



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

**Submission to the Advisory Committee on the Representation
of Women and Women's Stories
September 2024**

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

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. Since its beginning, almost 40 years ago,

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Recommendations for Specific Actions

- Anti-racism and gender equality training on an ongoing basis for staff of Irish cultural organisations
- The collection of data on ethnicity in relation to people engaging with cultural organisations and also people visiting cultural organisations, the disaggregation and analysis of this data.
- That on a geographical and architectural level organisations need to be more welcoming to Traveller and Roma women as visitors with targeted messaging and other initiatives taken to develop engagement at this level.
- That cultural organisations include Traveller & Roma women at decision making level and, in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policy and services to include positive action measures for the employment of Traveller and Roma women in cultural institutions.
- Cultural organisations develop sustainable and ongoing policies of engagement with Traveller & Roma women to ensure access, participation and inclusion.
- Traveller organisations should be resourced directly to work in partnership with cultural institutions and this should include Traveller cultural workers in Traveller organisations who can lead out on this work.
- That cultural organisations should ensure that Traveller & Roma women are included in training and capacity building in relation to cultural work such as collection, curation, archiving and other skills.
- Traveller & Roma women should be supported in projects to analyse and consider the representation of Traveller women in cultural organisations and to develop further discussion on this.
- That the establishment of a Women’s Museum, inclusive of Traveller, Roma and other minority ethnic women would be in tandem with inclusion measures in mainstream cultural organisations and not instead of these mainstream measures.

Introduction

Pavee Point welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Advisory Committee on the Representation of Women and Women’s Stories. Pavee Point has always recognised the need for a particular focus on Traveller women’s rights, equality and inclusion, including in the arts. This has led to an ongoing focus in our work with and for Traveller and Roma women and to the development of national initiatives, including supporting the development of the National Traveller Women’s Forum (1988) and the Violence against Women Programme (1998).

Context

The Situation of Traveller and Roma Women in Ireland

Travellers and Roma are one of the most marginalised and excluded groups in Ireland experiencing racism and discrimination. Irish Travellers were recognised as an ethnic group in 2017 and the State has made increased efforts to include Travellers and Roma in policy measures. While welcoming these efforts, the pace has been slow and under resourced. A number of UN treaty-monitoring bodies, European institutions, and equality and human rights bodies. In 2021, the European Union

Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that 65% of Travellers reported experiencing discrimination, one of the highest reported rates within the six European countries it surveyed.

Roma are one of the largest minority groups in Europe and an extremely diverse ethnic group in terms of language, legal status, and social, cultural and religious attitudes and practices. An estimated 16,000 Roma live in Ireland, many of whom are second and third generation Roma. Ireland's first national Roma Needs Assessment has showed Ireland's Roma community to be exposed to extreme levels of racism, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty.

Intersectional Discrimination and Gendered Racism as Barriers for Gender Equality

Traveller and Roma women are among the most marginalised and excluded individuals and groups in Ireland due to gendered racism and intersectional discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and other factors. Therefore, the experience of inequality among Traveller and Roma women differs from that of women in the majority population, and their experience of racism and discrimination differs from that of Traveller and Roma men. This results in stark findings in relation to the social exclusion faced by Traveller and Roma women.

Discrimination against Travellers Discrimination against Roma

- Travellers are over 22 times more likely than White Irish to report discrimination in shops pubs and restaurants
- Travellers are 10 times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination in seeking work
- 40% of Travellers experience discrimination in accessing health services
- The implementation of EU Directive 2004/38 and state policy (Habitual Residence Condition) leaves many Roma outside of the social protection system and thus vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion
- 78.9% of Roma report feel discriminated in getting a job
- 93.3% of Roma feel discriminated in getting accommodation
- 84.4% of Roma feel discriminated in getting social welfare
- 81.1% of Roma feel discriminated in a public setting.

Current Policy Context in Ireland

A number of existing policy measures, both mainstream and targeted, explicitly include Travellers and Roma as key priority groups. This includes the **National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II** (NTRIS); the **National Action Plan Against Racism**, the **National Strategy for Women and Girls** and the **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty**, all of which require disaggregated ethnic equality data to be effective. In this regard, the announcement of a **National Equality Data Strategy** is welcome. Please see Appendix 1 for details of relevant actions in these policies.

Responses to Consultation Survey

What ways have Irish women's lives and experiences been documented and recorded so far within our museums, galleries, libraries, archives, and theatres (national and local)?

The lives and experiences of Traveller and Roma women have been largely ignored in the above institutions and in some situations denigrated. Traveller and Roma women report that they have never or rarely seen themselves represented in museums, galleries and theatres.

Stereotypical representation

Where Traveller and Roma women are represented, these representations often consist of stereotypical depictions informed by the dominant social and political power structures of the time. Traveller and Roma women are often romanticised – with the Traveller or Roma life looked upon as being a life of freedom without responsibilities or burdens of the dominant population. Traveller and Roma women are also associated with poverty with many representations of Traveller and Roma women as beggars and living in poor conditions. This also results in associations with criminality.

In other analysis of Travellers and Roma are often defined and misrepresented as ‘outsiders’ or anti-social bystanders. In visual arts, Travellers and Roma are sometimes melded into landscapes erasing individuality and reducing people to concepts:

“I don’t like this type of work because I think it dehumanizes people, it just blends them into paint. Sometimes we don’t see physical features, we don’t see people, it’s like we aren’t seeing these people.....It’s just when it comes to a group that was isolated, alienated and used as subjects it continues that process in how they were included in visual art. It’s complicated.” – *The Wandering Gaze, re Tinkers Encampment Blood of Abel* by Jack B. Yeats, 1940.

Another depiction in Victorian times was the breastfeeding woman where breastfeeding in public represented a perceived freedom in contrast with societal constraints and resulted in the sexualisation of Traveller and Gypsy women. ‘*The Gypsies*’ William Simpson (1823 to 1899) and *Gypsy Mother* by Richard E Clarke (1878-1954).

Ad-hoc and Once Off Engagement

Where women’s lives have been documented, such as in exhibitions at the Museum of Country life or projects at the National Gallery or other, this has happened on a once off or ad hoc basis. Often the spaces provided for these presentations, because of being once off, are temporary spaces that are incidental or tucked away.

Cultural activities conducted mainly by women and specifically Traveller and Roma women – such as storytelling and folk singing – are not promoted or elevated in the world of arts and culture. The diverse experience of Traveller and Roma women is also ignored, this diversity and intersectionality requires attention within national cultural institutions.

Impact of Lack of Representation

The impact of the overall lack of representation and exclusion of Traveller and Roma women in this area has resulted in Traveller & Roma women not being able to assert their right to actively engage in interpreting cultural heritage. This leaves Traveller and Roma in a marginalised and isolated situation where they may feel obliged not to criticise or contravene cultural practices and customs for fear of being ostracized and losing their belonging in their own communities. This can impact negatively on the attainment of other rights such as freedom of movement or the right to education.

This lack of representation also results in a sense of denigration of Traveller culture and identity; with Travellers often feeling as if these institutions are not welcoming and do not reflect their culture, history and art.

Specific work undertaken by Traveller Organisations

Travellers and Traveller organisations have led out in the area of documenting and recording the lives and experiences of Traveller and also Roma women. For example, the National Traveller Women's Forum have produced a variety of reports, submissions, events and video documenting Traveller women's experiences. Cork Traveller Women's Network have a number of oral history projects including the Black Ash Traveller Oral History Project and the Spring Lane Oral History project and also worked with Cork Public Museum to have the first permanent Traveller exhibition in a public museum.

The Misleor Festival run by Galway Traveller Movement reaches out to nomadic groups around the world and the organisations that represent them to celebrate the diversity within nomadic communities with a vibrant programme of music, theatre, film, poetry, and visual art. Misleor looks at how nomadic artists and activists are claiming a space for their culture in today's society.

Pavee Point has also produced a number of cultural resources - Traveller Ways Traveller Words featuring oral histories of Traveller women; the video Pavee Beoirs – Our Lives in the 20th Century; the leaflet 'Challenging the Misconceptions of Violence Against Minority Ethnic Women, including Travellers, in Ireland'; the poster Traveller Women Through the Generations as well as a variety of publications on women's health and maternal health. Pavee Point has also produced the exhibition Roma: One People, Many Lives and the video on Traveller & Roma women 'Our Voices Our Lives' and the video Romani Kultura. Pavee Point also published 'Whisht' the singing and storytelling of Kitty Cassidy. Traveller organisations are now also involved in a number of archive projects to preserve, catalogue and disseminate their collections. It is important to the community that ownership of these archives is kept within the community and the collections are created by the community and for the community.

Partnerships with Cultural Organisations

Traveller organisations have sought opportunities for partnerships and engagement with cultural institutions. For example in Cork, The Cork Traveller Women's Network based itself at the Triskel Arts Centre. This enables Traveller women and girls to link in on a variety of cultural events and also supports the Traveller group in making contacts and building relationships with other cultural institutions. Pavee Point has worked with the National Museum of Ireland and Municipal Gallery The Hugh Lane, for example. In the case of the National Museum this led to two projects being run through Collins Barracks and in conjunction with Pavee Point and TravAct, Coolock. The second of these projects focused on the The Beady Pocket and brought Traveller women and women from the majority population together to investigate and explore this unique cultural garment. These positive partnerships and engagements require ongoing support and resourcing to ensure sustainability.

Traveller Pride

Traveller Pride Week has been a focus for cultural work. Traveller Pride Week has been in existence for over 15 years, with funding provided by DCEDIYs, Traveller organisations to develop their events and gain valuable experience in cultural presentation. These projects often highlight the important role and achievements of women in the Traveller community across a variety of areas. The projects are often led out by Traveller women who form the backbone of many Traveller organisations. Highlighting Traveller & Roma women's contributions is considered an empowering process by Traveller women and Traveller organisations. This is echoed in research that indicates that accounts of history highlighting women's contributions give legitimacy to women's empowerment initiatives and challenge the status quo as well as the

State's commitments to gender equality, as described by the UN Special Rapporteur Farida Shaheed in her report on cultural rights to the UN General Assembly in 2012.

Appendix 1 - Current Policy Context:

National Strategy for Women and Girls -

National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG) 2017- 2028 which for the first time included specific actions aimed at addressing some of the inequalities faced by Traveller and Roma women.

The Strategy proposes a series of measures to promote greater visibility of women in sport, of women athletes on broadcast media and of women in the arts, film and the media and includes targeted measures to encourage Traveller and Roma women to engage as equal and active citizens.

Other actions of relevance are:

3.3 Establish a programme of activity, including research, awareness-raising and cultural activities, to promote positive gender norms and to challenge negative gender norms

3.8 Continue to increase the visibility of women in arts and heritage, including as contributors, creators, curators, in governance and in content through the introduction of gender policies in our National Cultural Institutions, the Irish Film Board and the Arts Council. 2017-2018 DAHRRGA, National Cultural Institutions, Arts Council, Irish Film Board

3.9 Continue to support the increasing visibility of female creative talent, in the film industry by implementing the Irish Film Board's Gender Equality Six Point Plan, and in the audiovisual sector. ongoing DAHRRGA, Irish Film Board, DCCAE

3.10 The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) will, as part of the implementation of its Statement of Strategy 2017-19, take action to support increased representation of the diversity of Irish society in the broadcast media, with particular focus on gender equality

4.15 Undertake initiatives to promote the participation of Traveller and Roma women in leadership positions, including in the community and voluntary sector.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) –

The new NTRIS 2024 – 2028 was published in July 2024 and contains a number of Strategic Outcomes and Objectives in relation to Traveller & Roma Culture, Heritage and Identity.

It commits to outcomes where Traveller and Roma culture, heritage and identities are valued and respected, in furtherance of the State recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group and in compliance with Ireland's international commitments towards both Travellers and Roma. It also states Travellers and Roma will be supported to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, thereby facilitating inter-generational learning, cultural continuity and positive self-identity.

It also sets out that Traveller and Roma contribution to contemporary arts and culture is supported and valued and to this it the State will assist the active participation of the Traveller and Roma communities in cultural, artistic activity.

National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) –

Pavee Point welcomed the publication of the new and much needed NAPAR in March 2023, and its explicit inclusion of Travellers as being directly covered by all provisions and recommendations in the plan and the acknowledgement of the intersectionality between racism and multiple forms of oppression, in the plan.

The NAPAR's publication is especially pertinent for Travellers, Roma and other minority communities at this time given the recent far-right incited riots in November 2023 and further racist online and offline activity in 2024.

We welcome that the plan commits to the collection of ethnically disaggregated data without which it is difficult to fully quantify the prevalence and impact of racism.

The NAPAR has a number of specific actions in relation to cultural participation.

Cultural and Community Participation Action

2.12 Establish the position of racial equality officer in all arts, culture and sports funding bodies. This role to include working with funding recipients to support local, collaborative anti-racism programmes across the arts, culture and sports sectors. Implementing Bodies (indicative) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland, Local Sports Partnerships, Arts Council, Funding Bodies Target Completion Date (by end year) 2027 Action

2.13 Take steps to increase the participation of minority ethnic groups in arts, culture and sports activities and establish information-sharing and peer-networking channels for young athletes and artists from racialised backgrounds to enable them to develop their careers. Implementing Bodies (indicative) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland, Local Sports Partnerships, Arts Council, Funding Bodies Target Completion Date (by end year) 2024

Other relevant actions are

Combating Racism through Mainstream Policies, Programmes and Legislation Action 5.1 Include objectives and actions to address racism, including systemic racism, in all relevant public policy programmes, publicly funded community and voluntary sector programmes, and private sector state commissioned and resourced services. Implementing Bodies (indicative) All public authorities and relevant community and voluntary organisations, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Rural and Community Development Target Completion Date (by end year) 2024

Action 5.5 Introduce mandatory and continuing anti-racism education, including cultural competency and unconscious-bias training for all staff at all levels throughout the public sector, as part of the fulfilment of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Implementing Bodies (indicative) Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, all public sector employers Target Completion Date (by end year) 2027

National Equality Data Strategy –

Pavee Point welcomed the development of the forthcoming National Equality Data Strategy (announced on 21 March 2022) which must focus on measurable impacts, and ask that it be urgently and fully implemented. As part of this Strategy, the full and effective development and implementation of ethnic equality monitoring (in line with human rights standards) across all relevant State departments and public bodies, must be ensured, to improve the ability to monitor the impact of policies and initiatives.

We ask that the State ensure the strategy is in place urgently (as expected to cover 2023-2027, as committed to by the State) and that it has a robust implementation and monitoring plan with clear targets, indicators, timeframes and budget lines, with actions being resourced and implemented by all government departments and relevant statutory agencies.

Public Sector Duty

Section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their functions to have regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services; and
- protect the human rights of staff and services

The 2014 Act requires a public body, having regard to its functions, purpose, size and resources available to it, to:

1. **Assess** – set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body;
2. **Address** – set out in its strategic plan the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues;
3. **Report** – report on developments and achievements in its annual report.

The obligation to integrate the Duty in a public body’s strategic plan and annual report means that assessing and addressing equality and human rights issues is an ongoing process that should be reviewed and developed in accordance with strategic planning cycles.