

Country fiche: IRELAND

Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

SUBSTANTIVE POLICY AREAS

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is a universal childcare programme with the stated objective of providing children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. • The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) has taken positive action measures through regional pilots to assist Traveller/Roma children's retention in the education system. It has also committed to provision of 10,000 EUR per year to support ten Travellers/Roma to be trained as social care workers. • A positive development is the forthcoming legislation to include Travellers culture and history into the school curriculum. • National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education has set a target to increase the number of Traveller new entrants to third-level education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic data is not currently collected by the ECCE scheme and therefore Travellers/Roma children's access, participation and outcomes remain unclear. • The use of restricted attendance timetables and home education for Travellers in difficulty with their schools or for whom school places are not found is an increasing concern. • The provision of segregated education for Traveller children remains a challenge with two Traveller-only schools continuing to be funded by the Department of Education and Skills. While one school has indicated they will close in June 2019, the other has not. • There is a need to offer Travellers/Roma high quality education programmes with clear pathways back to full provision and these must be stringently monitored and evaluated. • Specific educational supports cut between 2008 and 2012, must be reinstated to assist in addressing the persistently low levels of educational attainment of Travellers/Roma. |
|--|---|

EMPLOYMENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream public employment services and social services are available for Travellers/Roma. • There are new plans to adjust services based on the needs of Travellers/Roma and to support hiring Travellers/Roma in public sector. • The anti-discrimination legislation is in place and is monitored. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream strategies are not sufficiently tailored to Travellers/Roma needs and access and effectiveness may be limited; better coordination across government departments would improve their effectiveness. • Access to employment services is often limited for Travellers/Roma with no permanent residence. • Implementation of the new plans is delayed. |
|---|--|

HEALTHCARE

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health care services in Ireland, provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) are free of charge for holders of a medical card. • A discussion paper on National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) was developed and consulted at four regional meetings with stakeholders. The proposed framework is expected to include the establishment of a new planning advisory body for Traveller Health (PATH) and resources for NTHAP implementation. • Traveller-specific health infrastructure, including Traveller Health Units and 25 dedicated Traveller Primary Health Care Projects throughout the country have proven to be extremely successful and effective initiatives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) continues to pose a barrier to many Roma seeking to access health care and other social services. The HSE should review the legislative and policy restrictions preventing Roma with no income from accessing a medical card. • No dedicated high-level official has been appointed in either the Department of Health or the Health Service Executive (HSE) to take responsibility for Traveller health. |
|---|---|



HOUSING

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An independent review of the 1998 (Traveller Accommodation) Act is currently underway. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is absence of any actions in the NTRIS relating to addressing the housing and accommodation needs of Roma. There is a systemic failure of local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities to provide adequate and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers. There are high levels of experienced discrimination against Travellers/Roma in accessing private and public social rental sector. Travellers/Roma housing needs have become increasingly marginal in current policy focus and political debate on the housing and homeless crisis. Travellers are invisible in debates on homelessness despite representing at least 9% of the homeless population. Legislation has criminalised the practice of nomadism, whereas there is under-delivery on Traveller-specific accommodation (that is properly serviced halting sites and group housing). |
|--|---|

HORIZONTAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Code of Ethics for Irish Police was adopted in 2017, which specifically refers to membership of the Traveller community as being a wrongful ground of discrimination. The Irish Police appointed 277 Ethnic Liaison officers aimed at building trust. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination in access to services in pubs, restaurants and other licensed premises do not come under the remit of the Equal Status Act. Yet, Travellers are 38-times more likely than “White Irish” to report discrimination in such situations. Ireland should repeal relevant legislation to ensure that cultural practice of nomadism is not criminalised; and should ensure adequate safeguards against forced evictions, and where evictions do take place ensure that adequate alternative and appropriate accommodation is provided. The Code of Ethics for the police does not have any legal enforceability. Beyond the ethnic liaison officers, there is a need for all police to undergo anti-racism and anti-discrimination training. |
|--|--|

FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National police force has been recording ‘discriminatory motives’ since 2002, and the data is disaggregated since 2015. Prohibition of incitement to hatred act 1989 addresses membership of Traveller and Roma community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national strategy, building on the previous successful National Action Plan against Racism, should be developed and implemented in association with affected rights holders including Traveller and Roma organisations. Austerity measures closed an important structure – the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. Underreporting and under recording are serious obstacles to reach justice that have to be addressed. Systematic monitoring is also missing (besides some NGO initiatives). |
|---|---|

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS AMONG ROMA

- The NTRIS Steering Group established (for 2017-2020) a cross-working group to look at the gender specific actions in NTRIS and Traveller and Roma-specific actions in the National Strategy for Women and Girls.
- The NTRIS commits to promote the participation of Traveller and Roma children's participation in the Early Childcare and Education (pre-school) scheme.
- TUSLA has supported a pilot peer-led project to improve access to safety and protection orders for Traveller women.
- The NTRIS aims to improve the labour market situation of Travellers/Roma young people, in line with commitments under the Youth Guarantee; however, Ireland's 2018 report on the Youth Guarantee does not provide any information on progress in this regard.
- In the NTRIS there are 7 specific actions to address gender-based violence against Roma and Traveller women; however, there are no expected implementation dates set for these actions.
- Roma who cannot gain employment, or do not have their own resources and health insurance, are unable to meet the right to reside criteria. This has a negative impact especially on the rights of the child. The Child Benefit should be a universal payment, not contingent of the fulfilment of residence conditions.
- No measures have been adopted to address (explicitly) Roma LGBT+ issues.

STRUCTURAL MEASURES

STRENGTHS/KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MS APPROACH

WEAKNESSES/GAPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2017 the Department of Justice and Equality launched the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS). • NTRIS Steering Group was established by the Department of Justice and Equality in April 2015 with a mandate to contribute to developing NTRIS and to monitor the implementation and progress of NTRIS. • Some government departments and statutory agencies implement targeted measures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of political will and prioritisation means that little policy has been implemented, with no accountability for lack of implementation. • There are sectoral committees established in policy areas, but these committees either have not been convened and/or do not function effectively. • There is no clear budget allocated to the NTRIS and there is a lack of transparency around allocated funding and actual spending. • The NTRIS lacks a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework. • Some indicators have been identified, however, they were not developed in consultation with Traveller and Roma representatives on the NTRIS Steering Group. |
|--|---|

CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community development is at the core of Traveller organisations and there is a strong community development and human rights component underpinning this work in Ireland. • The current infrastructure includes four national Traveller organisations and local Traveller organisations, located in areas with sizeable Traveller populations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveller organisations struggle to access sustainable and adequate funding to promote empowerment and participation to the extent that it is needed. • Some Traveller and other civil society organisations have expanded to work with Roma and some Roma organisations are emerging, however, significant investment is needed to promote empowerment and participation of Roma, within a human rights framework. |
|---|--|

MAINSTREAMING OF ROMA INCLUSION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities (based in local authorities) have a statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities are failing to meet their statutory responsibilities to provide adequate and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers; they should be sanctioned for non- implementation of Traveller Accommodation Plans. • Although SICAP's targeted approach is welcome, there is still work to be done to ensure that Travellers and |
|--|--|

- The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is a national programme to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in local communities, which is managed by local authorities through Local Community Development Committees. Travellers and Roma are named as target groups under SICAP.

Roma are targeted in practice. Travellers represented less than 3% of overall SICAP caseload in 2016.

DATA COLLECTION

- Travellers refers to the approx. 35,000 Irish Travellers living in the island of Ireland, who were officially recognised as a minority ethnic group in 2017.
- Roma refers to those who identify as Roma in Ireland, approx. 4,000-5,000 people. This includes migrants and second and third generation Roma, many of whom are Irish citizens.
- Department of Education and Skills publishes disaggregated data on the basis ethnicity annually for pupils in primary schools in Ireland through the Primary Online Database; this is however not the case for secondary school level intake.

- There are significant gaps in reliable and comprehensive data on the socioeconomic situation and needs of Travellers and Roma.
- The lack of data makes it difficult to monitor impact of policy measures on Travellers and Roma, progress in NTRIS implementation or allocation of funding for Traveller and Roma organisations.

FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- There are over 25 dedicated Traveller Primary Health Care Projects throughout the country and up to 11 million EUR has been allocated to these initiatives.
- While funding for inclusion initiatives is available through a range of government departments, core funding is provided through the Department of Justice, now under the auspices of NTRIS. Funds are limited and accessing these funds is competitive.

- However, there has been no additional funding or new developments for the Traveller Primary Health Care projects since 2008 ('pre-austerity') despite the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study which showed that Travellers experience significant health inequalities.
- To date there has been a lack of clear criteria for the allocation of funds, a lack of transparency on availability of funds and no effective monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor the use of funds.

EXAMPLE OF PROMISING PRACTICE

For the first time, a targeted strategy the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) and a mainstream women's strategy National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 (NSWG) in Ireland have included actions related to improving the situation of Traveller and Roma women. The inclusion of Traveller and Roma women in these strategies is seen as a positive development. However, no progress has taken place in relation to actions related to Traveller and Roma women as there are no clear indicators, targets, outcomes or budget lines developed for the actions. Traveller organisations consistently raised concerns about this lack of progress at the national oversight meetings of both Strategies. Recently the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality has committed to developing an implementation plan for the actions related to Traveller and Roma women in the NTRIS and National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG). It has also agreed to prioritise progressing the situation of Traveller and Roma women in education and employment. It is important that the implementation plan for actions related to Traveller and Roma women in the NTRIS and NSWG is robust and contains clear actions, targets, indicators, outcomes and budget lines. Traveller and Roma women have also been included in a third mainstream policy initiative. The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV) contains two actions related to Traveller and Roma women. However, without a robust implementation and monitoring framework very little, if any, progress has taken place to improve safety and protection for Traveller women. Arising from actions related to NTRIS and the National Strategy on DSGBV, Tusla Child and Family agency has commissioned Pavee Point to undertake a pilot project in improving access to safety and protection for Traveller women. While this is a much-needed initiative, the pilot project must be adequately resourced and sustained into the future.

MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED

- To ensure implementation of Traveller/Roma policy, the government should develop impact indicators, clear budget lines, timelines and a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework.
- To establish an independent statutory Traveller Agency with dedicated responsibility to drive and monitor the implementation of Traveller policy, with accommodation prioritised in its first year. The accommodation needs of Roma should be addressed in NTRIS.



- To ensure an evidence-based policy-making that will require to roll out a standardised ethnic identifier across all government departments and agencies under their remit using the human rights framework in routine administrative systems and in the Census.
- To implement the forthcoming National Traveller Health Action Plan including the recommendation from the regional consultations, including establishment of a Planning Advisory Body for Traveller Health with dedicated staff and budgets to drive its' delivery and implementation.
- To address disproportionate levels of unemployment in the Traveller and Roma communities, including development of specific national training and employment plan for Travellers and Roma. Mainstream training and employment strategies also should include targeted measures.
- To support progression and retention of Traveller and Roma children in post-primary schools.
- To ensure funding for Traveller and Roma organisations to promote the empowerment of Travellers and Roma aiming at enhancing national and local policy development, implementation and accountability.
- To address racism against Travellers and Roma through a new National Action Plan Against Racism, with a clear focus on Traveller and Roma women and measures to address online hate speech.
- Progression and retention of Traveller and Roma children to post- primary schools should be supported. The use of limited timetables should be investigated (through data collection) to ensure they are not disproportionately applied to Traveller students, and that where they are being applied, that it is being done so in the best interest of the child.