



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE



# Ukrainian Roma in Ireland

A situation report:  
2022 -2025



## Foreword:

We would like to acknowledge everyone who supported the development of this report and who have worked respectfully and collaboratively with us over the last 3 years to ensure that the rights of Ukrainian Roma were promoted and protected at a time of great uncertainty and upheaval for many Roma families who fled Ukraine and sought protection in Ireland.

This included Government Departments and State Agencies - particularly the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department of Justice, and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

In order to ensure that Ukrainian Roma had access to the necessary supports and services across the country, we harnessed existing relationships and networks such as the National Roma Network, as well as new community/civil society structures established to respond to this crisis, such as the Ukraine Civil Society Forum. We look forward to continuing to building on this work in close solidarity.

A particular mention to our long standing partnership work with Donegal Travellers Project, which allowed us to connect the European, national with the local Roma community response and to develop this report.

The report highlights the importance of a strong Roma infrastructure underpinned by community development in order to respond to key issues collectively and we look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the key recommendations made in the report, keeping a spotlight on the specific needs of Ukrainian Roma refugees.

**Lynsey Kavanagh, Co-Director**



---

Photographs: From Donegal Travellers Project  
by photographer Katie Ruby McLaughlin Robinson

Design: Angelia Fox

*April 2025*



# Contents

Introduction .....	4
Pavee Point's Work with Ukrainian Roma Refugees .....	5
Context .....	6
The Situation for Ukrainian Roma Before the War .....	6
The Situation Facing Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Europe .....	6
Roma Access to Supports under the Temporary Protection Directive .....	7
Ukrainian Roma in Ireland .....	8
Findings from Pavee Point Ukrainian Roma National Phonenumber .....	9
Key Issues.....	10
Discrimination.....	10
Temporary Protection.....	10
Breakdown of Temporary Protection Cases....	11
Accommodation Queries .....	13
Access to Health/Social Supports .....	14
Emerging Issues/New Developments in Ukraine Supports.....	15
Feedback from Ukrainian Roma families .....	16
Collaboration with Donegal Traveller Project: Ukrainian Roma Families in the North West Region .....	16
Conclusion .....	18
Recommendations.....	19

# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the work of Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('Pavee Point'), over the last three years, with Ukrainian Roma seeking refuge in Ireland, as well as the key human rights issues brought to our attention during this time. It also documents how Pavee Point has worked collaboratively with organisations in the National Roma Network, the Ukraine Civil Society Forum, as well as relevant State Departments and Agencies to address the additional barriers facing Ukrainian Roma and improve access to supports and services.

Pavee Point has been following the situation for Ukrainian Roma refugees across Europe since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine through our connections with European and International NGOs and Human Rights bodies. In March 2022, Pavee Point became aware of Ukrainian Roma families seeking refuge in Ireland. Although we are not a service provider, we identified a need to respond, on a humanitarian basis, during this time of crisis and since then we have linked with Ukrainian Roma families, State agencies and all relevant stakeholders where needed.

Given that the National Ukraine Response does not gather data on the basis of ethnicity, we do not know the exact number of Ukrainian Roma who have come to Ireland over the last three years. However, since we established a national phoneline for Ukrainian Roma refugees in October 2022, we have supported 181 cases, involving 837 people (469 adults and 368 children). We are conscious that the cases brought forward to us represent a small portion of the lived experiences of Ukrainian Roma seeking protection, but these cases serve to highlight their complex, and specific needs, particularly in terms of racism, discrimination, social and health inequalities.

# Pavee Point's Work with Ukrainian Roma Refugees

Over the last three years, Pavee Point has sought to support Ukrainian Roma refugees in collaboration with the wider National Ukraine response by:

- Direct policy, advocacy and lobbying work. Highlighting our human rights concerns for Roma and other ethnic minority ethnic groups at this time of crisis in Europe both nationally and internationally, including raising the issue at the beginning of the crisis with the Taoiseach and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs<sup>1</sup>
- In the initial days and weeks, providing information and advice when contacted by local Roma churches and European Roma NGOs about Ukrainian Roma families coming to Ireland
- Linking with the Department of Justice, Immigration, HSE, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and relevant NGOs involved in the National Ukraine Response.
- Providing anti-racism information sessions for those working with Ukrainian Roma in Ireland, including Helping Irish Hosts, Red Cross and International Organisation for Migration (IOM). We also provided anti-racism information sessions to over 100 Department of Justice immigration staff, over 60 DCEDIY, HSE and South Dublin County Volunteer Centre, and Security staff at Citywest.
- Operating a phonenumber for Ukrainian Roma, available Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9am-5pm since October 2022. While Pavee Point is not a service provider, given the context of rising concerns, this phonenumber was introduced as an interim measure to provide information and to signpost Ukrainian Roma to appropriate supports. This phone is managed by a Roma community worker who can provide information through Romani language. Leaflets and posters were shared at the airport, Citywest and across wider Networks.
- Signposting to local services and supports for Ukrainian Roma once accommodation secured linking with local Roma supports.
- Responding to new, emerging issues and regulatory changes, such as the Absence Policy, the renewal process for Temporary Protection, as well as monitoring impending changes to accommodation and welfare entitlements.

## Summary of Ukrainian Phonenumber Data

<b>Number of Cases:</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Number of People Supported:</b>	<b>837 people (469 adults and 368 children)</b>
<b>Number of Temporary Protection Cases:</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Number resolved Temporary Protection Cases (initially refused) following support:</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Number of Queries regarding accommodation</b>	<b>42</b>

<sup>1</sup> Pavee Point (February 2022) Protection for Roma and other minorities in Ukraine <https://www.paveepoint.ie/protection-for-roma-and-other-minorities-in-ukraine/>



# Context

## The Situation for Ukrainian Roma before the War

There were an estimated 400,000 Roma living in Ukraine before the Russian invasion<sup>2</sup>. Similar to the rest of Europe, Roma face high levels of racism, discrimination, poverty, and lack of access to employment, education, and health care in Ukraine. Additionally, Roma in Ukraine have been subject to active prejudice, hate speech, and violent attacks by radical groups<sup>3</sup>. This was widely publicised in 2018, with reports of violent attacks on Roma settlements involving extreme violence and the burning down of people's homes<sup>4</sup>.

Following the conflict in and around Ukraine in 2014, the OSCE published a situation assessment of Roma in Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. In this report, a lack of access to personal documents (civil registration and identification documents) was identified as a main challenge facing Roma communities in Ukraine. It also identified that many Roma have to work across the border in neighbouring countries (Poland, Czech Republic) in seasonal and informal jobs, while their families remain living in Ukraine.

## The Situation Facing Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Europe

Roma in Ukraine have been affected by the Russian invasion and violence, like all citizens of Ukraine. Many Roma have joined the Ukrainian forces, other Roma are involved in humanitarian work supporting vulnerable people<sup>6</sup>.

In 2023, the European Roma Rights Centre<sup>7</sup> monitored the experiences of Ukrainian Roma since the outbreak of the war, focusing on five countries bordering Ukraine (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova) as well as inside Ukraine itself. The report exposed a pattern of discrimination across Europe, including in EU member states and found cases of segregation, violent attacks, ethnic profiling, and discrimination against Roma.

For example, in Moldova, there were reports of Roma families forced to collect water from toilets and were even attacked by racist security guards with pepper-spray. In Hungary, Roma were segregated, racially abused, and ill-treated at the Ukrainian border where they were considered 'economic migrants' rather than legitimate refugees. The Czech response mirrored that of some Central European countries, with Roma subjected to hate speech from politicians, arbitrary ethnic profiling by the police, segregation, poor conditions, abuse by volunteers, and denial of access to services by local authorities.

---

2 European Commission, An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Brussels, 2011, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com\\_2011\\_173\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf) (Accessed 10 December 2013).

3 European Roma Rights Centre (2018) Anti Roma Pogroms <http://www.errc.org/news/anti-roma-pogroms-in-ukraine-on-c14-and-tolerating-terror>

4 Human Rights Watch (2018) Ukraine: Fatal Attack on Roma Settlement <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/26/ukraine-fatal-attack-roma-settlement> ERRC (2018) Anti Roma Pogroms in Ukraine <http://www.errc.org/news/anti-roma-pogroms-in-ukraine-on-c14-and-tolerating-terror>

5 <https://www.osce.org/odihr/124494>

6 Stephan Müller (6/13/2022) Forced Migration and the Roma in Ukraine <http://www.ror-n.org/-blog/forced-migration-and-the-roma-in-ukraine#comments>

7 ERRC (2023) ROMA RIGHTS UNDER SIEGE: MONITORING REPORTS FROM ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE <http://www.errc.org/reports--submissions/the-roma-rights-under-siege-monitoring-reports-from-one-year-of-war-in-ukraine>

In March 2024, the OSCE published a report titled 'Mapping the Challenges faced by Ukrainian Roma in a War Time and Overcoming the Obstacles through Policy, Advocacy and Empowerment'<sup>8</sup>. This report acknowledged challenges facing Roma communities, including limited access to medical support, lack of access to education for Roma children, poor and obstructed access to accommodation, inadequate documentation and discrimination in employment. It also highlighted that the discrimination facing Roma in Ukraine and abroad requires increased cooperation and coordination between and among state authorities and civil society for more targeted and effective assistance.

“(Pavee Point Worker) was someone we trust, he is from our community, he knows what we are facing and took time to explain things to us in our own language”

**Quote from Ukrainian Roma family**

### **Roma Access to Supports under the Temporary Protection Directive**

The European Union's Temporary Protection Directive was introduced in March 2022 and allows Ukrainian refugees to gain access to accommodation and the labour market. Ukrainian refugees do not have to enter the asylum process. However, it seems that it depends on the individual country if it extends Temporary Protection to persons from Ukraine entering without any or with limited documents.

Ukrainian Roma have faced issues meeting the requirements for Temporary Protection due to barriers such as discrimination, language and literacy difficulties and lack of documentation. Up to 20% of the Roma do not possess IDs, as well as other key documentation, and this has created problems in terms of Roma leaving Ukraine or being accepted as a refugee under the Temporary Protection System of the European Union. In some cases, this has even led to Roma not being permitted to cross the border to receiving countries, despite guarantees of entry for refugees in the EU Temporary Protection Directive and other international treaty law.

This access issue mirrors other regulatory barriers faced by Roma more widely. For example, in Ireland, many Roma coming from EU countries are also unable to access basic social protections due to the implementation of right to reside, European Directive 2004/38, and habitual residence condition (HRC) policy by the Department of Social Protection<sup>9</sup>. They face similar difficulties with proving their habitual residency in the State due to discrimination, lack of documentation, proof of address and language and literacy difficulties.

---

8 OSCE (March 2024) Mapping the Challenges faced by Ukrainian Roma in a War Time and Overcoming the Obstacles through Policy, Advocacy and Empowerment'<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/0/577460.pdf>

9 The habitual residence test is intended to evaluate if a person has a connection with the Irish State Department of Social Protection Habitual Residence Condition. Available at: <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/sw108.pdf>.

## CASE STUDY: CZECHIA

In 2022, President Milos Zeman<sup>10</sup> stated that Roma are not war refugees, but rather economic migrants. When Roma refugees from Ukraine slept rough in front of the train station of Brno, the Deputy Mayor Ms. Marketa Vankova<sup>11</sup> claimed that Roma refugees had applied for financial assistance in several countries but failed to provide proof for her statement when questioned by journalists. All provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees at the main train station was stopped at the end of May. The overwhelming majority of the refugees at the main train station were Roma.

An investigation by the Office of the Public Defender of Rights<sup>12</sup> found that Roma refugees were discriminated against at the Prague Regional Assistance Center for Aid to Ukraine in May 2022. Unlike non-Roma Ukrainian refugees, the Romani refugees were only allowed inside the registration centre if accompanied by non-profit sector staff or police; and only Roma were also required to have their accommodation arranged before they could apply for temporary protection.

## Ukrainian Roma in Ireland

Since April 2022, Pavee Point has worked closely with a number of Ukrainian Roma families, State agencies, relevant stakeholders, Donegal Travellers Project and other groups working with Roma to highlight the specific needs of Ukrainian Roma Refugees in the National Ukraine Response. Pavee Point is a National Traveller and Roma Organisation which seeks to promote the rights of Travellers and Roma in Ireland, and beyond. Using a community work approach, and within this remit, we highlight emerging concerns, work with government departments and State agencies to address these issues through both targeted and mainstreaming approaches. This work also includes working directly on the ground with Ukrainian Roma families.

“ In assessing applications for Temporary Protection, the Ukraine Response team works with all applicants to help them find the necessary evidence required under the terms of the EU Directive. The relationship that the unit has developed with Pavee Point has been of particular benefit when working with applicants from the Roma community in ensuring they can provide all required information for their application. We welcome the ongoing collaboration to enable us to help these applicants to the fullest extent. ”

**Ukraine Response Unit, Department of Justice**

10 Czech President calls Romani refugees from Ukraine “economic migrants” - Romea.cz - Everything about Roma in one place <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-president-calls-romani-refugees-from-ukraine-economic-migrants>

11 Mayor of Czech Republic's second city alleges Romani refugees sleeping in the train station can access benefits in other countries, then admits she can't prove it - Romea.cz - Everything about Roma in one place <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/mayor-of-czech-republic-apos-s-second-city-alleges-romani-refugees-sleeping-in-the-train-station-can-access-benefits-in>

12 <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/office-of-the-public-defender-of-rights-finds-discrimination-against-romani-refugees-from-ukraine-at-aid-center-in-czech>



## Findings from Pavee Point Ukrainian Roma National Phonenumber

As highlighted in previous reports, within the context of rising concerns, a national phonenumber was established in October 2022 as an interim measure to provide information and to signpost Ukrainian Roma to appropriate supports. The phonenumber operates Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9am-5pm, and it is managed by Pavee Point's Roma team<sup>13</sup> who provides information through Romani language. To date, through this phonenumber, we have provided support to over 800 Ukrainian Roma and provided support with queries regarding Temporary Protection, accommodation, health, social welfare, and child welfare/education. A common thread throughout many cases has been concerns and reports of racism and about discriminatory attitudes, or differential treatment and its impact on accessing supports.

Through our work, we have been able to highlight cases of concern, collaborate with relevant organisations and agencies, promote better understanding of the needs of Roma within the response, and achieve positive outcomes for families who faced significant barriers and challenges when seeking protection in Ireland.

Pavee Point has reflected and responded to the changing needs of Ukrainian Roma over time. In the beginning, the primary focus was on supporting Ukrainian Roma families to access their rights under the Temporary Protection Directive. Pavee Point worked closely with the Department of Justice to address access barriers, and the situation has improved since 2022. In 2023/2024, the most prevalent issue was accommodation, and 2025 has seen the need to support Roma through new national regulatory changes impacting Ukrainian refugees.

Three years since the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, the situation is moving from an emergency response to looking at longer-term solutions. Sadly, war continues in Ukraine and the humanitarian situation remains dire. The Temporary Protection Directive is due to expire in 2026, and currently all Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection in Ireland must renew their status via an online portal. There are also planned changes to the available accommodation supports for Ukrainian Refugees through the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP). These changes have a particular impact on Roma refugees, given the additional barriers they can face in terms of language/literacy/digital literacy, access to documentation, and discrimination in employment, education and housing. Pavee Point will continue to adapt and respond to the emerging issues and challenges facing the Ukrainian Roma community and this requires continued engagement with the State and other agencies, a whole of government approach and the need to address the specific needs of Ukrainian Roma in partnership with Pavee Point and other groups working with Roma.

---

<sup>13</sup> Pavee Point (2022) Briefing Paper Ukrainian Roma in Ireland <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pavee-Point-Briefing-Paper-Ukrainian-Roma-Refugees-in-Ireland-2022.pdf>

## Key Issues

### Discrimination

Over the three-year period, the phonenumber has received reports from Ukrainian Roma regarding concerns of racism and discriminatory behaviour/attitudes, which they believed impacted on the service/help provided to them. At the beginning of the response this issue was more pronounced and appeared to play a role in some decision-making processes. However, over time we have seen more positive outcomes for Ukrainian Roma. This has been achieved through Pavee Point monitoring and highlighting issues as they arise, the development of closer partnership working within the Ukraine response, and the provision of Pavee Point anti-racism training to relevant service providers.

#### **CASE STUDY: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA WOMAN SEEKING TEMPORARY PROTECTION**

In May 2022 there was a reported incident of discriminatory behaviour displayed by a Ukrainian interpreter at Dublin Airport and this directly impacted the Ukrainian Roma's initial Temporary Protection decision.

An older Ukrainian Roma woman was at the airport and she requested to have her Temporary Protection decision reassessed as she had been refused the previous day. The interpreter intervened and informed Pavee Point and Immigration staff that the woman was 'a liar' and she was 'not a genuine refugee'. Pavee Point spoke to the woman who furnished a valid passport and documentation and sought Pavee Point's support in requesting that Immigration staff review them. The woman was automatically approved and Immigration apologised to the woman. This was reported to the interpreter's manager by Pavee Point staff. As a result of this incident, Pavee Point delivered anti-racism training to all interpreters in that organisation.

### Temporary Protection

The primary concern for Ukrainian Roma families has been access to Temporary Protection. Since March 2022, we have supported 44 families who were initially refused their Temporary Protection on arrival, which in turn excludes them from accessing any supports (accommodation, healthcare, social protections) in the State. This can leave Roma families very vulnerable, especially considering the difficulties and barriers they may have already faced on their journey to Ireland.

Through working closely with families, the Department of Justice, as well as legal supports through the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, we have been able to successfully secure Temporary Protection in 24 of these cases. This shows that many Ukrainian Roma families who were initially refused Temporary Protection, did in fact have an entitlement to this protection, however, some additional barriers needed to be addressed to get their application approved. Ukrainian Roma families often face language/literacy difficulties, experiences of discrimination, and lack of access to all documentations required/requested.

In the early days, Temporary Protection refusals were common and there were significant humanitarian concerns for families who were in the State without any entitlements to accommodation, health, and social welfare supports. Many families stayed in Dublin Airport for a number of days while supporting them to advocate on their cases. Families, with very young children, including babies and infants, were forced to sleep on floors or benches, with little to no humanitarian supports.

Pavee Point engaged with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) legal team on a number of Temporary Protection Cases. We also provided anti-racism training/information sessions to the Department of Justice Immigration staff. Positive working relationships were developed with Immigration staff and clear communication pathways established. We believe this positive relationship supported better outcomes for Ukrainian Roma families, with a significant decline in the numbers of reported Temporary Protection refusals.

### Breakdown of Temporary Protection Cases

Dates	TP cases	Cases referred to IHREC	Cases Resolved
October 2022- October 2023	39	11	22
October 2023 - October 2024	5	1	2

#### CASE STUDY: FAMILY GRANTED TEMPORARY PROTECTION WITH SUPPORT FROM PAVEE POINT AND IHREC

In June 2023, a single Ukrainian Roma Mother, her father and six children were refused Temporary Protection at Citywest, with the reason provided to the woman as lack of documentation. This meant the family did not have access to accommodation or other supports. The family contacted Pavee Point and advised that they were sleeping at the airport.

We provided information about seeking International Protection in order to access accommodation, as well as the process for seeking legal advice with IHREC based on the information provided that the family had all essential documentation. They did not seek International Protection and another Roma family agreed to accommodate them while they went through the legal process.

The family met with an IHREC solicitor with interpreter support provided to discuss their case and documentation. In early July, the family went to Citywest with IHREC and Pavee Point and on a second review their Temporary Protection was granted. The family are now accommodated and living in Dublin.

### **CASE STUDY: 2 SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES REFUSED TEMPORARY PROTECTION, WITH ONE FAMILY RETURNING TO UKRAINE**

In July, one single Ukrainian Roma Mother with 5 children, and another single Roma Mother with 2 children came to Citywest seeking Temporary Protection. Both families were initially refused. The families then went and slept at the airport, where someone gave them the Ukrainian Roma Phoneline number. Pavee Point had concerns about women and children sleeping rough at the airport and contacted the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, as well as TUSLA. As the family did not have any entitlements in the State, they could not access emergency accommodation and TUSLA did not have alternative options for family accommodation and could only offer to take the children into care, which the mothers did not want, understandably.

Pavee Point advised the two families to return to Citywest and seek International Protection and signposted to legal supports available with IHREC. Both families returned to Citywest and on their return they were reassessed for Temporary Protection. The Mother with 5 children was approved on the second review for Temporary Protection, however, the mother with 2 children was refused for a second time. This family's case was referred to IHREC. The IHREC solicitor and Pavee Point supported the family at Citywest. Unfortunately, this case was refused a third time, based on lack of documentation and the family returned to Ukraine.

“ They didn't let me through (Temporary Protection) and I didn't know what to do. Someone told me to call Pavee Point and they helped me to understand what I needed and now we got approved. My family miss home but are very happy we are safe in Ireland ”

**Ukrainian Roma Family**

## Accommodation Queries

The second most common query to the Ukrainian Roma Phoneline is accommodation. As we are all aware, providing adequate accommodation for beneficiaries of International and Temporary Protection has been a significant challenge for the Government since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, this is further compounded by an overall housing and homelessness crisis and lack of supply of accommodation in the State. This is particularly challenging for large families, including Roma, as there are limited options available. In addition, Roma can face other issues in their accommodation, particularly, experiences of racism and discrimination. Through the work of the Ukrainian Roma Phoneline and based on work with Ukrainian Roma families on the ground, many Roma families have reported feeling segregated in their accommodation, unable to use communal spaces such as the kitchen or playroom. Families have reported complaints/threats of eviction/evictions, where they believe discrimination has played a role.

Pavee Point has worked closely with Roma families, DCEDIY, and other relevant stakeholders such as the Red Cross and Helping Irish Hosts to find solutions to these issues when they arise.

Accommodation issues experienced included severe overcrowding, unsuitable living conditions, evictions and navigating processes around housing assistance payments.

### **CASE STUDY: EVICTION OF ROMA FAMILY FROM HOTEL ACCOMMODATION**

A Ukrainian Roma family (parents, 2 teenage sons, and 9 year old daughter) had Temporary Protection and were placed in hotel accommodation at the end of December 2022. The family were evicted from the hotel in February due to non payment of their food bill. The family appealed to the hotel that they were not yet in receipt of social welfare and they were unable to pay. The hotel blamed the family for not completing forms given to them by social welfare and were told to leave the hotel. The family were unable to complete the documentation due to literacy issues and they had not received any support with filling out forms.

The family went to Citywest but they were refused admission. The family slept the first night outside Citywest before going to Dublin airport and slept there for a night, with no money or food during these 2 days. On Friday they met a Roma man who knew about the Ukrainian Roma Phoneline and they called us for support. Pavee Point linked with DCEDIY who provided guidance and liaised with the Department of Social Protection.

Initially the response was that it was believed the family was in receipt of a payment and they had refused to pay for their food. However, it was agreed that the family would be accommodated over the weekend while this was clarified, as the family were adamant that they did not have a social welfare payment. It was later confirmed the family did not have a social welfare payment and agreed the family should return to Citywest to be accommodated. The family were allocated a house by UCTAT and had their social welfare payment approved.



### **CASE STUDY: EVICTION OF ROMA FAMILY FROM PLEDGED ACCOMMODATION**

Pavee Point received a call from Helping Irish Hosts. A Roma family were in host accommodation and the landlord sought to evict them from the property with very little notice (over a weekend) due to reported damage of property. Helping Irish Hosts advised that they could not offer the family alternative accommodation due to damage of this property. Pavee Point advised Helping Irish Hosts to liaise with the family directly before the eviction to hear their side of the story. On inspection of the house, there was no damage to property and Helping Irish Hosts worked with the local Roma support worker at Donegal Travellers Project to secure alternative accommodation for the family.

### **Access to Health/Social Supports**

Similar to Roma in other Eastern European countries, Ukrainian Roma experience poorer health outcomes and stark health inequalities, including higher rates of morbidity and mortality, chronic health conditions, impacted by social determinants of health such as extreme poverty, and unequal access participation and outcomes in mainstream health services. This means that many Ukrainian Roma families are coming to Ireland with additional, complex health needs which need urgent attention.

Ukrainian Roma families have called the phoneline with queries about accessing supports such as healthcare and social protection. Callers often had difficulties understanding the system, faced language/literacy barriers, or were unaware of the local supports available to them. This sometimes resulted in longer waiting times/delays in getting the services they were entitled to.

Pavee Point supported families to apply for medical cards, translate key documents including hospital letters and support access to mainstream services.

### **CASE STUDY: DELAYED ACCESS TO SUPPORTS AND SERVICES**

The Ukrainian Roma Phoneline received a call from 2 Ukrainian Roma families who were granted Temporary Protection and living in Dublin. They had been in Ireland almost one year, however, they still did not have medical cards or a GP. Their 2 children were not registered in school. The family was not linked with a support worker and didn't know how to navigate the system. Pavee Point linked the family in with their local Ukrainian support service to explain the situation and make the connections. The Ukraine support worker followed up on the issues directly.

“ This work supporting the needs of Ukrainian Roma highlights the importance of the HSE and interagency working in partnership with Pavee Point and others to ensure the health needs and inclusion of Roma within the national Ukraine response is prioritized ”

**Concepta DeBrun, Social Inclusion Specialist, HSE CHO7**

## Emerging Issues/New Developments in Ukraine Supports

As we enter the third year of the Ukraine response, Ukrainian Roma continue to come to Ireland to seek protection, and families who have remained here continue to link in with the Ukrainian Roma phonenumber and local supports when needed.

As mentioned previously, the Temporary Protection Directive is due to expire in 2026, and currently all Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection in Ireland must renew their status via an online portal. Pavee Point is linking with the Department of Justice, the Ukraine Civil Society Emergency Response Forum and the National Roma Network to ensure the correct information is reaching Ukrainian Roma across the country. This includes the development of a Roma specific resource on how to renew their applications and provided where possible direct support for Roma families in this regard, particularly Roma who do not have digital/literacy.

At the end of 2023, the Ukraine Crisis Temporary Accommodation Team (UCTAT), under Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, introduced a new absence policy which states that Ukrainians cannot leave the country unless it is an exceptional circumstance such as for medical or compassionate reasons. We have shared this information with our networks, and we have also supported 2 families who faced difficulties on return to Ireland due to a lack of understanding of new rules (see case study below).

We are also monitoring the planned changes to the available accommodation supports for Ukrainian Refugees through the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP). These changes could potentially have a disproportionate impact on Roma refugees given the discrimination they face in terms of accessing employment and housing.

### CASE STUDY: NAVIGATING THE NEW ABSENCE POLICY

The Ukrainian Roma Phonenumber received a call from a family of two adults and five children. The father had to return to Ukraine to seek a conscription exemption from the Ukrainian army. The man was unaware of the new absence policy and the need to make a formal request to travel. Upon his return, he was denied access to his accommodation, where his wife and children continued to reside. Pavee Point linked with the family and the Ukraine Crisis Accommodation Team in DCEDIY. The family were able to provide the necessary documentary evidence and resolve the case. The father was then allowed to return to his original accommodation with his family.

“ We were happy to be consulted about difficult cases that arose involving Ukrainian Roma. We understand that Roma across Europe have faced a long history of racism and discrimination, including in crisis situations. The unit with responsibility for housing Ukrainian refugees were conscious of the very specific cultural context relating to Ukrainian Roma and their needs ”

**Traveller and Roma Policy Team, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**

## Feedback from Ukrainian Roma families

Since the development of the Ukrainian Roma support phoneline, Pavee Point has worked in close partnership with local organisations working with Roma, as well as local supports for Ukrainian Refugees. This has ensured that families can receive targeted supports in local areas from organisations who understand the needs of the Roma community. In 2023, Pavee Point engaged with families across Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Carlow and Dublin to see how they are settling in Ireland, one year on from the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Families have identified both positive and negative experiences in Ireland, with similar themes emerging from the visits. A number of families experienced difficulties with their accommodation, experiences of racism, and issues accessing their rights and entitlements.

### Collaboration with Donegal Traveller Project: Ukrainian Roma Families in the North West Region

Pavee Point has worked closely with the Donegal Travellers Project (DTP) and their Roma Team during the Ukraine response. The DTP Roma Health Project covers the Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim area and focuses on Roma health inequalities, and their DCEDIY funded project focuses on Community Development and Advocacy. Through these projects, DTP are supporting 48 Ukrainian Roma families that have been accommodated in this region.

In May 2023, DTP hosted a visit with Pavee Point to discuss collective issues and to meet with Roma families who had previously engaged with the phoneline. This was an opportunity to reflect on the work to date; identify ongoing challenges and enablers in supporting Ukrainian Roma families, one year on.

During the visit, we met with 16 Ukrainian Roma families who are living across Donegal, Sligo, and Leitrim. This consisted of 81 people (44 adults and 37 children). Families were living in various accommodation settings, in hotels, reception centres, and houses. Some families were living in extremely remote locations, including 3 families (12 adults and 10 children) living on one of the islands off the Donegal coast.

Pavee Point and DTP completed a short questionnaire with families to document their experiences since arriving in Ireland. Some had a positive experience, and many expressed being happy in Ireland. One family reported a positive relationship with their landlord who had helped them when a family member was very ill with cancer. The landlord had taken the time to support the family and bring them to all of their hospital appointments.

However, there were also a number of issues and challenges identified by the Roma families. The main concerns were:

- Difficulties accessing Temporary Protection on arrival
- Experiences of racism (on arrival, in Citywest, in their accommodation)
- Poor living conditions and overcrowding
- Living in remote locations, no public transport
- Chronic health conditions, and difficulty accessing necessary supports and medical cards
- School enrolments for children and accessing new places when families are moved
- Feelings of segregation in reception centres – other Ukrainians not allowing access to playroom and kitchen, only at certain times
- Language/interpretation barriers, with additional barriers for families living in Gaelacht areas

### **CASE STUDY: LIVING CONDITIONS**

One family of 13 people is housed in one bedroom. Their accommodation is really overcrowded, with no privacy and in poor condition. The hostel accommodation is very remote, a long distance from any amenities and no public transport.

The family also report racism from other Ukrainian people living in the centre. They do not want to mix with them, don't let them use the shared spaces. They are given specific times when Roma can use the kitchen.

### **CASE STUDY: FAMILY EVICTION**

One of the families was previously living in Donegal and then left for Germany as a family member was sick. When they returned Citywest did not offer them new accommodation, so they went to stay with extended family in their pledged accommodation in Donegal. The whole family were informed that they would be evicted if they allowed extra people to stay. The local Roma support worker responded and sourced the family new accommodation through the Local Authority

Since our visit in 2023, DTP continues to work to support Roma families and using a community work approach have adapted to the existing and emerging needs of the community. Currently, projects are focused on supporting families with renewal of Temporary Protection. This is labour intensive work, which requires one to one support. The team covers a large, remote/rural area which requires extensive travel.

“ We had our baby here and we didn't know for 5 months about getting the birth certificate or child benefit. No one could help us but we rang the phone and were able to get help with everything we needed ”

**Ukrainian Roma Family**

## Conclusion

Within our remit as a national Traveller and Roma rights organisation, Pavee Point identified that the specific needs of Roma needed to be considered within the national Ukraine response. Since 2022, along with other groups working with Roma and with Ukrainian Refugees in Ireland, Pavee Point has worked to ensure the inclusion of this new Roma community living in Ireland.

Similar to the rest of the Roma community in Ireland and across Europe, Ukrainian Roma have faced additional barriers when seeking support, due to experiences of racism and discrimination, language and literacy barriers, and difficulties accessing documentation. Pavee Point has worked closely with the relevant Government Departments, agencies and other civil society actors, to ensure that the specific needs of Ukrainian Roma are considered at national and local levels resulting in real, positive outcomes.

We have also highlighted these issues at European and international levels through engagement with international human rights monitoring bodies and regional instruments.

Over the three years, the situation has evolved and changed for Ukrainian Roma, and it has been important to adapt and respond to the changing needs/emerging issues as told to us by the community. We will continue, along with the wider Ukraine response and Roma Network, to monitor the needs of Ukrainian Roma, highlight any human rights concerns, and support their full inclusion in Ireland.





# Recommendations

**Reflecting on the learnings from this project, Pavee Point has identified some key areas for consideration to promote the rights of Roma and other marginalised groups in any future national responses:**

**1. Implementation of National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) II:**

Convene the NTRIS II Steering Committee and ensure full implementation and monitoring of the Strategy by all Government Departments involved. Commitment in NTRIS to develop a Roma Health Action Plan should be urgently prioritised underpinned by a Social Determinants of Health Approach and take into consideration the specific needs and experiences of Ukrainian Roma refugees.

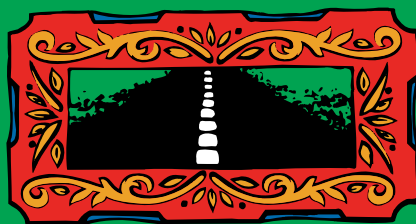
**2. Ethnic Data Essential:** The collection and use of ethnic data (ethnic equality monitoring) across all routine data collection systems, within a human rights framework is necessary to combat racism, eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights. Ethnic equality monitoring is government policy and a number of public bodies routinely collect and use ethnic data to inform policy and practice. This data can be used to put in place necessary measures and resources for Ukrainian Roma and support the State in properly monitoring the crisis and developing evidence-based responses and ensuring the needs of the community are met.

**3. Community Development Infrastructure:** Existing partnerships and community development infrastructure have been harnessed positively by the State in response to the Ukrainian crisis more broadly. However, as highlighted above, there is a need to strengthen and fully resource the Roma community sector to ensure that the Roma organisations and groups working with Roma can collectively respond to existing and emerging needs.

**4. Whole government approach required:** Ireland has demonstrated its competence in responding to crises, particularly in most recent times with COVID-19 and generally in its response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with whole-of-government approach evident and the pooling of resources across departments. It is important these approaches are institutionalised and that inter-agency working continues to be used proactively at both national and local levels in addressing Roma marginalisation.

**5. Anti-racism Training:** Awareness raising and training for all Government departments (and all organisations/agencies under their remit) staff within 3 months of employment as per NTRIS II.

**6. Access to mainstream services and supports:** Ensure Roma access to mainstream services and supports, including health services within their local area to ensure continuity of care. Core to this is access to appropriate interpreters, as well as providing training and opportunities for Roma to become professional interpreters.



**PAVEE POINT**  
**TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE**

**Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre**

46 Charles Street Great  
Dublin 1 D01XC63, Ireland

Phone: +353 (01) 8780255

Fax: +353(01) 8742626

Email: [info@pavee.ie](mailto:info@pavee.ie)

**[www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)**

