



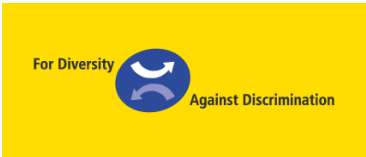
Promotion
of Roma/Traveller
Integration and
Equal Treatment
in Education
and Employment

SEMINAR ON EMPLOYMENT
NORTHERN IRELAND

Project leaded
by



Project financed
by



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1.0 Context

1.1 The Final Report of the Government's Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers (2000) found that that only 11% of Travellers were in paid employment of one form or another, while 70% of those who are economically active have had no paid work in the last ten years.

1.2 The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 outlaws discrimination in the field of employment. Trade unions and employer's organisations, professional regulatory bodies, those involved in vocational training, partnerships, barristers and the police are all prohibited from discriminating against employees or potential employees. In certain circumstances, preferring a person of a particular ethnic group is permissible if it is a genuine occupational qualification to belong to such a group. The legislation permits positive action measures which allow for access to training facilities to be provided to a particular racial group only, where that group has 'special needs' or is not represented or under-represented in the workforce.

1.3 The report '*Out in the Country – the Traveller Economy in Belfast*' (West Belfast Economic Forum, 1998) drew attention to the lack of investment by the state in the Traveller economy and pointed out that economic activity had actually been prevented on some of the officially sanctioned district council sites. The report concluded that this neglect was no longer acceptable and made a series of recommendations for action by statutory agencies.

1.4 A government commissioned report on minority ethnic people's experience of education, training and employment in Northern Ireland found that '*...the high levels of illiteracy and lack of formal qualifications gained by Travellers do not*

reflect a general lack of concern for education among this group. The majority of those interviewed expressed regret at either not having the opportunities to learn and/or not making the most of the opportunities that existed and also stressed a desire to further their education. Many of the young adults interviewed had joined various literacy and other educational programmes. One of the key motivating factors underlying this desire to learn appeared to be a recognition of the importance of a basic level of education and of qualifications in order to find work' (Connolly and Keenan, Opportunities for All, NI Statistics and Research Agency, 2000).

1.5 Although comprehensive statistics concerning Traveller participation in mainstream state-sponsored pre-vocational and vocational training programmes is not available, anecdotal evidence is that participation is minimal and drop-out rates are high.

1.6 In addition to the barriers outlined above are the following problems: real and perceived fears of discrimination in training and the workplace (official statistics show that two thirds of people would not willingly accept a Traveller as a work colleague); lack of information about what further education and training opportunities are available; lack of support to enable Travellers to undertake such education and training; the cultural inappropriateness of some training courses; and existence of a benefits trap (fear of losing social security and associated benefits which will not be replaced by sufficient income from training allowances or wages).

1.7 In certain circumstances, preferring a person of a particular ethnic group for a job does not amount to unlawful discrimination. If it is a 'genuine occupational qualification' that a person be of a particular ethnic group then an

employer will have an effective defence. Where it can be demonstrated that it is a *bona fide* requirement for the post holder to be of a certain ethnic origin, then it is not unlawful discrimination to prefer such a person. Positive discrimination – for example, preferring a black person to a white person for a vacant position because black persons are under-represented in the workforce or because historically they have suffered discrimination – is unlawful. It could only be lawful if it were a genuine occupational qualification. Although the law does not authorise ‘positive discrimination, it does allow for what are generally called ‘affirmative measures’. These provide exemptions from the Order where access to training facilities is provided for, or encouragement directed at, members of a particular racial group only. These only apply, however, because that racial group has special needs or because there is no representation, or an under-representation, of persons from that racial group in a particular workplace sector of the workforce.

1.8 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has published a *Code of Practice for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Employment*, which offers guidance and assistance in relation to employment practices and has been supplemented by a publication *Racial Harassment at Work*.

1.9 A small number of cases alleging discrimination in employment have been taken by Irish Travellers under the Race Relations legislation, but these have been settled out of court.

1.10 The Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister: 2000) included a series of

recommendations relating to training and employment. Amongst these were that:

- *‘The Department of Higher, Further Education, Training and Employment (now the Department of Employment and Learning) should collect baseline information on the employment and training needs and aspirations of Travellers to enable the setting of short and medium term goals’ (Recommendation 24);*
- *The Department of Employment and Learning ‘...should explore and assess existing training and employment projects for Travellers within Northern Ireland and within Ireland and Britain with the aim of identifying models for the development of further Traveller-specific interventions. Travellers and Traveller organisations should be invited to participate in the design, planning and management of any such assessment’. (Recommendation 25);*
- *The Department of Employment and Learning ‘...along with other relevant Government Departments should consider providing resources to support existing Traveller-specific training projects within their areas of responsibility’ (Recommendation 26).*

However, to date, the Department has only commenced work on the first of these recommendations (24).

2.0 Brief description of the seminar

2.1 The second in a series of roundtables held under the auspices of the Equality Commission's Roma EDEM Project activities took place on 15 November 2005 at the premises of An Munia Tober¹. Travellers' Project in Belfast.

2.2 The roundtable sought to:

- Identify and examine discriminatory barriers;
- Present and examine good practice;
- Make recommendations for positive actions that will advance access and attainment by Travellers.

2.3 The event focused on training; employment; and further and higher education and was attended by over 70 participants including Irish Travellers, Roma, representatives of Government Departments and other public authorities, representatives of the Further and Higher Education sector as well as a range of voluntary organisations.

2.4 Amongst Government Departments in attendance were the Department of Employment and Learning, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister and the Department of Education.

2.5 Other public authorities in attendance at the event were: Invest Northern Ireland, The Association of Northern

¹ An Munia Tober means 'The Good Road' in the language of Irish Travellers known as Gammon or Cant.

Ireland Colleges, Armagh College of Further and Higher Education, Limavady College of Further and Higher Education, the Western Education & Library Board, the Belfast Education & Library Board, the Southern Education & Library Board, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Armagh Health & Social Services Trust, North West Belfast Health & Social Services Trust, the Royal Group of Hospitals; and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

2.6 Other organisations which took part in the roundtable included: An Munia Tober, Armagh Travellers Support Group, the Roma Support Group, Pavee Point, the Irish Traveller Movement, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Conway Education Centre, Newdealwest/Jobconnect, the Employment Support Board for West Belfast and the Greater Shankill, Tutor Connectu, the Job Assist Centre, the Social Economy Agency, Dairy Farm Training, Save the Children and the National University of Ireland at Maynooth.

2.7 The event was introduced by Deputy Chief Commissioner Anne O'Reilly, introducing the event who described how until the Second World War most Travellers had followed a tradition of self-employment providing some of the services required by the rural population. However, post-war technological, economic and social changes had removed much of the need for these types of services among the rural community and Travellers moved to the towns and cities as part of a process of urbanisation.

Only a minority of Travellers had adapted successfully to this changed situation. The subsequent economic and social disadvantage experienced by most Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland has endured to the present day and been

well documented, most recently in the report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers.

Amongst the salient elements of this disadvantage the report noted that 92% of Travellers have no GCSEs or their equivalents or higher and that no Travellers have attended tertiary level education in Northern Ireland. Only 11% of Travellers were in paid employment whilst 70% have had no paid work in the last 10 years². Furthermore, research sponsored by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency has suggested that 66% of the non-Traveller population would not willingly accept a Traveller as a work colleague³. There was currently no information in the public domain on the situation of Roma in Northern Ireland.

Calling for action to address this situation, the Deputy Chief Commissioner emphasised that *'the context of a post-industrial society within the rapidly changing world of the 21st century. ...requires us to embrace equality and diversity so as to effectively utilise resources (including human capital) that will enable us to compete with other societies in the global economy. The continuing social and economic exclusion of Roma and Travellers can no longer be deemed acceptable. The legislation places a clear onus on statutory bodies in particular to work to enable all sectors of society to avail of the services and benefits which exist and to explore and develop new ways of delivering services to meet needs where this is necessary'*.

2.8 A series of keynote speakers delivered presentations designed to inform a series of discussion workshops which took place later in the day.

² OFMDFM: *Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers* (2000).

³ Connolly, P. and Keenan, M. (2000) *Racial Attitudes and Prejudice in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

2.9 Derek Hanway, Director of An Munia Tober, highlighted the barriers to access faced by Travellers and called for a partnership approach towards ensuring that Traveller participation in training and employment programmes became the norm rather than an exception.

2.10 Ken Fraser, Head of the Race Equality Unit at OFMDFM, acknowledged the existence of institutional racism, often manifested in the failure to accommodate diversity in how services are provided – a ‘one size fits all approach’. He pledged that *‘Government will develop tailored approaches to meeting the needs of specific minority ethnic communities and focus on those groups who still suffer particular disadvantage, rather than treating all minority ethnic groups as having the same needs. A key element of this will be appropriate ethnic monitoring of service delivery’*. OFMDFM was committed to producing a final implementation plan for its race equality strategy by March 2006.

2.11 Brid O’Brien, of the Dublin-based Pavee⁴ Point Travellers Centre, outlined the role of Pavee Point and other Traveller NGOs in supporting Travellers to develop action and analysis; provision of employment for Travellers and work with other agencies to develop Traveller inclusive responses. She emphasised that the NGO sector on its own cannot address Travellers socio-economic exclusion and that the other two sectors of the labour market, the private and public sectors, have key roles to play. Although equality and anti-racist measures were essential, it was important that all key players think beyond the promotion of equality and anti-racism to its achievement: *‘The public sector has a*

⁴ Pavee is a word for Traveller in gammon or cant

particular role to play not only as a key policy maker and implementer but also as a potential employer of Travellers and Roma’.

2.12 Aidan Fitzpatrick, representing the Commission, presented an overview of positive action measures available to employers under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

2.13 Anastasia Crickley of the Centre for Applied Social Studies at the National University of Ireland at Maynooth and Chair of the Vienna-based EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, described her experience in enabling successful Traveller involvement in NUI Maynooth Community & Youth Work courses⁵.

She pointed out that:

‘...third level is central in promoting appropriate in promoting appropriate, research, curriculum development and teacher education, and Travellers’ involvement in professional roles. Also, the sectors of society with social and political capital are educated there: any transformation of their perspective will contribute to building a just and inclusive society. Travellers, Roma and other minorities must engage with third level if they are to maximize their education options, including professional roles at all levels of education planning, development and provision. As with policy and curricula, so with provision: Travellers will not be fully included until they are present, achieving, and engaged in shaping all levels of education’.

⁵ *‘In the past ten years between ten and twenty Travellers per year have enrolled in third level (in ROI), mainly through alternative access and in social studies diploma courses’, Anastasia Crickley 15 November 2005*

Calling for the employment of access officers to work with marginalised groups she underlined the necessity of liaison between colleges and these communities and their organisations, to promote choice of and access to third level colleges and courses, and to financial and other supports.

2.14 The event concluded with a number of thematic workshops which made recommendations for progressing actions to advance equality for Travellers and Roma in training; employment; and further and higher education.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 Training and employment

- There was a need for agencies involved across the whole spectrum of education, training and employment to work together in partnership (community groups, employers, Traveller Support Groups, Further and Higher Education Colleges, primary and secondary schools).
- Need to change training agencies' perceptions of Travellers
Through the provision of a programme of awareness of Travellers and their culture to be delivered using Travellers themselves (requires resourcing to enable long-term sustainability)
- Need for training agencies to be more proactive in enabling Traveller community to access their services. This should include the appointment of a contact person.
- Employment agencies should develop a strategy for employment of ethnic minorities, including Travellers, in their own organisations and seek to set targets to achieve this.
- There was a need for one Government Department to take a clear lead and co-ordinate action with other Departments and Agencies. The lead agency for employment and training is the Department for

Employment and Learning although the Department of Education has a major role to play to ensure that current problems arising from the educational deficit experienced by the Traveller community.

- The Department of Employment and Learning should ensure that all training, employment and further and higher education related policies and programmes are Traveller-proofed under the auspices of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- All education provision for Travellers should be integrated.
- Information needs to be provided for Travellers in education about the transition to the world of work.
- Traveller Support Groups also need to build capacity of Travellers to be employed and employ them (currently only 5 Travellers are employed by Traveller Support Groups, none in management positions).
- Travellers should be employed by external agencies in researching need.
- The recommendations made by the Deloitte research report commissioned by the Department of Employment and Learning into the training and employment aspirations of Travellers must be implemented.

3.2 Employment

- Public authorities must commit to using the positive action provisions of the Race Relations (NI) Order and

FETO to enable training and employment opportunities for Travellers.

- Each Government Department and public authority concerned with training, employment and further and higher education should appoint a champion or contact person with lead responsibility for progressing access and outcomes for Travellers.
- Training for Travellers should lead to employment opportunities which have economic benefits for Travellers.
- Political will was needed to bring about race equality for Travellers in employment, training and further and higher education.

3.3 Further and Higher Education

- The success of the National University of Ireland at Maynooth in attracting Travellers onto their programmes should be investigated by the Department of Employment and Learning and the Further and Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland.
- Practical partnerships between education providers and representative agencies should promote pro-active links with parents, communities, employers and the corporate sector
- The role of community education needed to be acknowledged and supported.

- Pre-vocational training should be used as a means to facilitate Traveller involvement in vocational training.
- Further and Higher Education Colleges needed to develop initiatives to attract adult Traveller returners and teenage Travellers who were early leavers from school.
- The use of continual assessment was often easier than an exam-based approach.
- Traveller achievers in the Republic of Ireland and Britain should be used as role models to promote further Traveller involvement in further and higher education and training.
- Further and Higher Education Colleges should facilitate Traveller nomadism by ensuring that if Travellers are able to complete courses commenced in one college.
- Opportunities to employ Travellers as researchers in research into the needs of the Traveller community should be utilised.
- Is a need to go beyond research and focus on actions – implement the actions of the PSI Working Group on Travellers.
- All facets of education provision must be informed by principles of equality, interculturalism and anti-discrimination.

- A thorough audit is required, of policy, codes of practice, curriculum texts and materials, in the light of these principles.
- All involved in delivering this education must be educated in the theory and application of these principles.
- The adoption of these principles will transform education for all students and this is necessary for the promotion of equality principles in society.
- There should be a commitment to employing Travellers, particularly former students, in access facilitation roles.
- Promoting access begins with encouraging students in schools and other education venues to choose higher education. Universities already have links with feeder schools in disadvantaged areas; links should be built with Travellers. Visits to colleges, taster days, support mechanisms such as homework clubs and summer schools are examples of how access could be promoted and facilitated. Traveller participation in student clubs and other organisations should be promoted.
- Isolation is a major problem for many when they are effectively pioneers from their community in third level provision. Personal and social support is required, both for the individual student and for her/his family and community group.
- Third level institutions should explicitly name and welcome Travellers in their statements, initiatives,

programmes and policies; they should actively promote Traveller culture and distinct identity, and their full integration into the community.

- Pro-active policies are required to promote employment of Travellers and other underrepresented minorities in all sectors of university staff.
- Access departments should play a role in monitoring college courses and research to ensure application of anti-racism and interculturalism principles relating to Travellers and other minorities; personnel could also be involved in teaching and research relevant to their specialisms.
- For many minority students academic support is an essential service. Catch-up tuition for those who missed out on elements at prior levels, relevant language skills development, workshops on study skills, use of laboratories, libraries, equipment and ICT technology etc. are required.
- Minority, including Traveller and Roma, enrolment across the spectrum of disciplines should be promoted.
- Innovative actions should be developed in dialogue with the Traveller community and their organisations and with other levels in the education system;
- Funding should be made available to support and promote successful strategies and partnerships at all levels

- Inclusive curricula and pedagogy should be developed and disseminated
- Appropriate supports need to be put in place to enable transition
- A support and mentoring system for Traveller students
- Comprehensive information and guidance on access programmes and opportunities available to all.
- Students of all backgrounds, identities and abilities should be encouraged to set higher personal goals and build ambition. This requires:
 - inclusive and challenging curricula and pedagogy
 - synergies between 'common knowledge' and 'college knowledge'
 - linkages between disadvantaged regions, schools and communities
 - colleges' visible involvement in school activities.
- The Department of Employment and Learning should ensure that all third level institutions should articulate a practical agenda to widen access. This will require:
 - the evaluation of existing access programmes
 - the development of a framework of policies and initiatives that identify:
 - ❖ what works for each target group
 - ❖ guidelines for successful partnerships
 - ❖ activities across the education system

- ensure regular institutional evaluation of strategies and programmes

4.0 Programme

09.30am Tea/Coffee and Registration

10.00 am **Introduction**

Chair: Anne O'Reilly, Deputy Chief Commissioner,
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

10.10am **Barriers which prevent Travellers accessing training and employment**

Derek Hanway (Director, An Munia Tober)

10.25am **Policy measures available to promote race equality in training and employment**

Ken Fraser (Head of Race Equality Branch,
OFMDFM)

10.40am **Legal measures available to promote race equality in training and employment**

Aidan Fitzpatrick (Employment Development
Branch, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland)

10.55am **The Role of Roma and Traveller NGOs in the fight against discrimination**

Brid O'Brien (Pavee Point Travellers Centre,
Dublin)

11.25am **Access for Travellers to Further and Higher Education**

Anastasia Crickley (Centre for Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland at Maynooth)

11.40am **Themed Workshops**

- Training
- Employment
- Further and Higher Education

12.40pm **Feedback from Workshops**

12.50pm **The Way Forward**

13.20pm **Close and Lunch**

5.0 Background documentation used

- Outline of Roma EDEM Project Background, Objectives, Partners and Activities
- Extracts from Part II of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, *Discrimination in the Employment Field*.
- Extracts from the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, Part VIII Exceptions Section 75 *Selection of unemployed persons*
- Bibliography: *Travellers and Employment*
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre Bibliography on *Employment*
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre Factsheet – Travellers and Work
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre List of Publications on Economy and Work

6.0 List of participants duly signed

Attached

7.0 Pictures of the event



Participants welcome the first speaker at the roundtable event.



Listening to the presentations at the roundtable event.



Keynote Speakers, left to right: Ken Fraser (Head of Race Equality, Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister); Anne O'Reilly (Deputy Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland); Aidan Fitzpatrick (Employment Development Division, Equality Commission), Anastasia Crickley (National University of Ireland, Chair of European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia); Derek Hanway (Director, An Munia Tober); Brid O'Brien (Pavee Point).



Training Workshop



Further and Higher Education Workshop



Feeding back from the Employment Workshop during the plenary session



Feeding back from the Further and Higher Education Workshop during the plenary session