

IRELAND

Country Fiche

Assessment of the progress in the NRSF implementation
between 1 June 2023 and 30 March 2025

APPROACH OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (NRSF)	<p>The publication of the second National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2024-28) in July 2024 was welcome and is the direct result of lobbying by Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma, with the aim to ensure a strategic, coordinated, whole of government approach to Traveller and Roma inclusion. The strategy comprises two documents; (1) the overarching Strategy; and (2) a two-year Action Plan. A second Action Plan will be developed for 2026-2028 following the mid-term review.</p> <p>NTRIS II has the potential to deliver positive outcomes for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. However, this requires committed resources across all relevant Government Departments, linked to clear targets and timelines. In order to provide a baseline and monitor progress, the State must introduce ethnic equality monitoring across all datasets. A significant number of actions in the Plan are targeted; there is a need to ensure a strong balance in relation to both targeted and mainstreaming. Ethnic data is also required to support this.</p>
ESTIMATED ROMA POPULATION	<p>32,949 Travellers recorded in Census figures, and according to the Dept of Housing's Annual Count of Travellers,¹ there are 12,360 families (approx. 50,000).</p> <p>16,059 Roma according to 2022 Census figures.²</p>
National Roma Contact Point (NRCP)	<p>Department of Children, Disability and Equality</p>

HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

1. FIGHT AND PREVENT ANTIGYPSYISM AND DISCRIMINATION

PROGRESS MADE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Action Plan Against Racism: NTRIS makes reference to the National Action Plan Against Racism. This is a positive alignment with a strategy which promotes inclusion of Travellers and Roma and acknowledges the intersectionality 	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced Focus on Racism/Equality: There are concerns about a change in prioritisation and language within the recent Programme for Government⁴ which lacks meaningful commitments in relation to human rights
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¹ Department of Housing, Local Government, Heritage (2023) Traveller Accommodation Statistics <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/2023-annual-estimate-of-accommodation-of-travellers-in-all-categories-of-accommodation.pdf>

² Central Statistics Office (2022) CSO population data <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/censusofpopulation2022/>

⁴ [Programme for Government 2025 - Securing Ireland's Future](#)

<p>between racism and multiple forms of oppression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hate Crime Legislation: We welcome the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 and measures are now needed to support Travellers and Roma to benefit from its protections.³ • Criminal Justice System: Actions 13-15 of NTRIS II seek to address the over representation of Travellers in the Criminal Justice System and support those already in prison. The Irish Prison Service is engaged with the work of the Traveller Justice initiative. 	<p>and equality, with the section on racism particularly weak.⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protections Against Hate Speech: We note with concern the removal of provisions addressing hate speech, leaving Travellers and Roma without this crucial layer of protection. According to the European Commission, Ireland is failing to comply with European law surrounding the criminalisation of race-based hatred. • Over-representation of Travellers in Prison: Travellers account for 0.6% of the population, but account for 8% of men in prison, 21% of children detained and 22% of the female prison population are Travellers.⁶ However, the State has not introduced measures to address this over-representation or contributing factors. • The Public Sector Human Rights and Equality Duty: This has now been in effect for over 10 years with limited evidence of the Duty being widely implemented in the public sector. Provisions could be made to strengthen and expand this provision.⁷
<h2>2. REDUCE POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION</h2>	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Traveller and Roma Culture: There are actions within NTRIS on the promotion of Traveller and Roma culture and the arts which supports Roma inclusion. Currently, a Traveller Heritage Strategy is under development, in partnership with national and local Traveller organisations. There are also assigned actions and allocated resources to continue to support annual events such as national and local Traveller Pride Week, International Roma Day (8 April). 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty disproportionately impacts marginalised groups, including Travellers and Roma.⁸ • There are no dedicated targets for reducing Traveller and Roma poverty in mainstream policy initiatives related to poverty.⁹ There are no specific anti-poverty actions¹⁰ within NTRIS II and this is a clear gap in the Strategy. • Many Roma in Ireland are unable to access basic social protections due to the

³ [Criminal Justice \(Hate Offences\) Act 2024](#)

⁵ No reference or commitments made in relation to the Government's National Action Plan Against Racism.

⁶ [Irish Prison Service cited in Travellers in Prison Initiative.](#)

⁷ This could establish a set of minimum standards in relation to the role of Equality Bodies to allow them to take challenges for failures to comply with the Duty and for the full transposition of the EU Directives [Standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities](#), EU, 2024

⁸ Due to higher levels of unemployment, health inequalities, and high levels of homelessness [The State We Are In - Inequality in Ireland 2025](#)

⁹ Including the Roadmap for Social Inclusion [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025](#)

¹⁰ including establishing a baseline or to tackle the issue systemically through universal application of Child Benefit. Another potential action is to review and/or address the regulatory barriers that prevent Roma from accessing basic social protection supports and state funded services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combatting Poverty: We welcome that the successor policy to the Roadmap to Social Inclusion intends to name Travellers and Roma as a priority group and we look forward to seeing these actions, which will need clear targets and adequate resourcing. 	<p>implementation of Department of Social Protection policies,¹¹ excluding access to welfare supports, including Child Benefit (a universal payment for all children in the State).¹² Roma face significant difficulties with meeting eligibility requirements due to access to documentation, discrimination, and language and literacy barriers.¹³</p>
<h3>3. PROMOTE PARTICIPATION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT, COOPERATION AND TRUST</h3>	
<p>The Capacity of Traveller organisations and Groups working with Roma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Ireland, there are national Traveller organisations, one national Traveller and Roma organisation, as well as autonomous local Traveller organisations across the country, and various Roma projects and groups working with Roma. • There are a range of national networks that Traveller civil society engage in.¹⁴ • Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma represent on various mainstream policy structures and forums, ensuring the voice of Travellers and Roma are included¹⁵ at national, regional, local level. • Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma also engage at international level. A coalition of Traveller and Roma organisations engage with international human rights mechanisms.¹⁶ 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travellers and Roma experience significant exclusion from decision making and wider political processes due to discrimination and marginalisation. The State has not adopted measures to improve the representation of Travellers or Roma in political institutions at local or national level.¹⁹ The State should consult Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma in the design and implementation of positive actions intended to increase Traveller and Roma political participation. • Funding needs to be provided to support existing organisations, and the creation of new autonomous Traveller and Roma organisations who can engage with local and national structures for policy consultation, design and service delivery. • The Roma community infrastructure is not as well developed as the Traveller

¹¹ The right to reside, European Directive 2004/38, and habitual residence condition (HRC): Under the European Directive 2004/38 every EU citizen has a right of residence in another member state for up to three months. They have a right of residence for more than three months if they: are workers or self-employed in the member state; have sufficient resources for themselves and their families so as not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host state and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover; are enrolled at a private or public establishment for study purposes and have sufficient resources for themselves and their families so they are not a burden on the social assistance system; or are family members accompanying or joining the Union citizen who satisfies the above conditions as appropriate. European Union (n 137)

¹² 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>.

¹³ [Pavee Point and Dept of Justice \(2018\) National Roma Needs Assessment](#)

¹⁴ such as the National Roma Network, National Traveller Partnership, National Traveller Health Network, as well as platforms for civil society and Government to work in partnership and implement policy, such as the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, National Traveller Health Implementation Group, Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Steering Group.

¹⁵ In key policy areas such as health, education, employment, housing/accommodation, children and women's rights.

¹⁶ For example, recently, the coalition engaged with Ireland's review under CEDAW. The coalition provided an alternative report on Traveller and Roma women's rights in Ireland, they made representations at the review in Geneva, and will use the recently published concluding observations in our advocacy work.

¹⁹ FCNM, *Opinion on Ireland*, ACFC/INF/OP/I(2004)003, 5 May 2004; FCNM, *Second Opinion on Ireland*, ACFC/OP/II(2006)007, 30 October 2006; FCNM, *Third Opinion on Ireland*, ACFC/OP/III(2012)006, 19 April 2013; FCNM, 2019; CERD, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Ireland*, CERD/C/IRL/CO/2, 2005; CERD, 2011; CERD, 2019; CEDAW, 2017; Council of Europe, *Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Thomas Hammarberg on His Visit to Ireland*, Strasbourg, 2008.

<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under theme 9 of NTRIS,¹⁷ there are actions focused on assessing the local representative structures and the barriers to engagement for Travellers. There is a specific action to assess the advocacy and representation needs of Roma at local level. This work must be done in partnership with local Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma, and funding and supports must be allocated to Traveller and Roma organisations to engage for meaningful outcomes. Political Participation: We acknowledge the important development in this area in 2020 with the appointment of a Traveller woman to the Seanad and her election in 2024.¹⁸ 	<p>infrastructure, with no autonomous local Roma organisations, and many areas of the country that are without a dedicated Roma project/supports. Where there are Roma projects or workers, there are difficulties in terms of adequate/sustainable funding and their inclusion in local decision-making structures.</p>
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<p>SECTORAL OBJECTIVES</p>	
<p>4. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY INCLUSIVE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION</p>	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NTRIS II commits to the implementation of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy, as well as wider actions in terms of literacy, further and higher education. We welcome these commitments and the development of the first National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy along with the first of three implementation plans²⁰ which looks at the inclusion of Travellers and Roma across all educational levels. Other positive developments include the use of targets for Travellers and Roma within the National Access Plan for Equity of Access in Higher Education²¹ The robust implementation of both strategies with 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in Early Years initiatives is approx. 70% for Travellers and approx. 93% for the non-Travellers,²³ with reliable data for Roma not available. Ireland's childcare and early years education system is in crisis,²⁴ with high costs, lack of places, and high staff turnover, which has a particular impact on access for marginalised groups including Travellers and Roma. A public model of childcare is needed. Traveller and Roma community organisations require ongoing resources to sustain and enhance their essential education work.

¹⁷ Theme 9: Participation, Empowerment, Cooperation and Accountability.

¹⁸At local level, there are currently no Traveller or Roma councillors. At national level, Ireland had never directly elected a Traveller or Roma woman to either House of the Oireachtas until the 2025 Seanad election when Senator Eileen Flynn was elected for the Administrative Panel in 2025, having previously being nominated by the Taoiseach in 2020.

²⁰ Traveller and Roma Education Strategy, 2024, <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/2545f-traveller-and-roma-education-strategy/>.

²¹ National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028, 2022, <https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/#:~:text=The%20National%20Access%20Plan%20continues,on%20participation%20and%20student%20success.>

²³ [Pavee Point \(2024\) Traveller and Roma Education – Vision, Issues and Actions](#)

²⁴ [Pavee Point and other National Traveller Organisations are members of the Together for Public Campaign](#)

<p>accurate data to support monitoring, setting post-primary targets, and allocating resources will be required to address the educational disadvantage of Travellers and Roma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In terms of early years education, we welcome the Early Start²² programme launched last year which has a focus on Travellers and Roma and seeks to employ staff to secure outcomes for both communities. 	
5. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT	
<p>PROGRESS MADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We acknowledge the State's commitment to develop a Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan and the targeted employment supports for minority ethnic groups in the State's Pathways to Work Strategy.²⁵ However, work is yet to begin on the development of the plan. There are also employment programmes in place such as the Traveller apprenticeship scheme and the Civil Service Traveller and Roma Work Placement Programme which aim to address the employment inequalities faced by the community, creating targeted employment opportunities for Travellers and Roma. 	<p>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travellers and Roma experience high levels of unemployment²⁶ due to racism, discrimination,²⁷ low educational attainment, and can remain in a poverty trap. Roma who do not meet the right to reside or HRC²⁸ are not considered jobseekers and therefore not eligible for many training and employment supports. The high cost of childcare acts as a major barrier for Traveller and Roma women to access employment, further education and training.²⁹ Many also fear losing secondary benefits, particularly the Medical Card, considering the community's stark health inequalities.³⁰

²² The Early Start Programme is a pre-school project which targets some areas of urban disadvantage. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/services/early-start-pre-school-programme/>

²⁵ Gov of Ireland (2021) Pathways to Work. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-social-protection/publications/pathways-to-work-strategy-2021-2025/>

²⁶ Irish Census, 61% of Irish Travellers reported being unemployed, and 16% of Roma (thought to be underestimation)

²⁷ 81.6% of Roma report feeling discriminated against seeking employment, and 55% of Travellers have experienced discrimination at work. Kelleher et al., All Ireland Traveller Health Study, University College Dublin & Department of Health & Children, 2010; Curran, S., A. Crickley, R. Fay, F. McGaughey (eds), Roma in Ireland – a National Needs Assessment, Department of Justice and Equality, 2018.

²⁸ Habitual Residence Condition

²⁹ Ireland has the highest childcare costs in the EU as a percentage of family income, making it inaccessible for many Traveller and Roma women. OECD, *Benefits and Wages: Statistics*, 2014, cited in Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Submission to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, June 2015, www.ihrec.ie.

³⁰ Within the context of poor health outcomes for Travellers and Roma, this fear is not unfounded. Kelleher et al., 2010 (2); Curran, et al., 2018 (2).

6. IMPROVE ROMA HEALTH AND EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

PROGRESS MADE

- We acknowledge and welcome the publication of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) 2022-2027.³¹ This is an ambitious plan and holds potential to have an impact on Traveller health as it acknowledges systemic racism, social determinants of health and commits to strengthening partnership working between the health service and Traveller organisations. To be effective it needs to be fully resourced and implemented, using ethnically disaggregated data to monitor and identify Traveller, participation, and outcomes in health.
- In NTRIS II, the State has committed to the development of a Roma Health Action Plan which is to be welcomed and must be developed in partnership with groups working with Roma, using a social determinant of health approach.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- There are poor health outcomes for Travellers and Roma³² due to structural inequalities and failure to address the social determinants of health, including racism, discrimination.
- Many Roma who do not have an income or have difficulties with proving where they live, cannot access means tested Medical Cards.
- For effective development and implementation of a Roma health action plan, there needs to be further investment and strengthening of the Roma health/community development infrastructure.
- Currently retention, progression and recruitment of Traveller Community Health Workers is a significant concern and an urgent need to address this³³ through pay parity, development of progression routes and broadening of the career paths within health services and the broader public sector. This is imperative given that the vast majority (83-86%) of Travellers access health information from these projects.³⁴

7. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO ADEQUATE DESEGREGATED HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

PROGRESS MADE

- A new preferential National Caravan Loan Scheme for Travellers was introduced for 2025.³⁵ The new Scheme allows local authorities to offer preferential, discounted

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The persistent and deteriorating accommodation crisis among Travellers and

³¹ HSE (2022) [National Traveller Health Action Plan](#)

³² The mortality rate for Travellers is three times the rate of the general population, and suicide for Travellers is 6 times higher than the general population. Traveller women's perinatal outcomes remain exceptionally poor, with disproportionate rates of maternal mortality, morbidity and perinatal death. Traveller babies are three times more likely to die in their first year than infants in the general population, even though 98% of Traveller women avail of maternity services. We are concerned that Traveller health inequalities have widened, particularly as the general population's health has improved.

³³ It is important to note that Traveller Community Health Workers are at the cold face of crises responding on the ground to health inequalities and the mental health crisis and extremely high suicide rates facing the community. NTRIS II commits to reviewing Traveller Primary Healthcare Projects and these considerations need to be a part of future proofing.

³⁴ HSE National COVID-19 Traveller Service User Experience Survey found 86% of Travellers got their information about Covid from Primary Health Care workers.

³⁵ [Government of Ireland \(2024\) New preferential Caravan Loan Scheme](#)

<p>loans for Traveller families to purchase a caravan / trailer for use as their primary residence and substantially increases the loan limits from 40,000 EUR to up to a maximum of 80,000 EUR, in certain circumstances. If implemented effectively, this is a positive new scheme.</p>	<p>Roma³⁶ has been exacerbated by Ireland's ongoing housing and homeless crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite significant national and local Traveller accommodation infrastructure, a slowly increasing budget and a full spend of Traveller Accommodation budgets since 2020, implementation is slow. Spend is focused on maintenance of existing Traveller accommodation rather than new units to meet existing and projected needs. • Of significant concern are new proposed amendments relating to homelessness in the Housing Act 1988,³⁷ which seek to introduce further restrictions to eligibility criteria for accessing emergency accommodation. • The accommodation actions within NTRIS II are limited and lack targeted actions related to Roma accommodation and homelessness. • There is a need for stronger action and commitment from the Department of Housing to address Traveller and Roma homelessness and provide enough culturally appropriate accommodation.
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PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

NTRIS II Design

- NTRIS II represents an evolution of the precursor NTRIS 2017-2021, more outcome-focused, stronger focus on implementation, and accompanied by two two-year action plans, which provide greater detail re. expected action deliverables, timelines and performance indicators.
- A partnership approach with Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma is embedded.
- The Strategy commits to the coordination at the central Government level.
- The strategy was developed with consideration of the PSD.³⁸

³⁶ Research shows that 39% of Travellers meet the European definition of homelessness compared to 6% of the general population. As this includes a large number of Travellers who are experiencing 'hidden homelessness' in overcrowded living conditions. This is (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion - ETHOS). Over 90% of Roma in Ireland report experiencing discrimination when accessing accommodation. Almost half of Roma in Ireland have experienced homelessness in their lives, and due to the restrictive criteria of accessing emergency accommodation and social housing supports, most live in poor private rental accommodation and overcrowded conditions. [Pavee Point and Department of Justice \(2018\) National Roma Needs Assessment](#)

³⁷ More information in [Pavee Point's Submission](#) to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Homelessness Related Aspects of the Housing Act 1988

³⁸ The statutory obligation of public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect the human rights of everyone affected by their policies and plans Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

- NTRIS II contains a number of welcome actions that commit to increasing Traveller and Roma participation in local and national decision-making structures and political representation.
- The commitment to support the development of a network of dedicated Roma organisations is important in the context of the underdeveloped nature of the Roma civil society infrastructure

NTRIS Implementation and Monitoring

- The first meeting of the NTRIS Steering Committee was held in May 2025 (10 months after its publication), it was chaired by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) and comprises of representatives from all relevant Government Departments, and Traveller and Roma representatives. NTRIS II Progress Updates for Q4 2024 are published as per the commitment to regular reporting.³⁹ DCDE has established a new dedicated webpage for Traveller and Roma inclusion.⁴⁰
- NTRIS steering committee has an Employment subgroup and other Traveller policy steering groups⁴¹ feed into NTRIS II. There are also discussions about forming a subgroup focused on data, research and training.
- As part of the NTRIS Monitoring Structure, a Traveller and Roma Forum will be held each year (first scheduled for October 2025). This is a space for Travellers, Roma, Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma to come together and have a mandate to question NTRIS II Steering Committee representatives regarding the annual reports and progress in implementation, as well as to feed into development of new action plan and future strategy.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Under Action 34 of NTRIS II Action Plan, the Department of Justice is leading on the development and implementation of a Traveller and Roma Internship Programme in the Civil Service. This programme was co-designed with representatives from Traveller and Roma organisations (including Pavee Point). The next iteration of this programme will open in September with 24 placements available across multiple Civil Service Departments nationwide. A new pathway to permanency has been added to the programme, which will allow participants who successfully complete the placement, apply for a permanent position in the same Civil Service Department through a confined competition. This is a positive affirmative action measure which seeks to address systemic racism and employment inequalities and provide a clear pathway for Travellers and Roma to hold positions within the public sector.

³⁹ [NTRIS II Updates Q4 2024](#)

⁴⁰ The webpage also has links to easy-to-read versions of the Strategy and videos in English, Czech, and Romanian. [DCDE Traveller and Roma Inclusion Webpage](#)

⁴¹ Such as the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Committee and the National Traveller Health Action Plan Working Group.