



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Traveller and Roma Education Strategy

2024–2030



MINCEIR, PAVEE AN ROMA
GRANĒL OLSK-SUNNI

NACIONALNO STRATEGIA
VASH E PHIRUTNE THAJ
E ROMANE EDUKACIA



Contents

Ministers' Foreword	2-4
A word from the Chair of the Strategy Advisory Group	5
A word from the Traveller and Roma organisations	6
Vision 2023	7
Introduction	9
Development and consultation	16
Key themes from the consultation	20
Values to guide the delivery and implementation of this strategy	23
Strategic goal	25
Strategic pillars and strategic actions	27
Strategic Pillar 1: Participation and Experience	29
Strategic Pillar 2: Access and Outcomes	30
Strategic Pillar 3: Partnership	32
Strategic Pillar 4: Delivering Change	33
Driving implementation, monitoring progress, evaluating impact and reporting	34

Ministers' Foreword

I am pleased to welcome the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy on behalf of the Department of Education. This strategy represents a significant milestone in our commitment to improving the learning experience and success for Travellers and Roma children at all levels of the education system and outlines the steps we will take over the next six years to achieve this.

This strategy aims to improve the educational outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people in our schools, which are lower than the general population.

My Department supports all children and young people to engage in school and I have introduced a range of universally available measures over the last number of years to help schools and families, including most recently the expansion of the free school books scheme to Junior Cycle. I have already put in place targeted supports for children and young people at risk of educational disadvantage through the DEIS programme and in particular there is great work going on through our Supporting Travellers and Roma (STAR) school pilot programmes aimed at retaining Traveller and Roma children and young people in the school system. Notwithstanding this, we recognise that we must always do more to ensure that all learners can access the full benefits of education.

This strategy has been developed through the strong collaboration of Traveller and Roma organisations with the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Equality Disability Integration and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. There has been widespread participation from a range of stakeholders in our extensive consultation process including the children and young people themselves. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all who have contributed their time, expertise and insights. Your involvement ensures that our approach is informed, inclusive and adaptable.

The goal in this strategy can be achieved only by working across government and in partnership with a wide range of organisations. I look forward to continuing to work in collaboration with my Ministerial colleagues and their departments, the Traveller and Roma organisations and with the education partners and our colleagues across all school communities. As we begin the first of three two-year implementation stages, I am confident that this strategy sets forth a clear path to build on existing progress. The new structures for steering and monitoring the strategy will be rooted in partnership and will enable us to continue to consult and adapt as we progress. The strategic actions in this strategy are grounded in the experiences of the Traveller and Roma communities. They are ambitious yet practical. As the actions evolve over the coming years I am confident that they will result in real changes to improve the experience of and outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people in our education system.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norma Foley".

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education

Traveller and Roma young children are among the most disadvantaged and marginalised in Ireland. We recognise that in early life, disadvantage poses multiple risks to children’s development and can have long term impacts on their opportunities and social inclusion.

High quality early learning and care have an important role to play in our children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development and well-being and in helping to break these inter-generational cycles. School-age childcare services can also play an important role in supporting children’s holistic development, complementing the formal education provided in schools. This underscores the importance of ensuring that children from all backgrounds, including and especially Traveller and Roma, can access and participate in high quality early learning and care and school-age childcare. Of central importance for children and families is that government departments work together across the education continuum to support children make successful and supported transitions into and through each stage of their education journey.

The strategic actions relating to early learning and care and school-age childcare in this document are underpinned by my Department’s Equal Start model. This new model was developed in careful consultation with stakeholders including Traveller and Roma representatives, early education providers and parents. Equal Start introduces a set of universal and targeted measures to support access to, and participation in, early learning and care and school-age childcare for children and their families who experience disadvantage and marginalisation. The model adopts a tiered approach, which incorporates universal supports, child-targeted supports and setting-targeted supports, to ensure Traveller and Roma children attending early learning and childcare will benefit from a continuum of supports that best supports them as they start their learning journey.

This education strategy for Traveller and Roma children is part of the wider National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS). It’s inclusion in the NTRIS process will help ensure children’s success in early learning and care and beyond. Collaboration with other government departments and the Traveller and Roma organisations and wider communities working together will ensure our success. I am therefore pleased to publish this Traveller and Roma Education Strategy in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roderic O’Gorman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roderic O’Gorman TD
Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

I would like to welcome the publication of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030. Making sure everyone has equal access to education is a collective Government responsibility. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously and one that my department prioritises through our work on the National Access Plan. We know that we have more to do to support marginalised groups like the Traveller and Roma communities in their educational journey. Education is for everyone, regardless of where they grew up or what background they come from, and it is our job to make sure that students are provided with options for their education and that they are welcome there.

This Strategy recognises that every person's educational path is different and the level and type of supports that are needed along the way can vary. The Traveller and Roma Education Strategy has been developed collaboratively between my Department, the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and we will continue our work together to implement the plans outlined in the strategy. I look forward to our departments continuing to work with the Traveller and Roma communities to ensure that they are given every opportunity to thrive during their educational journey.

The drafting of this strategy was only made possible by the active engagement of all the stakeholders, and I want to acknowledge and thank you for your work and dedication in putting this strategy together.



Patrick O'Donovan TD
Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

A word from the Chair of the Strategy Advisory Group

The right to education is a fundamental right, recognised across multiple international human rights treaties to which Ireland is a party, reflected in the Irish Constitution and in Irish law and policy. As important as it is powerful, the right to education is integral to a person's dignity, their right to healthy development, and the fulfilment of their potential and talents. Education – as crucial for children, as for adults as life-long learners – is key to respect for the human rights of others and to a democratic society where everyone lives free from discrimination, racism and disadvantage. The realisation of the right to education requires that education is accessible to all, and that the experience of education is one where human rights are respected. While the education process requires partnership – between the learner, their family and community and those in the education system – ultimately, the state must be held accountable for ensuring the right to education is guaranteed.

For too long and for too many, Travellers and Roma have not enjoyed the right to education in Ireland. Addressing this in a meaningful and effective way, this new strategy identifies the objectives and actions required to ensure that the right to education is enjoyed by Travellers and Roma, without discrimination and in a manner that is rights-based, inclusive, outcome focused and respectful of Traveller and Roma cultures and identities. The strategy is not only important in its intent, it is informed by a widely consultative and constructive process with Travellers and Roma as well as stakeholders across the education system. Based on extensive consultation with the Traveller and Roma communities, including children and young people, and informed by their lived experiences of the education system, the strategy adopts an approach based on a shared vision and values, presenting a series of practical, time bound actions. Taken together, this represents a very meaningful attempt by the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Science to address the shortcomings and inequities of the current education system from the perspective of Traveller and Roma.

It has been my privilege to chair the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Advisory Group to support this strategy and to observe the respectful, inclusive and constructive approach taken by all its members, especially the Traveller and Roma organisations and groups whose impact at every stage was so crucial. All acknowledge that this is the first and not the final step in an ongoing process to ensure that, resourced and implemented, the strategy will make real strides towards the fulfilment of the right to education of Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

Professor Ursula Kilkelly
Chair of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Advisory Group

A word from the Traveller and Roma organisations

The publication of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy marks a reinforced commitment by the Minister of Education, Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research and Science and their respective departments to Traveller and Roma education ambition and equality. Education equality means equity of access, participation, and outcomes for Travellers and Roma at all levels in the system, inclusion at all levels in the curriculum, and at all levels in the education workforce and in the early learning and childcare workforces. Education equality means an end to all forms of discrimination and racism which affect the education experience of Travellers and Roma, which has been negative for too many and has led to intergenerational exclusion with consequences for life chances. Achieving equality also means ensuring equity of access and participation through continued and reinforced support and resourcing for education initiatives including education initiatives of Traveller and Roma organisations.

For the many Travellers and Roma who generously gave their time to participate in the strategy consultations, and for the Traveller organisations which have worked for years on education rights at local and national levels, equity and equality in education is essential for achievement of Roma and Traveller rights. This has been the basis of our contributions to the Advisory Group. A one size fits all approach can't address all needs, some of which are intersectional. For example, the education rights of Traveller and Roma girls and women, Roma and Travellers with additional educational needs, and Roma facing language barriers, need particular attention.

We acknowledge the commitment and work of the department officials who were involved, and the opportunities to engage with the strategy's development. The strategy is a first step. The associated first implementation plan will need reinforcement of targets and timelines in the following two plans. An oversight group with membership from the communities to support and monitor implementation will be essential to achieve lasting progress for Roma and Travellers Education rights. We look forward to continuing to contribute to this essential work.





Vision 2030

The following vision statement reflects the vision statement for the three government departments involved and has been further developed in consultation with the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) Advisory Group.

We want a high quality, inclusive education system that is open and welcoming to all, irrespective of background or ability; an education system that meaningfully engages learners of all ages in a positive learning environment where equality is upheld, and diversity respected, and where every individual is valued and actively supported to reach their full potential.



A strong focus is being placed on children and young people reaching their full potential. In doing so, it is particularly important to provide supports to children and young people at transition points in our education system and providing information supports to Traveller and Roma parents and guardians to encourage their involvement. Particular emphasis will be placed on retention by increasing the number of Traveller and Roma children and young people's success in three areas: participation in early learning and childcare, completion of the Leaving Certificate and entry to and completion of further and higher education.

Working collectively to combat and prevent racism and discrimination within the education system will provide for an inclusive, respectful and positive experience for all Travellers and Roma. This will be done by embedding inclusion and embracing diversity in all educational settings.

The establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework will be an integral part of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy and this will be overseen by an oversight group. TRES is a six-year strategy which will be supported by three two-year implementation plans. The first implementation plan 2024-2026 is published alongside this strategy and places a focus on the detailed research undertaken to date through the literature, extensive consultations and existing initiatives. The first implementation plan provides the foundation to set up this strategy and establish initiatives. The focus of subsequent implementation plans will be to build and extend on the work and learnings of the first implementation plan and to incorporate new initiatives not included in the current plan. This will also include setting clear targets in relation to participation in early learning and childcare, retention to Leaving Certificate and entry to and completion of further and higher education.

1 Introductions



Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of society and a driver of social equality. This education strategy is specifically developed to meet the needs of the children, young people and adults from the Traveller and Roma communities with the aim of enhancing their education experience and success. It is intended to provide direction for the whole education system, including early learning and childcare, primary and post-primary school, further, higher and lifelong education through cross-departmental collaboration between the Department of Education, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Travellers and Roma are among the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in Ireland. In an effort to address this, a National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) was published in 2017 a-whole-of-government inclusion strategy to improve the lives of Travellers and Roma in areas including health, housing, education and employment. The latest iteration, NTRIS II, published in July 2024, provides a framework to achieving equality of education outcomes, supporting an inclusive school community, and promoting a positive culture of respect and protection for the cultural identity of Travellers and Roma in education. The Traveller and Roma Education Strategy is a key action within NTRIS II.

The development of this strategy is also a commitment in the current Programme for Government (PfG) which states that *we will continue with, and expand, the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and develop a National Traveller Education Strategy, including a plan to improve access to Higher Education for members of the Traveller Community.*

National and international drivers include a wide range of policy and human rights recommendations, directives and strategies. At a systems level these include the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Under the UN Sustainable Development Goals, target 4.5 aims to "eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations" by 2030. The European Commission's EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020–2030 ("EU Roma Strategic Framework") places the focus on promoting socio-economic inclusion in the fields of education, employment, housing and health, as well as on equality and participation and is fully endorsed by the Irish Government. Ireland also reports to a number of UN and European committees whose recommendations have been considered in the development of this Traveller and Roma Education Strategy.

In March 2017, the State recognised Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish nation (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2017). The formal recognition of Irish Traveller ethnicity was a significant and historic development for Travellers and for Ireland. The announcement was supported by all parties in the Oireachtas and the recognition of the uniqueness of Traveller identity provided a solid foundation from which to pursue real equality and participation for the Traveller community in Irish society.

The Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community was established in September 2020 to examine the inequalities of opportunity and outcomes faced by the Traveller community in the areas of health, education, employment and accommodation and to make recommendations for policy to mitigate the effects on the Traveller community. The education recommendations have been given careful consideration in the development of this strategy.

It was noted from the outset of this strategy development work that Travellers and Roma are two groups with distinct characteristics that include, but are not limited to, culture, heritage, language and religion. While there are many similarities between the issues faced by Travellers and Roma in education, each group also has its own distinct challenges.

International Rights and Policies

- > UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- > International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- > The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- > EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child
- > EU Roma Strategic Framework
- > The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)
- > UN Sustainable Development Goals

Domestic Strategies and Policies

- > National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS)
- > First 5 strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children and their families
- > Equal Start to support access and full participation in early learning and care and school-age childcare
- > National Access Plan
- > Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People
- > Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR)
- > Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) SDG National Implementation Plan
- > ESD to 2030: Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development
- > National Strategy for Women and Girls
- > Migrant Strategy
- > Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying
- > Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice



Travellers and Roma: educational outcomes at present

The most up-to-date demographic data for Travellers and Roma in Ireland are from the 2022 Census. Of a total population of just over 5 million in Ireland, there were 32,949 Travellers (.64% of total population) and 16,059 Roma (.31% of the total population) counted in the Census. Actual numbers may be higher.

Data from the Department of Education primary online database (POD) show that participation rates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme or other pre-school settings vary widely across different cohorts of children. In 2022/2023, 74% of Traveller children and 64.7% of Roma children entered junior infant classes in primary school from the ECCE programme or other pre-school setting, compared to 92.3% of the general population.

The most recent published data on primary and post-primary enrolment is for the school year 2022/2023. This shows a total of 11,679 Traveller (8,309 in primary school and 3,370 in post-primary school) and 3,404 Roma (2,629 in primary school and 1,775 in post-primary school).

The data available on the Traveller population shows a transfer rate from primary to post-primary school for Traveller pupils of 95-98% in the school year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, before which it had been very close to the national average of 99%. Where primary pupils in 2022/23 moved to post-primary in 2023/24, the national average dropped to 95.6%, with the Traveller average lowering to 82.7%.

The rate of transfer of Roma children from primary to post-primary before the pandemic was 97.8%, reducing to 89.1% when primary pupils in 2022/23 moved to post-primary in 2023/24.

Fewer Traveller children and young people complete post-primary school than the rest of the population. However, the proportion of young people who progress to third year and beyond is growing. Children and young people who entered post-primary in 2016 (Retention rates of pupils in second-level schools: Entry cohort 2016) completed a five or six year cycle in 2021 or 2022. The data shows that the percentage of Traveller students in the 2016 cohort who progressed to third year is 90.5%, with the number of Travellers continuing to sit the Junior Cycle examination having increased by 10% over the last six years to 72% since the 2011 cohort. The number of Travellers sitting the Leaving Certificate has increased by 9% over the last six years but remains low at 31.4% compared to 91.7% of the total cohort.

The number of Travellers with a third-level qualification is increasing. Census 2022 revealed that 312 Travellers obtained a third-level qualification, which was almost double the Census 2016 figure of 167, and more than triple the Census 2011 figure of 89. In a third level setting, only 4.7% of Travellers completed their third level education compared to 47.7% of the general population. While there were 36 self-declared Traveller new entrants to higher education in 2022, 1,310 Travellers and 332 Roma were enrolled in further education. Up to 1,415 Travellers and 345 Roma were enrolled across further education and training programmes, including adult literacy programmes.

It should be noted that the numbers and percentages mentioned above are based on the number of people who have self-identified as Traveller or Roma and may not be a full representation of the actual numbers.

“I want to see greater participation of Traveller and Roma young people in post-primary and higher education.”

This quote is from a member of the Traveller community in the public consultation survey

Racism and discrimination are often experienced by Traveller and Roma children and young people both in and outside the education system. Previous research and reports have highlighted this and the literature review and the consultation carried out in the development of this strategy, further corroborates this finding.



“There should be a strong focus on values that promote inclusion, anti-racism and a commitment to providing education to all children in a safe environment where each and every child is free to learn and be proud of their identity.”

This quote is from a member of the Traveller community in the public consultation survey

“Roma children often get bullied for not knowing how to speak English.”

This quote is from a member of the Roma community in the public consultation survey

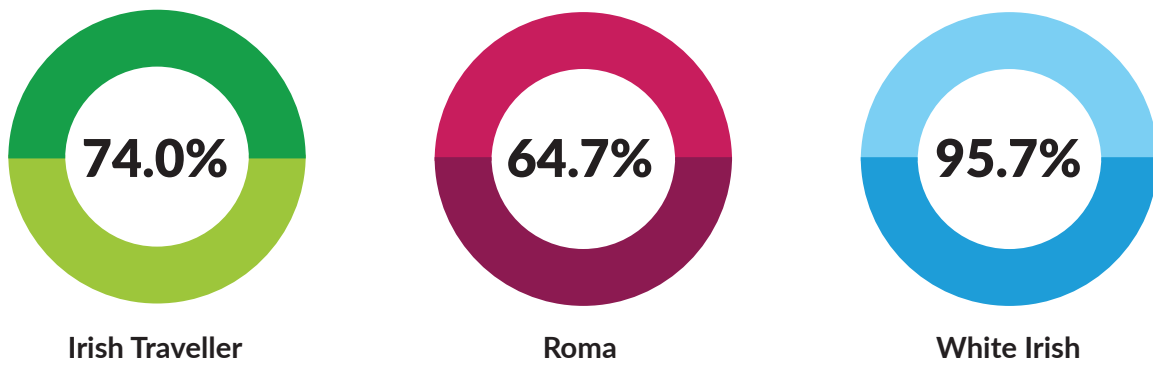
In order to address racism and discrimination against Traveller and Roma children and young people, this strategy takes a whole-of-education approach by bringing three departments together across early learning and childcare, school (primary and post-primary) and further and higher education to make targeted and impactful changes. As well as cross-departmental collaboration, this strategy will also work in tandem with existing education strategies, policies and procedures that promote inclusion, wellbeing and multiculturalism including Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, Equal Start, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, the Intercultural Education Strategy and associated guidelines and the Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme.



Graph/Table 1.

Entrants from the ECCE programme or other pre-school setting to junior infant classes in mainstream primary schools

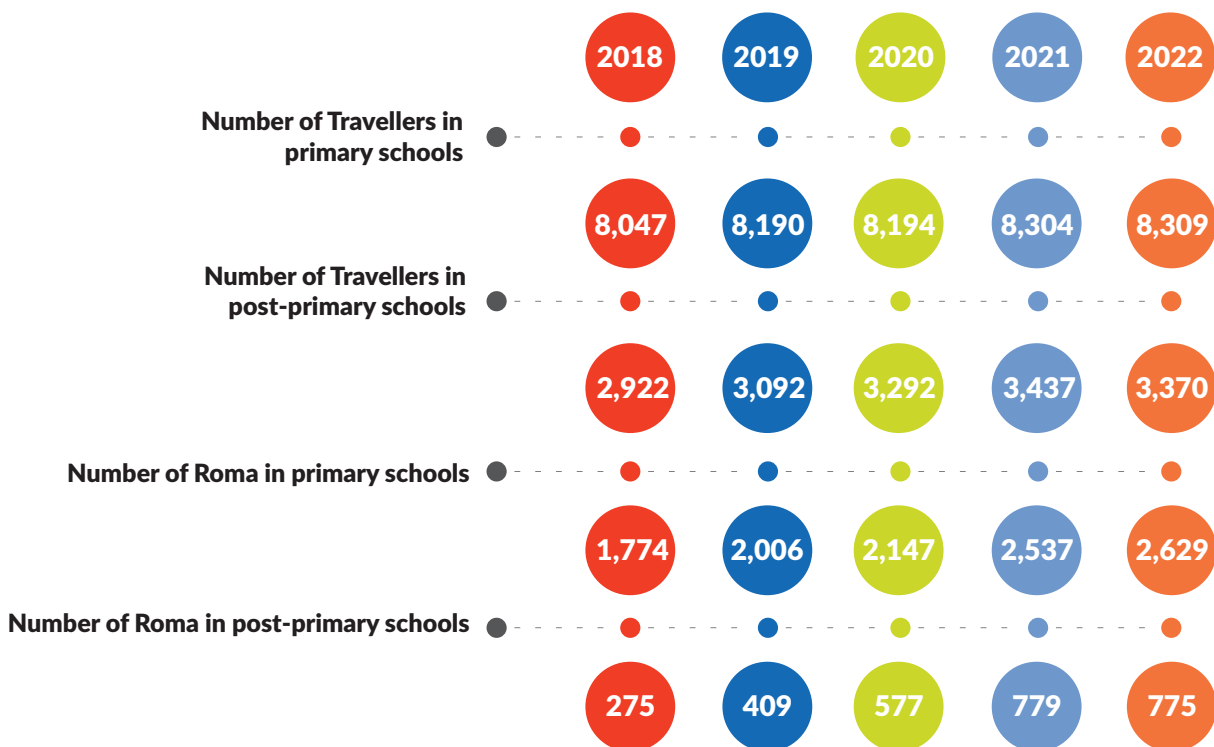
Ethnic or Cultural Background - 2022



Source: Primary Pupil Online Database 2022/2023 Department of Education

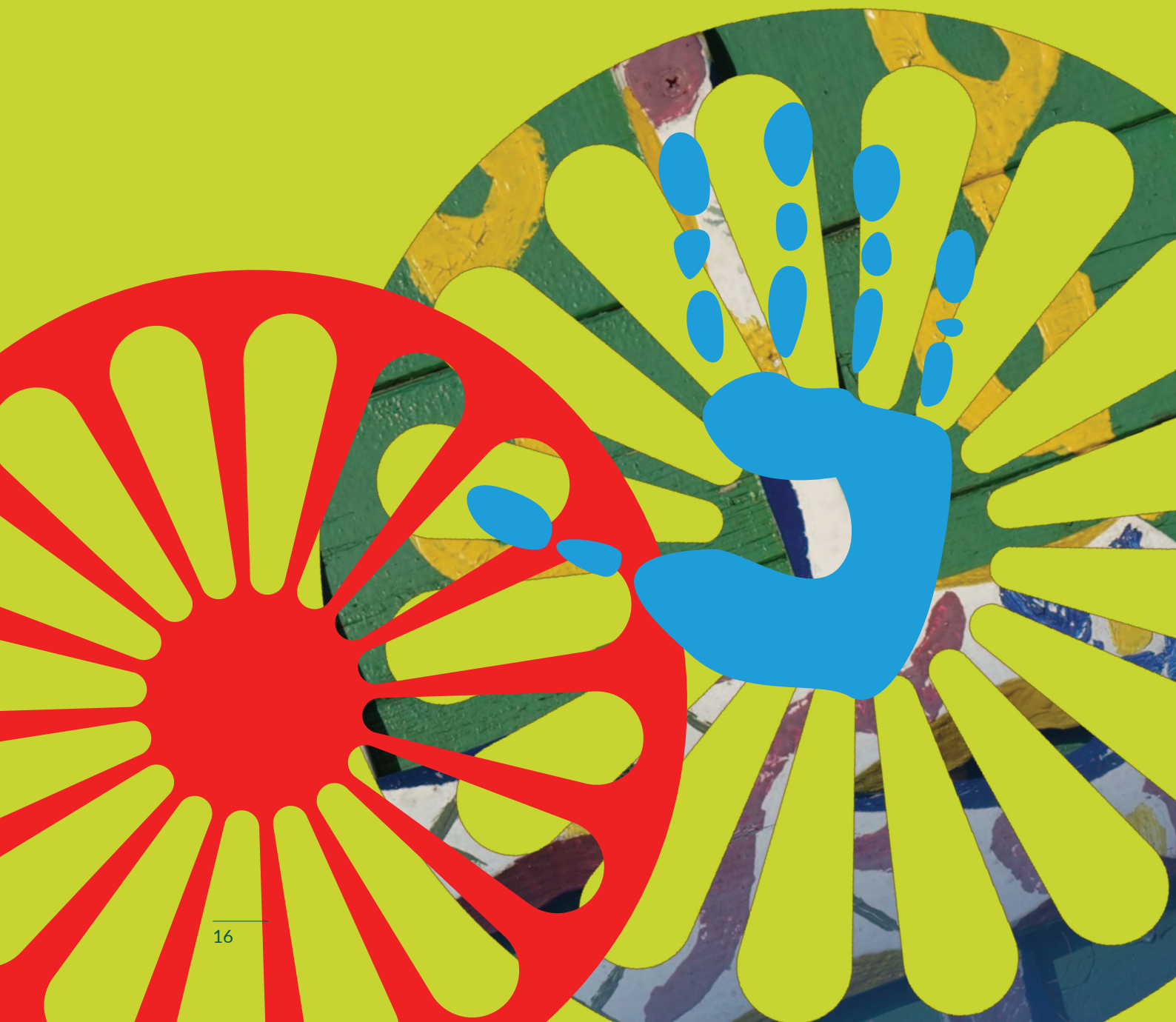
Graph/Table 2.

School Enrolment



Source: Government of Ireland- Education Indicators for Ireland Report- March 2024

2 Development and consultation



Governance

A Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Advisory Group was established to guide, oversee and contribute to the design, development and drafting of the strategy. The advisory group and a Traveller and Roma consultation sub-group played a key role in developing, guiding and running the consultations for the strategy. The group was independently chaired by Professor Ursula Kilkelly, an expert and highly published scholar in international children's rights.

Membership of the advisory group included a range of education, and Traveller and Roma stakeholders and representatives from each of the three departments. The full list of members is in Appendix 2.

Consultation

Primary and post-primary school consultations

Significant efforts were made from the outset of the consultation process to ensure that all relevant stakeholders were aware of the development of the strategy and of the consultation events to ensure maximum participation and awareness. Conscious efforts were made to make all communications and consultations about the strategy as inclusive and accessible as possible. While the consultations focused on the school system, feedback was also provided in relation to early learning and care and tertiary education. The Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) consultation used as its foundation the detailed reports from the consultations held in relation to the development of NTRIS II.

Public consultation

A public consultation survey was launched on 17 July 2023 by the Minister for Education and remained open until 30 October 2023. The survey design incorporated significant feedback from Traveller and Roma organisations, and efforts were made to ensure clarity and accessibility. A mobile-friendly version of the survey was provided, and a social media campaign encouraging people to participate was run to increase awareness. The importance of parental involvement and support emerged as one of the key themes from the public consultation. Engagement with parents and guardians is reflected in the strategic actions, particularly in pillars two and three of this strategy.

Targeted consultation

Targeted consultations were designed and developed for three different cohorts: Traveller and Roma families and communities; Traveller and Roma children and young people and the education system.

1. Traveller and Roma families and communities

Consultation with the Traveller and Roma families and communities was organised through the Traveller and Roma organisations to ensure maximum engagement. Six consultations took place: four with the Traveller community (in Tuam, Portlaoise, Dublin and Cork) and two with the Roma community (in Dublin and Longford). One of the challenges cited in this consultation was that teachers had lower expectations of Traveller and Roma children in school. A focus on outcomes and equity of opportunity were highlighted as necessary objectives of this strategy which encourages each child to fulfill their potential.

2. Traveller and Roma children and young people

The Advisory Group worked with DCEDIY, Hub na nÓg and the Traveller and Roma organisations to design and deliver the consultation with children and young people. Hub na nÓg supports government departments, state agencies, public service and non-government organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making, with a particular focus on those that are seldom heard. The methodology used for the consultation process was based on the Lundy Model, which focuses on providing an appropriate space where the children and young people are listened to and facilitated to express their views. A number of in-person consultations took place in locations around the country, and to accommodate the unexpectedly large numbers of young people and organisations interested in participating, a number of online consultations were also organised.

Feedback revealed that children and young people nominated by both Traveller and Roma organisations preferred primary to post-primary school and some children and young people from these communities reported negative experiences in school. These views have been considered when developing the strategic actions, specifically those relating to improving educational experiences with particular attention to transition points. Feedback that is age-friendly, accessible and respectful will be provided to the children and young people that participated in these consultations, in accordance with the Lundy model.

3. Education system

To garner feedback from the education system a range of different methodologies was employed. These included a targeted survey of selected schools supported by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD); a World Café style workshop with representatives from the school system including members of the DEIS Advisory Group, and two workshops targeting primary and post-primary school communities, which included educators from the further and higher education sector. Improving the school experience for everyone was a common theme, as was improving access, attendance, participation and retention.





Early learning and childcare consultation

In early learning and childcare, extensive consultation was undertaken in the development of Equal Start with a particular focus on meeting the needs of Traveller and Roma children and their families. The development of Equal Start is built on a series of research studies undertaken by the Expert Group on the funding model. A public consultation process was then undertaken specifically on the design of Equal Start. To engage with early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) providers, early years educators, SAC practitioners and representative organisations, a number of semi-structured interviews took place, followed by a series of workshops, both online and in person. Questions covered current barriers, challenges and issues related to disadvantage in accessing and participating in ELC and SAC, priority groups and possible supports and actions.

Further and higher education consultations

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) facilitated an extensive consultation on the development of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2022–2028). The HEA published a consultation paper and launched a public call for submissions. The consultation paper provided the context for the new plan, posed questions for consideration, and encouraged input from stakeholders. Several Traveller and Roma organisations and agencies provided written submissions during the consultation process, including the Cork City Traveller Inter Agency Group, Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women’s Forum, Pavee Point and National Traveller MABS.

3 Key themes from the consultation



- 1. Racism and discrimination:** addressing the pervasive issues of racism and discrimination that Traveller and Roma students face in the education system.
- 2. Lack of knowledge of the culture:** highlighting the need for greater awareness and understanding of Traveller and Roma cultures in the educational environment.
- 3. Parental involvement and support:** emphasising the importance of involving and supporting parents and/or guardians in the educational journey of their children.
- 4. Low expectations:** challenging the low expectations often held for Traveller and Roma children and young people, which can hinder their educational progress.
- 5. Enhanced cultural awareness and representation:** promoting cultural awareness and ensuring better representation of Traveller and Roma cultures in the curriculum and school activities.
- 6. Community engagement and empowerment:** encouraging active community engagement and empowerment to support educational outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people.
- 7. Mental health and wellbeing support:** recognising the need for mental health and wellbeing support tailored to the specific experiences of Traveller and Roma children and young people.
- 8. Educational pathways and guidance:** providing clear educational pathways and guidance to help Traveller and Roma children and young people achieve their full potential.
- 9. Monitoring and evaluation:** implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of policies and practices aimed at improving Traveller and Roma education.
- 10. Dedicated supports:** a call for a series of dedicated supports for Traveller and Roma children and young people to improve educational experiences and outcomes and narrow the attainment gap between these children and the national average.

Consultation reports

The following is a list of reports that resulted from research and consultation undertaken explicitly for the purposes of developing the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy, which will be available on the strategy website gov.ie - *Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (www.gov.ie)*

- Report on public online consultation
- Report on targeted consultation: education strand
- Report on targeted consultation: children and young people
- Report on targeted consultation: Traveller and Roma families and communities

Communications and feedback

The strategy contains an overarching commitment to improve communications between the education system and the Traveller and Roma communities. This includes a commitment to maintain the TRES page on gov.ie to ensure that up-to-date information on Traveller and Roma education is available. gov.ie - *Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (www.gov.ie)*



4 Values to guide the delivery and implementation of this strategy



This strategy and its implementation is guided by a set of core values which will help guide decision-making and prioritisation over the life of the strategy.

1. Learner-centered

The views of children and young people have been central to the development of this strategy. Traveller and Roma children and young people will be supported and encouraged to participate meaningfully in decision-making that impacts them.

2. Collaborative

The strategy has been developed through a collaborative process involving the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations, and departments and agencies across the continuum of education. This strategy will be delivered and evaluated in collaboration with the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations.

3. Inclusive and respectful

Creating an inclusive and respectful environment is at the centre of this strategy. We are committed to supporting positive engagement of Travellers and Roma at all levels of the education system. We are committed to addressing racism, promoting diversity and creating learning environments where the unique identity and background of Traveller and Roma learners is acknowledged, respected and valued.

4. Accessible

Education is a human right and we value learning and its role in the development, cohesion and wellbeing of an inclusive society. We commit to ensuring that Traveller and Roma learners have the opportunity to participate positively in their educational journey where they are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential.

5. Positive outcomes

Through the delivery of this strategy, we commit to maintaining a focus on educational ambitions and positive outcomes for Travellers and Roma at all levels of education.

6. Accountable

Together we are responsible for the implementation of this strategy. We commit to the development, review and evaluation of, and reporting on the implementation plans with the involvement of the Traveller and Roma organisations. We will be adaptable and open to change where possible and act in an honest and respectful manner.

Strategic goal

The strategic goal was developed in consultation with the TRES advisory group. Identifying the right goal was something that involved extensive consideration involving a number of workshops and discussions.

This rights-based approach has underpinned the work on the strategy and the development of the goal.

Ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcomes, as well as meaningful participation, across the continuum of education for all Travellers and Roma, including people with additional educational needs, in an inclusive system where Travellers and Roma are respected and supported to fulfil their potential, and where Traveller and Roma cultures and ethnic identities are acknowledged, visible and valued.

The diagram below captures each aspect of the strategic goal from the perspective of the Traveller and Roma learner. At its centre are the two areas of strategic impact for TRES: the experience of the Traveller and Roma learner, and the success of the Traveller and Roma learner.



At early learning and care level, the key focus of this strategy is for equal participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme for Traveller and Roma children.

At school level, the key focus is to improve the learning experience and attainment levels for all Traveller and Roma children and young people but particularly to significantly increase the numbers of young people remaining in school to 6th year and achieving a Leaving Certificate.

For the tertiary system, the aim of this strategy is to have the diversity of Ireland's population reflected in further and higher education and to provide the necessary supports to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or education, can access education without barriers.

Ireland has made a promise to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This includes:

- The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- The right to privacy (Article 16)
- The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- The right to education (Article 28)
- The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)



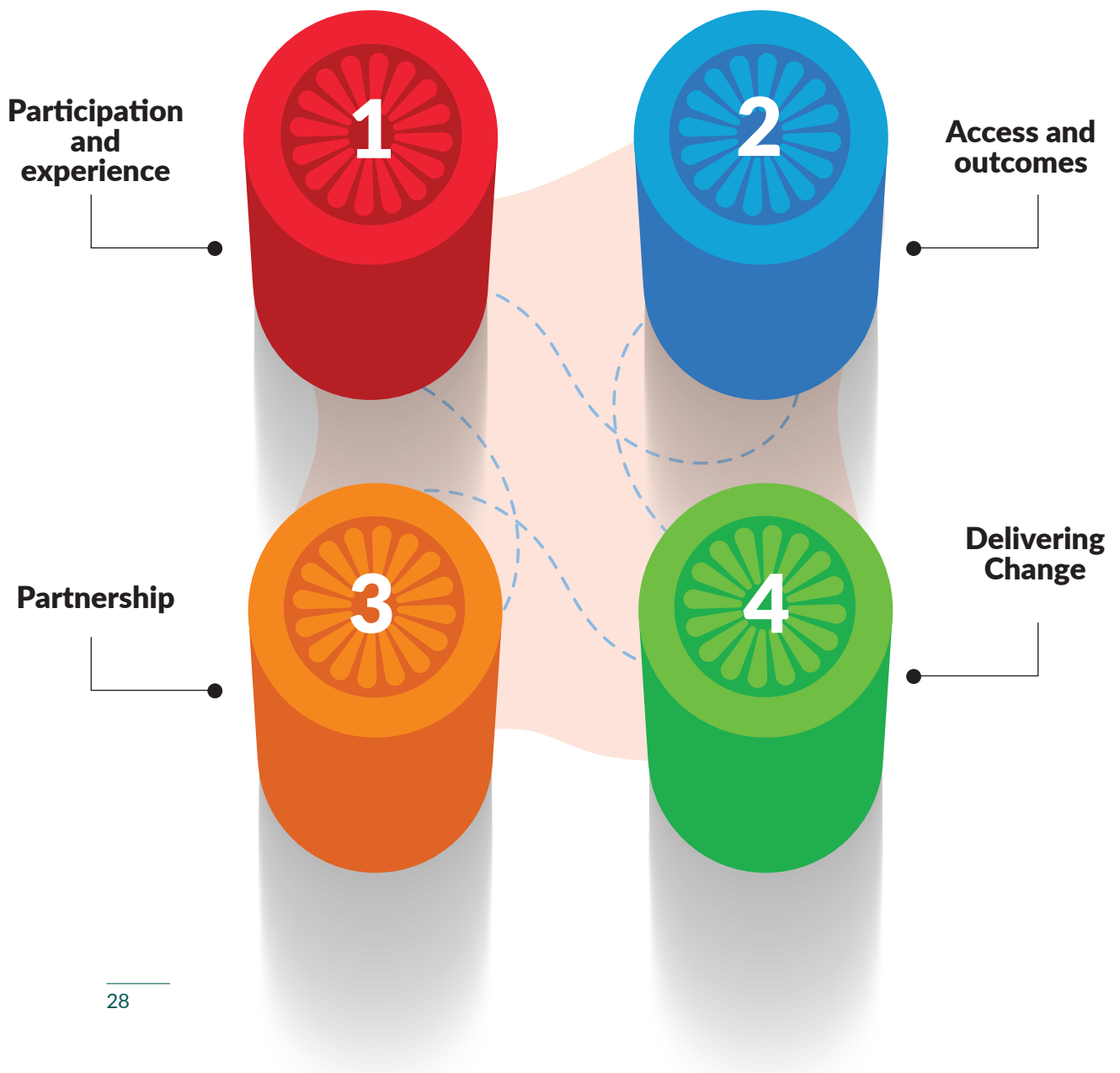
5 Strategic pillars and strategic actions



Strategic pillars and strategic actions

The six-year strategy is built around four strategic pillars. A desired outcome and related strategic actions have been identified for each pillar, designed to achieve the strategic goal. A separate two-year implementation plan presents the actions, lead organisations, timeframe, indicators of progress and targets to be achieved by June 2026. This plan will be kept under review by an oversight group. The first implementation plan provides the foundation for this strategy. It recognises that structures and resources are required for implementation and that there is further work to be done to build on the findings from the consultations and in particular from the evaluation of the STAR pilot project. The focus of subsequent implementation plans will be to build and extend on the work and learnings of the first implementation plan and to incorporate new initiatives that were not included in the current plan.

One of the findings of the evaluation of the STAR pilot project relates to the term 'STAR', which stands for 'Supporting Travellers and Roma' in education, and the significance and sense of positivity that this term holds for members of the Traveller and Roma communities. This strategy and implementation plan recognises this and, while the pilot project has come to an end, commits to using the term 'STAR' going forward to represent more generally the targeted supports for Traveller and Roma children and young people in schools.





Pillar 1: Participation and experience

Improve the learning experience of Travellers and Roma at all levels of the education system.

Outcome

Meaningful participation across the continuum of education for all Travellers and Roma in an inclusive education system where all Travellers and Roma are respected, and their cultures and ethnic identities are acknowledged, visible and valued.

- 1.1 Work towards equivalent rates of young Traveller and Roma children participating in inclusive, quality early learning and care and school-age childcare services to the same level as the general population through the Equal Start funding model and its associated universal and targeted actions.
- 1.2 Ensure every Traveller and Roma young child experiences a high-quality, warm, welcoming, inclusive early learning and childcare environment that is culturally and linguistically prepared to welcome the child and family.
- 1.3 Strengthen the capabilities of early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners to address and respond to diversity and to meet learning and care needs associated with the linguistic, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of those from the Traveller and Roma communities.
- 1.4 Continue to strengthen inclusion and cultural awareness, and address racism in our schools including through teacher professional learning, implementation of the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour*, and through the Department of Education's Intercultural Guidelines for schools.
- 1.5 Progress the work by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on supporting teaching and learning about Traveller culture and history within the curriculum, including providing supports for the Traveller community to assist in the development of relevant material for schools. Promote and encourage the participation of teachers and other members of the school community in targeted cultural awareness training.
- 1.6 Ensure a focus on meaningful participation by Traveller and Roma young people, including by monitoring the implementation of key policies and mechanisms such as the use of Reduced School Days, expulsions and suspensions, subject choice and exemptions, and the application of special education policies, as these apply to Traveller and Roma children and young people.
- 1.7 Encourage and support Traveller and Roma children and young people to participate in extra-curricular activities including Creative Youth programmes, homework clubs and other related activities.
- 1.8 Support Traveller and Roma Students in accessing tertiary educational opportunities and work to ensure that students have a positive and welcoming student experience.



Pillar 2. Access and outcomes

Ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcome for Travellers and Roma to fulfil their potential through our education system.

Outcome

Equity of access, opportunity and outcome across the continuum of education for all Travellers and Roma in an inclusive education system where Travellers and Roma are supported to engage and to fulfil their potential.

- 2.1 Ensure Traveller and Roma children will experience effective transitions where they feel valued, actively supported and nurtured, at the start and through their early learning and care experience and on to school.
- 2.2 Ensure Traveller and Roma children have access to additional supports for language and literacy attainment in line with actions in the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024 – 2033.
- 2.3 Build on the success of the literacy initiatives piloted in the STAR pilot project to support Traveller and Roma children and young people to develop their literacy competency, and implement the actions in Ireland’s Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024 - 2033, particularly those that target the Traveller and Roma communities, including parents and guardians from those communities.
- 2.4 Support Traveller and Roma children and young people at the transition points of our education system. In particular, focus resources on transitions to post-primary school and progression and retention beyond year three of Junior Cycle into and through Senior Cycle and to the Leaving Certificate examination. Provide guidance to and support and encourage schools to identify the specific guidance-related needs of the Traveller and Roma communities and include strategies to meet the specific needs of this cohort within the whole school guidance plan.





- 2.5 Expand data collection systems to enable monitoring of attendance patterns for Traveller and Roma children and young people in our schools. Informed by the data, take affirmative action in partnership with Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), schools and the Traveller and Roma communities, including Traveller and Roma organisations, to address poor attendance and support children and young people to re-engage and stay engaged.
- 2.6 Support schools working to ensure that their admission policies are compliant with all aspects of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, including with regard to non-discrimination, and ensure awareness of parents and guardians in the Traveller and Roma communities about school admissions and attendance, including rights and obligations.
- 2.7 Support Traveller and Roma children and young people’s wellbeing through further implementation of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, which promotes a whole school, preventative approach so that children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected, heard and supported in our schools.
- 2.8 Provide flexible and responsive learning opportunities that support Traveller and Roma students across the tertiary education system.



Pillar 3. Partnership

Working together across the system and with the Traveller and Roma communities, including Traveller and Roma organisations, to support the delivery of this strategy.

Outcome

Successful delivery of this strategy and achievement of our goal through active collaboration and partnership

- 3.1 Work with Traveller and Roma parents and guardians as partners in their children's early learning and childcare journey and utilise these opportunities to build trust as the primary partner in children's development and signpost families to wider supports inside and outside of early learning and care.
- 3.2 Develop roles and structures including, Tusla Traveller family support workers to link families to services and roles within Better Start and early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) services to link services to families.
- 3.3 Develop structures to facilitate ongoing collaboration with the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of education policies. Ensure the meaningful participation of Traveller and Roma children and young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of education policy. Encourage and support engagement between schools and Traveller and Roma parents and guardians, organisations and communities.
- 3.4 Ensure a focus on effective engagement and communication between the education system and the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations, through providing targeted, accessible information resources on the education system and related supports and developments. Support strong engagement with Traveller and Roma parents and guardians, including through targeted supports and increasing awareness and good practice with respect to language, literacy and digital literacy across the system.
- 3.5 Provide resources to all schools to address educational disadvantage and to address the cost of school for all families through universal supports; continue work on the review of resource allocation to schools for students at risk of educational disadvantage and carry out the work arising from the review. Continue to provide extra capitation for schools with Traveller enrolments and continue to include Traveller and Roma enrolments in the DEIS identification model.
- 3.6 Build on and apply existing information and knowledge around Traveller and Roma education including that gained through the development of this strategy and the evaluation of the STAR pilot project. Carry out further research, consultation and evaluation as required. Ensure a focus on identifying and sharing good practice.
- 3.7 Through research, identify the barriers and enablers for Traveller and Roma women accessing tertiary education and consider how to support Traveller and Roma women on their educational journey.



Pillar 4. Delivering change

Drive the implementation of this strategy and implementation plan, monitor progress and evaluate the outcomes.

Outcome

Progress on achieving the goal of the TRES is closely monitored and publicly reported. A monitoring and evaluation framework is established with evidence informed targets and statement of expected outcome.

- 4.1 Working through the Equal Start funding model and Oversight Group, develop and deliver universal and targeted supports through an extensive system of implementation monitoring and evaluation and report on progress through the TRES process. A dedicated Equal Start project team within the DCEDIY will lead on Equal Start implementation.
- 4.2 Establish a Traveller and Roma Education Forum to inform the review of progress and identify areas where further action, consultation, research and evaluation are required, and to facilitate consultation with members of the Traveller and Roma communities on matters across the education system.
- 4.3 Establish an oversight and governance structure to actively drive the implementation of the strategy and the implementation plan. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework and reporting mechanisms, including reporting to the NTRIS committee.
- 4.4 Through the Department of Education's Inspectorate, gather information about the key actions of this strategy relating to the experiences and outcomes of Traveller and Roma children and young people and the whole-school climate and environment. Ensure data on the numbers of Traveller and Roma children and young people are available to the Inspectorate to inform its annual planning processes.
- 4.5 Recruit appropriate personnel and establish support structures to co-ordinate and drive implementation at a national and local level, including working with schools, the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations, and the wider community as appropriate.
- 4.6 Continue to develop the range of data related to Traveller and Roma education that is collected, analysed and published, with a focus on making data publicly available where it is used for decision-making; increasing the range of disaggregated and qualitative data that is captured; increasing data-sharing between departments and agencies; enhancing the collection of ethnicity data; and analysing more data to assist in monitoring progress; understanding trends, particularly relating to attendance and retention; and designing policy interventions.

6 Driving implementation, monitoring progress, evaluating impact and reporting



To drive the implementation of this strategy, the Department of Education, the Department of Children, Equality Disability Integration and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will continue to work together and in collaboration with the Traveller and Roma organisations. The first two-year implementation plan is published alongside this strategy. The 2024 to 2026 Plan for implementation and action sets out a series of actions to be achieved by mid-year 2026.

Pillar 4 of the implementation plan sets out the intended structural changes that are being designed to bring about systemic change, including the establishment of new coordinator roles to work on the delivery of actions in the implementation plan. For early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC), this includes the new Equal Start funding model and the introduction of new link workers and coordinator roles in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) settings. For the school sector, this includes the identification of new coordinator roles to drive the implementation of the strategy. It also includes the intention to establish a permanent STAR coordinator role to scale the learnings from the STAR pilot project, including expanding the STAR communities of practice and the STAR Ambassador programme.

Equal Start is a new funding model with a set of associated universal and targeted measures to support access and participation in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) for children and their families who experience disadvantage. It prioritises Traveller and Roma children and families for additional supports. Measures will include communications initiatives to inform parents on supports and services, encourage parents' involvement in settings, supporting early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) settings to be more inclusive, and additional funding/tailored supports for target groups and areas of concentrated disadvantage.

Recognising the importance and value of having members of the Traveller and Roma communities engage in targeted work with children and young people from those communities, particular efforts will be made to encourage applications and support take-up of relevant posts by members of the Traveller and Roma communities. The implementation plan also includes measures in relation to increasing the diversity of the workforce across education.

Equal Start is a new funding model with a set of associated universal and targeted measures to support access and participation in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) for children and their families who experience disadvantage. It prioritises Traveller and Roma children and families for additional supports. Measures will include communications initiatives to inform parents on supports and services, encourage parent's involvement in settings, supporting early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) settings to be more inclusive and additional funding/ tailored supports for target groups and areas of concentrated disadvantage.

To provide oversight and to monitor progress against plans, a Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) Oversight Group will be established. This group will mirror the membership of the TRES Advisory Group and will have representatives from the three different education sectors, other relevant departments and agencies, and the Traveller and Roma organisations. This group will use the implementation plan to monitor progress.

To ensure ongoing consultation with the Traveller and Roma organisations and individuals from the Traveller and Roma communities, a Traveller and Roma Education Forum will be established. This group will meet at least twice a year and, in addition, to providing feedback on implementation, it will also provide a Traveller and Roma perspective for other education policy areas.

To ensure the continued meaningful participation of Traveller and Roma children and young people, a specific consultation and engagement plan will be developed in consultation with this group. This will evolve as the work of the student participation unit in the Department of Education evolves, underpinned by the Lundy Model and the Government’s Framework on Children and Young People’s Participation.

To evaluate impact in the school system, a series of inspections with a focus on Traveller and Roma children and young people will be instigated. A profile of the child’s journey through the school system will be mapped using data from the various departments, the education system and the wider public service. Further research will be commissioned as appropriate and viable options for measuring the impact of targeted supports on specific cohorts, including Traveller and Roma children and young people, will be explored and developed.

An important part of the first phase of TRES will be taking stock of the enormous quantity of data gathered through the series of public and targeted TRES consultations and the evaluation of the STAR pilot project.

Reporting

Each of the three departments in this strategy is responsible for the delivery of their actions and for reporting progress to the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) Steering Committee.

To streamline reporting and keep duplication to a minimum, the Department of Education will take overall responsibility for oversight of the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES). An annual report on the implementation of TRES, approved by the TRES Oversight Group, will be provided to the NTRIS Steering Committee.

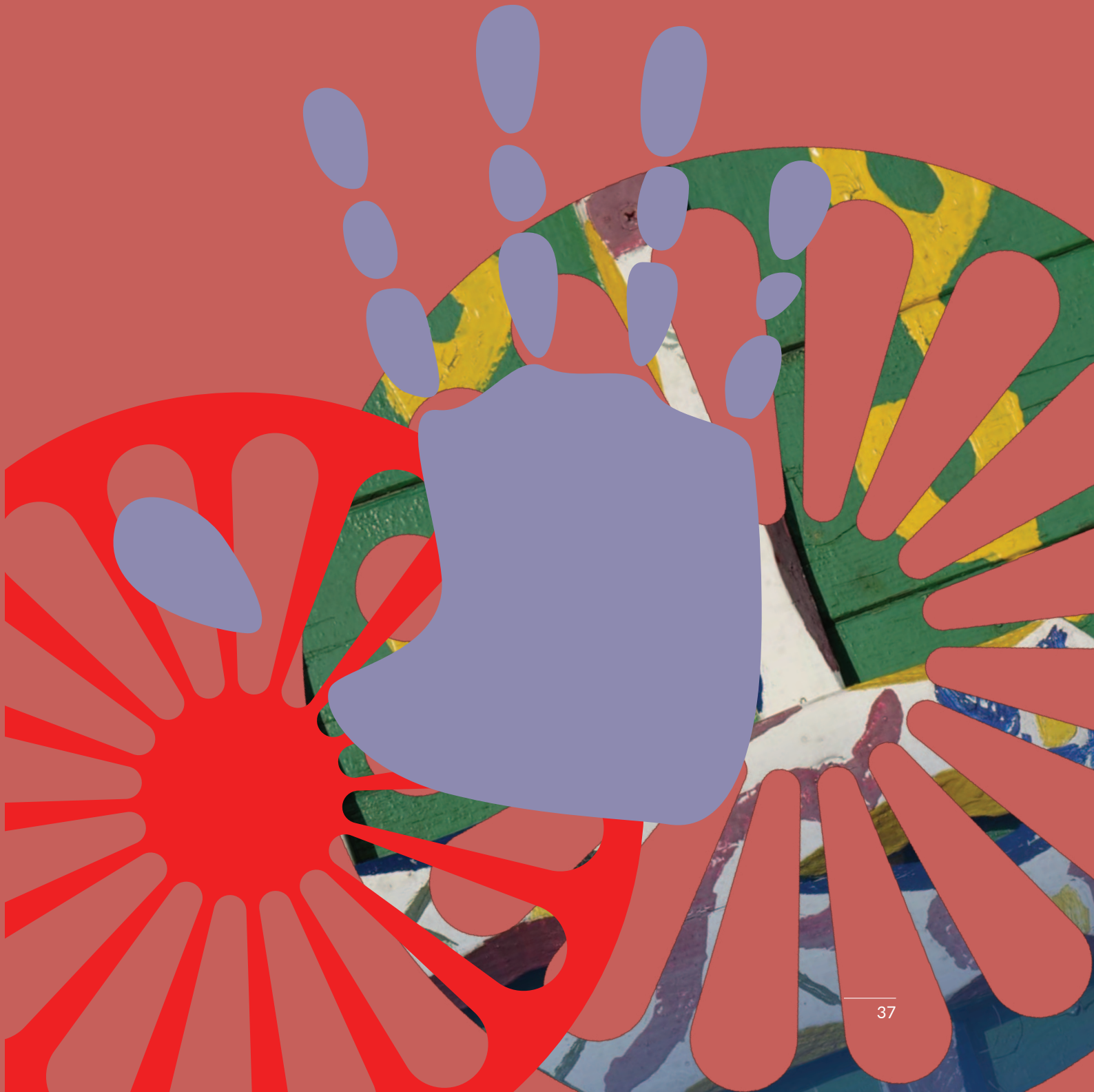


The actions in TRES are designed to have clear timelines and outcomes to enable straightforward reporting. Progress reports, which will provide an update on progress against the plan, will be developed and provided to the TRES Oversight Group. Frequency of reporting will be determined by the TRES Oversight Group and, once approved, the progress reports will be published to the TRES webpage on gov.ie.

The publication of progress reports will provide a simple snapshot of progress on all actions, allowing stakeholders to track progress, identify issues and celebrate successes. Most importantly, members of the Traveller and Roma communities and the organisations that represent them will be able to review progress and to raise questions as appropriate.

The TRES implementation plans will be reviewed once every two years and updated accordingly. New actions will be added and completed actions removed through the regular review of progress.

Appendices



Appendix 1. List of abbreviations

CERD	International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DEIS	Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DoE	Department of Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education scheme
ELC	Early Learning and Care
EU	European Union
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison coordinator
NAP	National Access Plan
NAPD	National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PfG	Programme for Government
POD	Primary Online Database
SAC	School-Age Childcare
STAR	Supporting Travellers and Roma in education
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service
TRES	Traveller and Roma Education Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Appendix 2. Membership of TRES Advisory Group

Department of Education, including

- Social Inclusion Unit
- Inspectorate
- Parents and Learners Unit (PLU)
- Curriculum and Assessment Unit (CAP)
- Teacher Education
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF)

Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

Exchange House Ireland

Minceirs Whiden

Involve

Cairde

Individual Traveller and Roma representatives

