



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Action Plan for Increasing Traveller Participation in Higher Education 2019- 2021

An Initiative under the National Plan for
Equity of Access to Higher Education
2015-2021

FOREWORD, MINISTER OF STATE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Equity of access to higher education is a national priority for the Department and indeed, the Government. Our third National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015-2019) (NAP) sets out our current strategy to address underrepresentation in higher education by groups identified in the plan. A progress review of the NAP published last year extended the lifetime of the plan to 2021. The review provided us with the opportunity to reflect on how well we are doing and where we need to energise and renew our commitment to increase participation in higher education by underrepresented groups including those living with social disadvantage, mature students, people with disabilities and Irish Travellers.

The progress review illustrated that even though there were increases in participation of Travellers in higher education, there remains quite a task ahead to meet the targets set out in the NAP.

Understanding and providing for the particular needs of Travellers as they seek to access higher education is critical to ensuring that children and young people from the Traveller community can fulfil their potential through education. Having a whole of education approach is important for enabling participation by Travellers in higher education. We need to fully embrace Traveller culture and traditions across the education spectrum.

In recent years, we have launched the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) funding stream. PATH's main objective is to increase participation in higher education by our NAP target groups, including Travellers. The three PATH funding streams will help us to better understand and address the barriers to access to higher education for Travellers. The feedback from students supported by PATH is very positive; it is becoming apparent that it is transforming their lives and the lives of their families.

This action plan is a tangible example of our commitment to deliver on our NAP targets for Irish Travellers. It is an on-going journey for us and the Traveller community. When we launched the current NAP, the number of Traveller students in higher education was 35. Our latest data shows that Traveller participation in higher education has now increased to 61. While it is evident that progress is being made, we still have work to do with the Traveller community in order to achieve our targets for higher education participation. It is my firm belief that this Action Plan which complements existing strategies and plans for Travellers, will help to increase awareness and participation levels for Travellers seeking to access higher education.

Together with our implementation partners we can keep the momentum going.

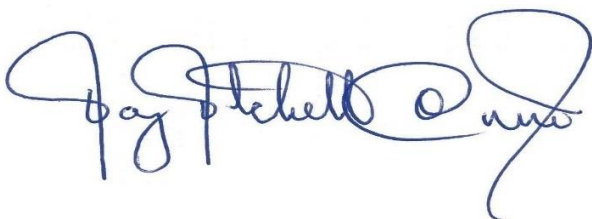
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fay Stender', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

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Section 1: Background and Context for the Action Plan for Traveller Participation in Higher Education

The third *National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015 -2019) (NAP)* was launched in December 2015. The vision of the *National Access Plan* is to ensure that the student body entering into, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

The plan identifies Irish Travellers as one of the target groups that are currently under-represented in higher education. Other groups include entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education, students with disabilities, first-time, mature student entrants, part-time/flexible learners and further education award holders. Lone parents and ethnic minorities are included as sub-groups within the main target groups.

A progress review of the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and the Priorities to 2021* was published in December 2018. The progress review acknowledges a number of significant positive developments and characterises the first phase of implementation of the NAP as a period of achievement and investment. A major element of both progress to date and the future implementation of the plan has been the increased investment in new access initiatives since the publication of the NAP.

There have been significant increases in participation rates since work began on implementing the NAP in December 2015. Participation in higher education across the State has increased from 51% to 55.3%, with a marked improvement in percentage points in almost every county.

While increases in participation in Irish Travellers are evident in the NAP, there remains a significant challenge in achieving our goals in respect of the Traveller target group. There is difficulty in measuring the number of Traveller students in the higher education system, as self-identification is the only mechanism by which this information is captured.

It is hoped that the numerous initiatives under the strands of the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) funding aimed at increasing Traveller participation will assist in the realisation of the target and enhance understanding of the barriers that exist in respect of Traveller participation in higher education. Even though the realisation of targets is proving difficult, evidence has shown that the number of Irish Travellers accessing higher education has increased from 35 (2012/2013) to 61 (2017/2018); a 74% increase since the commencement of this NAP.

The table below summarises progress against NAP targets for Irish Travellers.

Number of Irish Travellers in higher education	
Base Data (2015)	35
NAP Target for 2019	80
Progress Review Outcome 2018	41
Latest Data	61

Arising from the progress review published in 2018, the Department published priority actions in the *Action Plan for Education 2019* and made a commitment to the development of an action plan for increasing Traveller participation in higher education.

Section 2: Approach to the Development of the Action Plan

While recognising the supports that are already in place to support Irish Traveller Participation in higher education across the education spectrum, the purpose of this action plan is to bring a particular focus of attention and afford particular priority to certain actions.

The overall objective of the Action Plan is to advance Traveller participation in higher education within the context of approaches on retention and transition of Travellers across the education spectrum.

The guiding principles to the development of the Action Plan were:

- To build on existing Traveller policy and education infrastructure;
 - *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021*
 - *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2017 - 2021 (Education Actions)*
- To consider the learning from consultations, research and initiatives;
- To align the actions with the goals in the NAP; and
- Recognising that entry into higher education by Travellers may be by both traditional and non-traditional routes requiring a diversity of approaches – for students completing post-primary, mature students, and students completing further education programmes.

Engagement with Stakeholders

The development of the actions by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), in collaboration with the HEA, drew on the outputs from the recent National Access Forum, PATH seminar 2017 and other relevant events with a particular focus on Traveller participation in higher education. The Department also consulted the NAP Steering Group and the Education Sub-Committee of the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* on the development of priority actions. Reporting on progress on the actions will take place over the period of the action plan.

The action plan will be subject to annual review to assess progress and determine if adjustments are necessary for priority actions for each year of the plan.

Section 3: ACTION PLAN FOR INCREASING TRAVELLER PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2019-2021

Objective No.	NAP Goal	Objectives	Priority Actions	Implementation Partners	Indicators
1.	Regional and Community Partnership/ Assess Impact of initiatives	Support progress towards the target for Irish Traveller participation in higher education (HE), including initial teacher training, by extending a particular focus through PATH initiatives on Travellers' participation in HE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going monitoring of PATH 1,2 and 3 funded projects including monitoring of progress in relation to activities relating to Traveller participation. PATH 1 and 2 evaluations will look at impact on participation by Travellers and make recommendations as appropriate. 	DES / HEA / HEIs/ community partners/ Traveller representative groups.	<p>Number of Travellers participating in PATH initiatives</p> <p>Number of Travellers in HE by HEI</p>
2.	Regional and Community Partnership	Improve engagement with Traveller representative groups to develop an interagency approach within existing structures to increase Traveller HE participation by mature students, post-primary and further education graduates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will continue to work through existing structures, such as the <i>National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS)</i>, to improve engagement with Traveller representative groups regarding higher education participation. Further development and roll-out of PATH 3 projects. Increase Traveller student representation at higher education events and approaches to direct engagements at HEI/Cluster level. 	DES / HEA / TUSLA/ SOLAS / ETBI/HEIs	<p>Number of Travellers in HE</p> <p>Number of Travellers in HE by HEI</p>

Objective No.	NAP Goal	Objective	Priority Actions	Implementation Partners	Indicators
3.	Regional and Community Partnership	Work towards a whole of education approach to supporting successful transitions leading to increased Traveller participation in HE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen existing educational infrastructural links between the Career Guidance Service and Home School Community Liaison Scheme in schools and access officers in HEIs with a view to working with families and the Traveller community in general; to enable a greater awareness of the benefits to be gained from higher education and to advance the educational needs of Traveller pupils in collaboration with their parents. Access offices will provide support to schools in this regard. Continue to support awareness of Traveller culture and diversity within higher education institutions. 	DES / HEA / Schools / HEIs / TUSLA	<p>Numbers of Travellers in HE</p> <p>Cultural /Diversity Training programmes included in HEI's approaches to teaching and learning strategies</p>
4.	Build coherent pathways	To support transitions from post-primary to further and higher education by increasing school retention to and completion of the Leaving Certificate. Promoting a "sense of belonging" and "diversity" in schools that will address and break down the cultural barriers that impact on Irish Travellers achieving their full potential in society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage transitions to higher education as part of the NTRIS Traveller Pilot Project. Establish links between access officers in HEIs, HSCLs and Traveller Education Workers and identify role models from within the Traveller and Roma community. Advance the suite of education actions outlined in NTRIS. 	DES / DJE/ TUSLA / DCYA / HEA / HEIs	Increase in Traveller school completion rate

Objective No.	NAP Goal	Objectives	Priority Actions	Implementation Partners	Indicators
5.	Build coherent pathways	Consider approaches to increasing Traveller participation in higher education through mature student measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address as part of mature students study. 	HEA / DES	To be informed by recommendations of mature students study
6.	Build coherent pathways	Explore opportunities for improvements in transitions to the workplace for those who successfully completed their higher education courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with TUSLA on the development of a pilot employment support scheme for Travellers. 	DES / TUSLA	Numbers who successfully transition into employment from the pilot
7.	Develop Access Data	Explore opportunities for the collection of improved data on participation and completion by Travellers at school and in higher education in the context of the published <i>Access Data Plan</i> and explore ways of addressing issues of non-identification in HEIs including intersection with other target groups in the NAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Data Plan Implementation with a focus on providing key data for policy development regarding Traveller education. Updating of HEA Equal Access Survey (EAS) leaflet to encourage completion of survey and particularly the completion of the ethnic identifier for new entrants to HE – leaflet will be circulated to Traveller organisations. 	DES / HEA / HEIs / CSO / SOLAS	Improvements in the ability to count all Travellers in HE and to track progress through HE
8.	Develop Access Data	Review target for Traveller participation as part of the consultative process for the next NAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The target for the next NAP will be considered in 2020/21 and will be informed by objective no.7 above. 	DES / HEA	New target for Traveller participation included in next NAP that is agreed with stakeholders.

Objective No.	NAP Goal	Objectives	Priority Actions	Implementation Partners	Indicators
9.	Mainstream the delivery of access	Support the needs of all students in higher education, including Travellers, through the roll out of student success measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All HEIs developing student success strategies as part of the System Performance Framework (SPF) 2018 - 2021. 	DES / HEA / National Forum for Teaching and Learning / HEIs / Traveller organisations	<i>Student Success Strategy</i> in place in all HEIs that considers the needs of all students, including Travellers.

Appendix 1:

Summary of existing supports for Traveller participation in education

Supports and Initiatives to Support Traveller Participation in Higher Education

The function of access offices within higher education institutions is to encourage under-represented groups, such as Travellers, to enter and progress through third-level education. These offices through a range of pre-entry activities, alternative entry arrangements and post-entry supports, strive to ensure the facilitation of equity of access to higher education.

A number of new initiatives to support increased participation in higher education by the NAP target groups including Irish Travellers are being rolled out across the higher education sector, including the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) which was set up to support the implementation of the current NAP.

Each of the three new Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) funding strands is expected to have a positive impact on Traveller numbers in higher education. The new *Data Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education* will also examine ways of capturing data relating to Travellers with the gathering of precise data in respect of Traveller students.

It is intended that the numerous initiatives under the various strands of PATH will assist in the realisation of the NAP target and enhance our understanding of the barriers that exist in respect of access to higher education by Traveller students.

- **PATH 1**

The objective of PATH 1 is to increase the number of students from under-represented groups entering initial teacher education. Teachers with a personal understanding of the challenges that are encountered in participating in higher education are ideally placed to act as role models for prospective students from the same communities. Funding of €2.7m has been provided over a three-year period for teacher education access initiatives.

An example of work being carried out in this area is Marino Institute of Education's *Tobar* project, which seeks to increase Traveller participation in initial teacher education at primary level. This project is specifically targeting and supporting young Travellers who aspire to be teachers; placing the emphasis on a community-based approach in collaboration with Traveller advocacy groups and target schools.

- **PATH 2**

The purpose of PATH 2 is to encourage participation and success by students from sections of society that are significantly under-represented in higher education. The 1916 Bursary Fund underlines the Government's commitment to the type of equality of opportunity envisaged by the 1916 signatories. Under PATH 2, funding of €6m has been provided over a three-year period for 600 bursaries.

In the 2017/18 academic year, the first year of the 1916 Bursary Fund, 10 of the 200 bursaries were awarded to Irish Travellers. The initial assessment of the pilot stage implementation for PATH 2 indicated that the overall chance of securing a bursary was high for prospective Traveller students.

- **PATH 3**

PATH 3 complements the direct student funding provided under PATH 2; by supporting institutional capacity in developing regional and community partnership strategies for increasing access to higher education by specified groups. Higher education institutions are expected to form effective partnerships within their clusters and to show evidence of how they will engage with local DEIS schools, further education providers, community and voluntary groups, existing local initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage, Local Community Development Committees and other relevant stakeholders. PATH 3 funding amounts to €7.5m over a three-year period.

An example of work being carried out in this area is the South cluster's *Travellers in Education* project, which proposes a whole-school approach to addressing Traveller participation needs. This includes supporting staff in understanding the diverse nature of the student cohort and contributing to the creation of an environment that is conducive to employing and including Travellers. Furthermore, the employment of Traveller education workers in higher education institutions will enable, amongst other things, the introduction of an academic and role model mentoring programme for school-going children and young Traveller people through key support agencies and communities.

- **Student Assistance Fund**

The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) provides financial assistance for students in higher education who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. The SAF is available to anyone in approved higher education institutions undertaking a full or part-time course of not less than one year who will be awarded an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification on completion of the course. The purpose of the SAF is to assist students with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties who are unable to meet the costs associated with day-to-day participation in higher education.

An additional €1m was added to the Fund in 2017 which is specifically ring-fenced for part-time students who are lone parents or members of the other access target groups. Prior to that the fund supported full-time students only.

In December 2018 a further €1 million was added to the Fund for students attending Professional Masters of Education courses, who are experiencing financial difficulty.

- **Fund for Students with a Disabilities**

Student who are Irish Travellers who have a disability can access support under the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). This fund supports participation by students with a disability in a full-time programme of higher education. The aim is to ensure that these students can participate fully in education.

- **Student Grants (SUSI Grant)**

Students who are Irish Travellers can also access the statutory-based student grant scheme. This is the main source of support available for full-time students attending post leaving certificate (PLC), undergraduate and post-graduate courses. The scheme supported in excess of 77,000 students in the academic year 2017/18 at a cost of circa €371million. The grant ranges in value from €1,500 up to €12,185, affording particular priority to those on the lowest incomes and who are social welfare-dependent through the special rate of maintenance grant. Additional funding of €4 million was secured in Budget 2017 and a further €3m in Budget 2018 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. A student grant may consist of a maintenance grant and a fee grant which covers the cost of the student contribution towards fees.

Supports for Traveller Participation in Further Education

In the context of the further education and training (FET) sector, Goal 2 of the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019* relates to active inclusion and seeks to support the active inclusion of all individuals, including Travellers, to participate in FET to enable every individual to fully participate in society. As part of the annual FET service planning process that takes place between SOLAS and the education and training boards (ETBs), ETBs are required to consider the needs of a broad range of learners and disadvantaged groups, including Travellers. This is reinforced through the identification of Travellers as a priority target group within various programmes, for example, the operational guidelines for Back to Education Allowance and adult literacy service, identify Travellers as a priority target group.

There is a broad range of provision on offer within FET at levels 1-6 of the NFQ serving around 320,000 learners each year. Provision is available nationwide on both a full and part-time basis including evenings and weekends, to suit the lives of learners of all ages and from all backgrounds. For all learners, including Travellers, development of literacy, numeracy and “soft” skills is supported specifically through Adult Literacy Programmes, Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and NALA Write-On. Through the Strategic Planning Process, ETBs must ensure that actions related to Literacy and Numeracy and ESOL development identified in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017–2021 are considered and progressed. In addition, other FET programmes including Youthreach, apprenticeships, etc. also support the development of literacy, numeracy and ‘soft skills’, in line with the goals of the FET Strategy.

- **Fund for Students Disabilities**

Student who are Irish Travellers who have a disability can access support under the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD). This fund supports participation by students with a disability in full-time PLC programmes. The aim is to ensure that these students can participate fully in education.

- **Student Grants (SUSI Grants)**

Full-time students attending Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses who are Irish Travellers can access the statutory based student grant scheme. The student grant consists of a maintenance grant at PLC level.

Supports for Traveller Participation in Primary and Post-Primary Education

The current policy in relation to education provision for Travellers is to provide supports in mainstream schools. In keeping with this principle, additional resources provided in the education system are allocated on the basis of identified individual educational need.

A number of Traveller-specific supports remain in the system to assist with the transition to the mainstream system of pupils, previously provided for in segregated provision. These comprise of:

- 141 alleviation posts at a current cost of €9.5 million; and
- Traveller specific capitation – the amount paid in 2018 was - Primary €0.5m and Post-Primary €0.6m.

DEIS Action Plan

The DEIS Plan 2017 identifies numerous actions to promote improvements in school attendance and completion in order to improve educational outcomes and overall life chances for all students including Traveller children and young people.

There is investment of some €125 million in the Department's DEIS Plan for educational inclusion. The DEIS programme provides for smaller class sizes and other supports including additional teaching posts, Home School Community Liaison Coordinators, DEIS grants, enhanced book grants, curriculum supports, priority access to Continuing Professional Development and the School Excellence Fund for DEIS.

Additional Resources for Schools

It is recognised that not all Traveller pupils attend DEIS schools. There are a range of supports available to all schools including: Resource Teacher Allocations and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The services of TUSLA Educational Welfare Officers are also available to advise and assist parents whose children are encountering difficulties with school attendance.

Under the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools, all schools receive an allocation of special education teachers based on the profiled need of the school. A baseline component is provided to every mainstream school, based on pupil numbers, to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention. The model also takes account of the school educational profile, including the number of pupils with complex needs attending the school, the learning support needs in schools as evidenced by attainment levels in standardised test results, and the social context of the school including disadvantage and gender. Where schools have enrolled Traveller pupils who have additional learning needs, this will be taken into account by the standardised test result scores and social context element of the profile.

Schools that have greater levels of learning support needs as evidenced by standardised test score also receive higher special educational needs allocations. This includes schools with pupils from the Traveller community who may be attaining lower standardised test scores. This allocation is based on the learning need evidenced by the test score result as opposed to the cultural identifier. 1,000 additional special education teachers have been provided for schools since 2011. The total number of special education teachers has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011 to over 13,450 at present.

NEPS who work with both primary and post-primary schools are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Since 2011, sanctioned NEPS psychologist numbers have grown from 173 whole time equivalents (WTE) to 194 WTEs with a further 10 psychologist posts for the 2019/20 school year.

Wider Government Policy – National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) and related initiatives which support Irish Traveller Participation in Higher Education

The Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) published the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy in June of 2018. DES participated in the development of the strategy and is a member of the Steering Group which was established to oversee the implementation of the new strategy. Membership of the Steering Group includes all relevant Government Departments, Agencies and Traveller representative groups. DES officials participate in the Steering Group and in the Education Sub-Committee group. The strategy takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of Travellers and Roma in Ireland in practical and tangible ways. Departments have worked together to identify actions that can be taken to bring about a real improvement in the quality of life for Travellers and Roma. It also aims to improve public service engagement with Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. There are 149 actions in the strategy, covering the themes of Cultural Identity, Education, Employment and Traveller Economy, Children and Youth, Health, Gender Equality, Anti-discrimination and Equality, Public Services, Accommodation and Traveller and Roma Communities.

There are over 30 education-related actions in NTRIS. They are attached in appendix 2.

- **Pilot project to support traveller participation and retention**

Responding to specific actions in the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* and *DEIS Plan 2017*, a two-year pilot programme to target attendance, participation and school completion in specific Traveller and Roma Communities is being established regionally. This is a collaborative inter-Departmental and agency approach funded by DJE, DES and Tusla Education Support Services (TESS).

Appendix 2:

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2017 - 2021 (Education Actions)

Action 4. The Department of Education and Skills has prepared intercultural guidelines for primary and post primary schools to support all member of the school community to develop an inclusive school community. These guidelines will support schools in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations to develop education resources on Traveller and Roma culture and history for use in primary, post primary and adult education settings.

Action 10. The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and TUSLA will develop proactive, early intervention education welfare supports to promote and support Traveller and Roma attendance, participation and engagement with the education system and retention to the Leaving Certificate or equivalent.

Action 11. The Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy will be reviewed by the Department of Education and Skills and the review will be published by early 2017.

Action 12. All relevant Departments and agencies will promote the Early Childcare and Education (ECCE) pre-school scheme, as well as the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) for Children with a Disability, within the Traveller and Roma communities in order to facilitate access for every child to free pre-school from the age of three until they start school.

Action 13. The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and TUSLA will implement good practice initiatives to support parental engagement in education and increase children's school readiness.

Action 14. In line with the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015-2019), the Department of Education and Skills will support the development by the higher education sector of a network of peer support and mentoring for Travellers and Roma in third level education.

Action 15. The Department of Education and Skills will support the development by the higher education sector of positive action measures to encourage and support Travellers and Roma to become teachers. The Department of Education and Skills will work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to support those wishing to enter the workforce as early years educators.

Action 16. The Department of Education and Skills will review policy on admissions to school in line with the Programme for Government commitment to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

Action 18. In consultation with representative groups, the Department of Education and Skills will commission research on the effectiveness of their anti-bullying procedures and guidelines on Traveller and Roma experiences in the school system.

Action 19. The Department of Education and Skills has introduced programmes for initial Teacher Education and for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) based on the concept of inclusive education. The Department of Education and Skills will ensure that such programmes enable teachers to deal with teaching and learning needs of all students from all cultural backgrounds and provide support for pedagogical practices that promote inclusion

Action 20. The Department of Education and Skills will request that the Teaching Council examine how the areas of intercultural, anti-racism and diversity are dealt with in Initial Teacher Education Programmes during the review of the “Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers of Initial Teacher Education”.

Action 21. The Department of Education and Skills will continue to address the areas of anti-racism, identity-based bullying and cultural awareness through a suite of supports including the recently revised Stay Safe Programme and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provided by Department-funded support services to teachers at Primary and Post-Primary level.

Action 22. SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards will continue to provide training and education that supports Traveller men and women to develop literacy, numeracy and “soft” skills in line with the Further Education and Training (FET) strategy.

Action 23. The Department of Justice and Equality, in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations and employer bodies, will promote greater Traveller and Roma participation in apprenticeship and traineeships.

Action 33. All Departments will equality proof measures to ensure they are accessible for Travellers and Roma.

Action 34. The Department of Education and Skills will develop a national policy on recognition of prior learning by 2018, which will benefit Travellers and Roma as well as other target groups identified in the National Access Plan.

Action 35. The Department of Education and Skills will develop an accessible and inclusive model of Recognition of Prior Learning in collaboration with Traveller and Roma organisations to support the accreditation and employment of Travellers and Roma.

Action 41. The Department of Education and Skills (and its agencies) will review current practices on student participation in the school inspection process. A review of questionnaires for students administered as part of Whole School Evaluations is planned for 2017.

Action 48. Youth programmes and services will be developed in a culturally inclusive and appropriate manner. Grant bodies (the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Education and Training Boards and TUSLA) will include this as a requirement where relevant in Service Level Agreements with funded youth services.

Action 49. Youth programmes and services will ensure the active participation of Travellers and Roma in their representative structures.

Action 50. TUSLA and the Department of Education and Skills will endeavour to ensure Travellers and Roma have access to appropriate sexual health and relationship education.

Action 52. The Department of Education and Skills and TUSLA and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (via the Education and Training Boards) will strengthen cooperation between formal education and non-formal learning sectors to address the high rate of early school-leaving in the Traveller and Roma communities based on best practice models and reviews of existing programmes.

Action 56. All relevant Departments and Agencies will ensure that work undertaken with Traveller and Roma families is underpinned by the ten common basic principles on Roma inclusion adopted by the European Commission.

Action 83. The Department of Health and other relevant Departments will collaborate with educational institutions and programmes including the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery and the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) programme to develop initiatives that promote access by Travellers to education and accreditation programmes that enhance their ability to compete on an equitable basis for mainstream health posts.

Action 99. All relevant Departments will resource the development and implementation of local Traveller and Roma women's forums/groups to provide support in health, education, training, employment and accommodation issues.

Action 101. The Department of Education and Skills will consider measures targeted at Travellers and Roma as part of any future proposals extending student supports to part-time students.

Action 122. The Department of Justice and Equality (Irish Prison Service) will, in conjunction with the Education and Training Boards, provide access to Travellers and Roma to education while in prison, including literacy education.

Action 143. All Departments and relevant agencies will ensure that all relevant public service staff members receive anti-racism and cultural awareness training.

Action 145. All Departments, statutory agencies and Local Authorities will ensure the ten common basic principles on Roma inclusion adopted by the European Commission underpin the strategic and operational activities of all Government Departments, statutory agencies and Local Authorities.

Action 148. All Departments and agencies will explore the development of a system for capturing data on the participation of Travellers and Roma (as well as other minority ethnic groups) across all Government Departments and statutory agencies in all thematic areas and actions within their remit.

Action 149. All Departments and agencies will explore the introduction of stratified sampling to gather statistically significant data on Travellers and Roma.