>Supports for mature students including routes to accessing education and training.</p> <p>Positive action including peer mediators, Traveller and Roma inclusion in all curricula, wrap around supports, scholarships and anti-racism training across the system.</p>	<p>The right people with the right frame of mind to change the view that Travellers and Roma don't need to be fixed – top down.</p> <p>School principals play a key role.</p> <p>Solas and Department of Education to ringfence funding for schools and Traveller organisations.</p>	



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		<p>Supports for staff at 2nd level to keep children in school.</p> <p>Confidence building for Traveller and Roma students addressing hidden trauma.</p> <p>Raise awareness in the community of the benefits of education.</p> <p>Develop better media literacy.</p> <p>Enhance internships and work placements.</p> <p>Support diversity in employment in state agencies.</p> <p>Visibility of positive experiences.</p>		
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2. Discrimination and Differentials e.g. racism, reduced timetables, lower expectations, language supports.

Why is action needed now?	What changes are needed?	What actions are needed to make these changes?	Who needs to take these actions?	What do we need to be careful of?
Low expectations – low self esteem, people are being		Follow up on reduced timetables –	Department of education including in	Blame culture – there are some



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<p>given extra support when this is not needed and given less work. Early school leavers are not encouraged to stay and not given support.</p> <p>Lack of cultural awareness.</p> <p>lack of respect and assumptions people will leave due to marriage.</p> <p>Settled vs living on sites.</p> <p>People being pushed into other education setting e.g. youthreach .</p> <p>Poor culture in some schools - discrimination, racism and bullying including by teachers – left up to parents to deal with who may have had negative experiences themselves and a lack of supports available.</p> <p>Lack of accountability</p>		<p>addressing over representation and length of time on these and data on Traveller and Roma inclusion as well as a review of the role of the inspectorate and of the process overall.</p> <p>Exemptions from Irish – impacts on access to 3rd level</p> <p>Review and follow up on impact of Covid and children not returning to school.</p> <p>Accessible information and supports.</p> <p>Training for all education staff .</p> <p>Accountability for racism in schools.</p> <p>Inclusion – inclusive language and cultural events</p> <p>Visibility of Travellers and Roma in education</p>	<p>relation to resources and integration of resources as well as promoting better relations between Traveller and Roma families.</p> <p>Tusla - Integrated supports.</p> <p>Schools need to take ownership.</p>	<p>good teachers and principals.</p> <p>There is no one solution.</p> <p>Tokenism .</p> <p>Far right influence</p>
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<p>regarding systemic failures.</p> <p>No training for teachers – diversifying education/inclusive education.</p> <p>Changing the title of reduced timetable – reframing it to hide this.</p>		<p>materials and at staff levels.</p> <p>Link local Traveller and Roma orgs to schools as key stakeholders and provide funding for these orgs to do education work.</p> <p>Strengthen the Roma infrastructure.</p> <p>Assess communication with parents including in relation to language and the digital divide.</p> <p>Additional funding for HCSL officers and other Traveller and Roma specific supports.</p>		
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3. Equality of Access, Participation, and Outcomes

Early Years

Why is action needed now?	What changes are needed?	What actions are needed to make these changes?	Who needs to take these actions?	What do we need to be careful of?
Traveller children have a right to 'high' quality	There is a need for comprehensive data on Traveller	Include DCEDIY DEI training under nurturing skills	DCEDIY including through NTRIS	Consistency of approach across ECEC systems



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<p>inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC.)</p>	<p>and Roma children and engagement with the ECEC sector.</p>	<p>plan – This training should be accredited and resourced in line with the LINC</p>	<p>NCCA DES</p>	<p>DES/NCCA Vs DCEDIY in the terms of DEI</p>
<p>The DCEDIY Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) CPD training for educators currently does not have a specific focus on Travellers and Roma.</p>	<p>Information provided through Traveller and Roma organisations and City and County Childcare Committees on ECEC schemes and how to access them.</p>	<p>Training programme. Need for funding incentives for participants. Research on Traveller and Roma engagement with ECEC is needed.</p>		<p>Anti-bias training and the implementation of the DEI charter and guidelines. Ensuring clarity re. responsibility for Traveller and Roma access, participation and inclusion in ECEC services.</p>
<p>Limited data on Traveller and Roma children in ECEC.</p>	<p>Stronger links between Traveller and Roma organisations and City and County Childcare Committees.</p>	<p>Participation model – The DCEDIY DEI training should be a mandatory part of this model and mainstreamed nationally.</p>		<p>That mainstream services are accessible to all Traveller and Roma children.</p>
<p>Not all Traveller and Roma children are attending ECEC. 100% of Traveller and Roma children should have access to ECEC services and be supported to attend.</p>	<p>Need for change in the NCS funding arrangements.</p>	<p>Comprehensive Data on Traveller and Roma children’s participation in ECEC.</p>		<p>That Traveller and Roma children are not excluded because of NCS funding processes including deducting funding from service providers.</p>
<p>Traveller and Roma children have a right to ECEC service that are culturally inclusive.</p>	<p>Different levels of training for Travellers and Roma to work in the ECEC sector (3rd level, further ed, CPD).</p>	<p>ECEC educators to be informed adequately as to the importance of data collection.</p>		
<p>The Roma community do not know how to access the system</p>	<p>The DCEDIY Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) CPD Training, with a specific focus on</p>	<p>An information strategy on ECEC</p>		<p>Existing changes and challenges in the system and how they impact</p>



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<p>and language barriers persist.</p> <p>Some Travellers are also unfamiliar with how to access the ECEC system.</p> <p>Access to ECEC services in both urban and rural is needed. When there is competition for places Traveller and Roma children are often at the bottom of the list.</p> <p>Attending ECEC one element to support breaking the cycle of poverty.</p> <p>National Childcare Scheme (NCS) must be inclusive and accessible. The systems needs to be “inclusion proofed” (e.g. gov.ie card and practical problems in accessing the service).</p> <p>Need for data on how Travellers and Roma interact with</p>	<p>Travellers and Rome, needs to be increased nationally, resourced appropriately and accredited.</p> <p>A greater focus on Early Childhood Education and Care in the new NTRIS beyond a focus on children with disabilities accessing services through the Access and Inclusion Model.</p>	<p>schemes including video’s in different languages on how to access and engage in ECEC.</p> <p>DCEDIY pro-actively connect Traveller and Roma organisations and City and County Childcare Committees around ECEC and promote engagement.</p>		<p>on the changes we want to see</p> <p>Participation Model – wrap around services are needed.</p> <p>The Aistear curriculum (currently being revised) needs to have explicit visibility of Traveller and Roma throughout.</p>
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<p>and navigate the system.</p> <p>In ECEC funds have to be returned if children don't attend over a period of time. Some are reluctant to take Traveller children because they feel attendance is poor and they will lose funds.</p>				
<p align="center">Primary and Post Primary</p>				
<p>Why is action needed now?</p>	<p>What changes are needed?</p>	<p>What actions are needed to make these changes?</p>	<p>Who needs to take these actions?</p>	<p>What do we need to be careful of?</p>
<p>Attendance and Retention remain a concern.</p> <p>Attainment levels are not being captured.</p> <p>Maintenance of STAR funding is a concern with lack of clarity on the situation currently. Access to the labour market is still problematic including accessing TY placements.</p>	<p>Significant cultural change in the system and in society underpinned by core values.</p> <p>Remove barriers that the Habitual Residence Condition places on Roma.</p>	<p>Targeted CPD at all levels in the system.</p> <p>Antiracism and cultural awareness training for staff and students and included in teacher training as part of a scaled offering.</p> <p>In the context of the NCCA intercultural guidelines and the expert advisory</p>	<p>CPD – Dept of Education</p> <p>Anti-Racism and Intercultural training – Traveller and Roma orgs, relevant Departments and other partners including training colleges.</p> <p>NCCA Intercultural Guidelines to be disseminated and supported by CPD</p>	<p>Need for a mainstreaming <i>and</i> a targeted approach.</p> <p>Need to acknowledge that change takes time and to acknowledge the changes that have taken place.</p> <p>Rising levels of racism and xenophobia.</p>



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<p>Work is needed on ensuring that Travellers and Roma are part of the system overall.</p> <p>Reduced timetables still in existence and being mis-used.</p>		<p>group work on accessibility and reflection</p> <p>Traveller and Roma culture needs to be progressed.</p> <p>Need to ensure best use is made of ethnic identifier and disaggregated data (mining information).</p> <p>Building better school/community links.</p> <p>Accessible information for parents and guardians.</p> <p>Free books and transport.</p> <p>Career guidance and school completion programmes to give particular attention to Travellers and Roma with universal support (not just DEIS schools).</p> <p>Clear transparency and</p>	<p>HEA and DFERIS</p> <p>Training for teachers – universities and colleges.</p> <p>Whole system approach needed – not about the individuals in charge.</p>	<p>Ensuring that we keep a focus on intersectionality.</p>
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		accountability re reduced timetables needed (now being wrongly used as a behavioural intervention).		
Further, Higher and Lifelong Education				
Why is action needed now?	What changes are needed?	What actions are needed to make these changes?	Who needs to take these actions?	What do we need to be careful of?
<p>Because of the impact of ongoing institutional racism.</p> <p>Peoples prior experience not being recognised and therefore people have to start at the beginning of programmes with no RPL/APEL.</p> <p>People are dropping out because their support needs are not being looked at holistically.</p> <p>The outcomes for a lot of Travellers from FE/HE are poor.</p>	<p>Improved RPL and APEL processes which are transparent and clearly set out.</p> <p>There needs to be a consistent and holistic approach to the provision of the various supports.</p> <p>Travellers should not be directed to Traveller outreach workers in institutions if the mainstream supports exist.</p> <p>Travellers should have equal access to all services and supports.</p> <p>Providers need to be clear about</p>	<p>Spaces for discussing and reflecting on racism towards Travellers and Roma need to be created.</p> <p>Anti-racism and cultural awareness training - ensure the inclusion of Travellers and Roma in anti-racism training and initiatives.</p> <p>Institutional and structural needs to be addressed via actions to ensure accountability.</p> <p>Institutions need to reflect on practice and</p>	<p>Providers need to address their own unconscious bias and institutional racism and this needs to be led by the State with expertise from the communities affected and their organisations.</p> <p>Providers need to develop targeted supports where they do not exists but need to ensure complementarity and collaboration between mainstream and targeted supports.</p> <p>Changes are required in policy, reflected in strategy linked to</p>	<p>Ongoing institutional and structural racism and bias.</p> <p>Ongoing tolerance of racism at all levels.</p> <p>Travellers and Roma being expected to ‘sort it out’ – focus needs to be on the State and institutions.</p> <p>State/institutions not being held accountable.</p> <p>Strategy being developed but linked to a clear and concrete implementation plan.</p>



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<p>FE colleges not retaining people.</p> <p>Segregation is still having an impact on people's opportunities to progress to FE/HE.</p> <p>Intergenerational trauma is impacting on people's engagement with the education system.</p> <p>People are not managing assessments – need more alternative assessment routes.</p>	<p>their responsibilities and address issues re retentions and inclusion in their remit e.g. institutional racism/bias.</p> <p>Additional supports required in many institutions for literacy and technological literacy.</p> <p>Decision-making and planning structures need to be more inclusive.</p> <p>Accountability is required.</p>	<p>structures to identify and tackle institutional racism.</p> <p>Affirmative measures are required to address current and historical disadvantage.</p> <p>Awareness raising needed re the treatment of Travellers in policy and legislation historically and currently due to lack of implementation.</p> <p>Travellers need to be signposted to the diversity of programmes and opportunities at FE and HE levels and not pigeonholed into a narrow range of courses (eg; social studies).</p> <p>Supports re the digital divide are urgently required.</p> <p>Providers need to be held</p>	<p>implementation plans with developed by the State and institutions with all key stakeholders.</p> <p>Traveller and Roma organisations to hold the State accountable via the public sector duty and supported also by wider community sector.</p> <p>Needs a whole of government approach and whole institutional approach.</p>	
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		<p>accountable via public sector duty.</p> <p>Need to look at quotas within the education system.</p> <p>Providers to develop concrete and clear RPL and APEL processes.</p> <p>Mainstream supports to be complemented rather than replaced by targeted supports – working in sync.</p> <p>Providers plans need to ensure that there are associated clearly identifiable actions which are measurable.</p>		
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Appendix 2: Agenda

Pavee Point Education and Training Roundtable Wednesday November 22nd 2023

The year since our previous Roundtable we have seen a number of challenges as well as developments for Traveller and Roma education rights. The upcoming Roundtable will provide an opportunity to discuss these, share views, hear about ongoing and new initiatives at all levels from Early Years through First and Second Levels to Further and Higher Education, including the National Traveller Roma Education Strategy, and extensions to Higher Education supports, for example, SUSI grants.

We hope you can join us for this event which reflects Pavee Point's concern with parity of education access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in a truly inclusive transformative system which acknowledges and addresses barriers including racism and discrimination.

Please feel free to pass on this information. To book, please email tracey.reilly@pavee.ie by Friday November 17th 2023.

AGENDA

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| 10.00 am | - Registration – Tea and Coffee | |
| 10.30am | - Welcome, Introduction to the Day, Opening Remarks | Tracey Reilly
Anastasia Crickley |
| 10.45am | - Traveller and Roma Education and Training, Experiences and Issues, followed by Buzz groups and plenary discussion | Hughie Collins
Rudolf Simonic |
| 11.10am | - Current Policies and Strategies informing our Roundtable
National Traveller Roma Education
National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy 1 and 2
National Equity of Access to Further and Higher Education Plan
Training Initiatives | Martin Collins
Maria Joyce
Megan Berry
Rudolf Simonic |
| 11.40am | - Break and Networking opportunity | |
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| 12.noon | - Workshops: From Issues to Action.
- Equality of access, participation and outcomes, from Early Years to Leaving Certificate.
- Equality of access, participation, and outcomes in Further, Higher Lifelong education.
- Traveller and Roma visibility access to roles and jobs in Education and Training.
- Discrimination and differentials including reduced timetables, lower expectations, and racism. | |
| 14.45 | Feedback Wall | |
| 13.00 | Plenary discussion and responses from Government departments including DOE and DCEDIY | |
| 13.25 | Closing remarks and lunch. | |



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