# Public consultation on the development of a Revised National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy in Ireland

The Department of Justice & Equality invites interested parties to make initial submissions on a Revised National Traveller and Roma Inclusion[[1]](#footnote-1) Strategy in Ireland, to be implemented with effect from 1 January 2016. A copy of the current National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy (developed in 2011) is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/ireland/national-strategy/national_en.htm>.

This consultation process is an opportunity for members of the Traveller and Roma communities, members of the wider settled community and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of policy to further the inclusion of Travellers and Roma in Irish society.

## Introduction

The total number of Irish Travellers enumerated in April 2011 was 29,573 accounting for just over half of one per cent (0.6%) of the total population [Census 2011]. Travellers in Ireland have the same civil and political rights as other citizens under the Constitution. The key anti-discrimination measures, the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977, the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts specifically identify Travellers by name as a group protected. The Equality Act 2004, which transposed the EU Racial Equality Directive, applied all the protections of that Directive across all of the nine grounds contained in the legislation, including the Traveller community ground. All the protections afforded to ethnic minorities in EU directives and international conventions apply to Travellers because the Irish legislation giving effect to those international instruments explicitly protects Travellers.

The Roma community in Ireland is made up of persons of Romanian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Polish and Czech origin and Roma have the same rights and responsibilities as any other EU citizen when in Ireland. There are no official statistics on the number of Roma in Ireland but it is estimated to be in the region of 3,000-5000.

## Scope of the Revised Strategy

The Department has established a National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy Steering Group[[2]](#footnote-2), Chaired by the Minister of State for New Communities, Culture and Equality, to ensure that a renewed emphasis is given across Government to making progress on implementing Ireland’s National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy. The Minister considers that it is appropriate at this time to undertake a review the existing Strategy with a view to making whatever changes are appropriate by early 2016. The Steering Group will have the key role in overseeing this process.

The process will involve 3 phases. Phase 1 is an initial round of consultations to identify the priority themes to be addressed in a revised National Inclusion Strategy, followed by a second phase to identify and agree specific objectives under each of the themes identified and a third phase which will focus on identifying precise and measurable actions and timescales for achievement of each of the objectives that emerged from Phase 2. Thereafter, a final draft proposal for a revised Strategy will be prepared for consideration by Government.

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| Submissions sought |  |

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The Department is now commencing Phase 1, seeking views on the priority themes that should be addressed in a revised National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy. To aid the discussion under Phase 1, we have set out a number of themes that we would see as being key to progressing Traveller & Roma inclusion, some of which are identified as cutting across all other key priority areas:

1. **Cross-Cutting Theme 1: Data Collection and Ethnic Identifier**

There should be a consistent approach (in full accordance with the Data Protection Acts and the human rights framework) to the collection and utilisation of data in relation to the Traveller and Roma communities, with a particular focus on implementing an agreed indicators framework to inform the collection of measurable and comparable data in all of the key priorities areas of health, education, employment, housing and anti-discrimination

1. **Cross-Cutting Theme 2: Anti-discrimination and Anti-Racism**

Travellers in Ireland have the same civil and political rights as other citizens under the Constitution. All the protections afforded to ethnic minorities in EU directives and international conventions apply to Travellers because the Irish legislation giving effect to those international instruments explicitly protects Travellers. However, are additional measures needed to combat the levels of discrimination and prejudice, if any, against Travellers and Roma in Irish Society? Are additional measures needed to promote the social, economic, political and cultural participation of Roma and Travellers in society, including at local level?

1. **Cross-Cutting Theme 3: Gender, LGBT**

It is essential that the specific needs of women and members of the LGBT community within the Traveller and Roma communities are taken into account in all future service level planning with a view to ensuring that specific and real action is taken to ensure inclusion of marginalised groups within the Traveller/Roma communities.

1. **Accommodation**

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 provides the legislative framework within which housing authorities meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. The Act represents a planned, integrated and comprehensive response to the accommodation needs of Traveller families in need of accommodation. The provisions of the Act provide for public input and consultation at all stages of the preparation and implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes.

1. **Cultural Identity**

Traveller and Roma cultural identity needs to be acknowledged and be at the core of the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. Cultural identity should be promoted, valued and respected in Irish society in order to promote social inclusion and full participation of Travellers and Roma in society. This should involve specific actions to target the building up of Travellers and Roma self-confidence and self-esteem as well as innovative initiatives to promote positive representations and respect for Irish Travellers and Roma in Irish society, e.g. Traveller Pride Week. Initiatives should take place with a particular focus on media outlets and challenging negative media reporting, allowing the education of the wider community about the positive aspects of the Traveller and Roma communities while at the same time allowing Travellers and Roma to feel proud of their own identity.

1. **Education**

It is essential that effective and necessary supports are available to people from marginalised communities to enable them to participate in both formal and informal life-long learning and education, including pre-school, primary and post-primary, further and higher education. In relation to primary and post-primary, Traveller education is underpinned by the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (2006) while education for Roma alongside other migrant groups is supported within the Intercultural Education Strategy. Current policy for education provision, to ensure equal treatment and full access for all children including Travellers & Roma, is for a mainstream inclusive education. In addition, all education providers should be proactive in welcoming and taking positive actions to encourage the participation and progression of Traveller and Roma students.

1. **Employment**

Having a job or an occupation is an important determinant of self-esteem. It provides a vital link between the individual and society and enables people to be independent, to contribute to society and to achieve personal fulfilment. Yet Census 2011 shows an unemployment rate of 84.3% for Irish Travellers. Therefore, ensuring equal treatment of Travellers & Roma in access to the labour market and to employment opportunities is a crucial priority and one that should involve the establishment of targets for Traveller inclusion on labour market programmes including positive discrimination measures in terms of employment and social enterprise creation. In addition, there should be strong linkages between schools, employers and the Further Education and Training (FET) sector with regard to developing work experience/employment opportunities for the Traveller and Roma communities.

1. **Family and Children**

Implementation and monitoring of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy is a commitment in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People which runs from 2014 to 2020. The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy should acknowledge the link with the Framework and have regard to the Traveller and Roma-specific commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and also the significant range of universal commitments set out in this Framework as they may apply to the general child and youth population inclusive of both the Traveller and Roma communities. The Strategy should, in particular, recognise the importance of family consistent with culture and ethnic traditions; challenges to family life; family support and child welfare issues; cultural competency education and skill training for staff engaged with Traveller and Roma families.

1. **Health**

It is essential that Travellers and Roma are afforded equal treatment in access to universally available healthcare services. Equally it is essential that healthcare services are delivered by staff who have received cultural competence training and that such services are culturally appropriate catering for the specific needs of these communities. Specific actions, including affirmative actions as required, should be included in the HSE National Service and Operational Plans for implementation across the country, including in the areas of mental health, counselling, alcohol and drug addiction services and suicide ideation. In addition, the health and wellbeing of Travellers and Roma should be embedded into the priorities of local health service providers and local authorities, as well as into environmental planning and strategy development, so as to ensure that 'Health and Wellbeing' with specific reference to Travellers and Roma will be positioned as a theme in the local economic and development planning process underway.

1. **Political Participation**

There has never been a Traveller or Roma elected representative at the national level in Ireland. Accordingly, appropriate measures should be taken to promote and support the active participation of members of the Traveller and Roma communities in political life at both local and national levels.

## Your views

We want your views on whether these are the priority themes that should underpin the next National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS). We would like your opinions and comments under three questions as follows:

1. Are these the themes that should underpin the next NTRIS and what are your views on each of these themes?
2. Are there other themes that should be included?
3. Within the list of themes, which are the priorities?

## What happens next?

Once the first phase of this consultation process has been completed and a list of key themes have been agreed for the NTRIS, we will come back to all stakeholders to get your views on a draft list of objectives and key deliverables under each of the agreed themes.

Finally, we will come back again in the autumn of 2015 with a set of suggested actions and accountabilities under each specific objective/deliverable. The agreed themes, objectives/deliverables and specific actions and accountabilities will form the next National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy, subject to Government approval.

## Submissions

If you are making a submission, please include your name and contact details (Phone number, postal address and, if available, an email address) and please state whether the views expressed are personal or are being made on behalf of an organisation. If the views of an organisation are being submitted it should be made clear which organisation is being represented and you should indicate your position in the organisation. Submissions may be e-mailed to: tig@justice.ie or may be posted to

Traveller and Roma Inclusion Unit
Department of Justice and Equality
Bishop’s Square

Redmond’s Hill
Dublin 2

Please note that submissions received are subject to the Freedom of Information Acts and may be published on the Department’s website.

**The closing date for receipt of submissions is Friday 3rd July 2015.**

## Appendix 1

## National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

## Membership of Steering Group

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| Tusla - Child and Family Agency |
| Health Service Executive |
| Traveller Counselling & Psychotherapy Service |
| Involve |
| Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre |
| Department of Children & Youth Affairs |
| Higher Education Authority |
| Western Traveller & Intercultural Development |
| Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine |
| An Garda Síochána  |
| Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht |
| Department of Environment, Community & Local Government |
| National Traveller Women’s Forum |
| Irish Traveller Movement  |
| Parish of the Travelling People |
| Department of Education & Skills |
| Navan Travellers Workshops  |
| Department of Public Expenditure & Reform |
| Bray Travellers C.D.P. |
| Department of Health |
| Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation |
| City and County Managers Association |
| Mincéirs Whiden |
| Department of Social Protection |
| Exchange House Ireland |

1. The word ‘Inclusion’ is used in the Irish context, as agreed between the Department of Justice and Equality and Traveller representative organisations, as distinct from the word ‘integration’ used in the EU Framework for the Implementation of Roma Integration Strategies in Member States: see <http://ec.europa.eu/roma> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Appendix 1 for membership of the Steering Group. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)