

 Office for Social Inclusion An Oifig um Chuimsiú Sóisialta Social Inclusion Forum Workshop	
	Minority Groups – Strategies for Integration

**National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 -
Relevant extracts from Office for Social Inclusion First Annual Report**

Ireland's second National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAP/Inclusion) covering the period 2003-2005 was submitted to the European Commission on 31 July 2003. The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is the Government Office with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving the NAP/Inclusion process.

OSI's first Annual Report on the implementation of the Plan was launched on 17th December 2004 by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. This report was produced by the OSI in consultation with relevant Government Departments who have policy responsibility for the social inclusion targets and commitments contained in the Plan, and with representatives of the Social Partners through the Social Inclusion Consultative Group.

The following extracts from the Annual Report relate to actions on the targets relevant to this workshop and include material relating to Travellers, in addition to Migrants and Ethnic Minorities.

Copies of the report, in both Irish and English are available on line through the OSI website – www.socialinclusion.ie – or by contacting the office at 01 704 3851.

Migrants and Ethnic Minorities

EU Member States in December 2000 (revised December 2002) agreed a common set of objectives for combating poverty and social exclusion. One of these common objectives – *To help the most vulnerable* – includes the following statement - *To promote the social integration of women and men at risk of facing persistent poverty, for example because they have a disability or belong to a group experiencing particular integration problems such as those affecting immigrants;*

The NAP/Inclusion refers to the need for an overall framework on migration which would cover the regulation of inflows into the state, together with integration issues, racism and interculturalism.

(i) Education

The general aim of education policy in this sphere is to optimise access by migrants and ethnic minorities to all levels of the education system. A pamphlet “Schools and the Equal Status Act” was launched in September 2003. The pamphlet was prepared to assist schools to meet their obligations under that Act.

Anti-racism intercultural programme

An anti-racism intercultural programme at every level of the education system will be implemented building on existing initiatives and focusing on curriculum, training and support issues.

Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism in Education - Draft Recommendations towards a National Action Plan was produced by the Department of Education and Science in November 2002. Actions under way to support the Plan include: information for schools on the integration of asylum seekers and migrants and additional resources for schools to support the needs of students for whom English is not their first language.

Guidelines on intercultural education in the curriculum at primary level have been submitted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to the Department and guidelines at post-primary level are nearing completion. It is planned to publish the guidelines for primary schools in the coming months.

Modules on interculturalism have been developed and approved for use in the Further Education sector and new initiatives for migrant groups have been developed under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI).

Literacy and language training

Literacy and language training for adult minority linguistic groups will be expanded. Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) have developed versions of the European Language Portfolio for primary and post-primary learners of English as a second language as well as providing training on an on-going basis for teachers in schools who provide English language support to non-nationals.

There are now more than 3,500 asylum seekers/refugees attending literacy courses through the VEC adult literacy service; a report on addressing the literacy and language needs of adult asylum seekers has been launched, and training for teaching staff has taken place in collaboration with the London Language and Literacy Unit.

Third Level participation

No statistics are yet available on this target insofar as it relates to refugees.

(ii) Health

A Regional Health Strategy for Ethnic Minorities for the Eastern Regional Health Authority area was launched on 23rd September 2004.

Health Research

A Health Research Board Fellowship in Health Services Research was awarded to the Department of General Practice, NUI, Galway in Autumn 2002. The project is entitled "Health Service Delivery in a Multicultural Ireland: Perceptions of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Primary Health Care Providers". This work is due to be completed in Autumn 2005.

Building Healthy Communities Pilot

One of the projects the Department of Health and Children is funding under the Combat Poverty Agency's Building Healthy Communities pilot Programme in 2004 is Tallaght Intercultural Action. This project aims to improve the accessibility of health and social

services to ethnic minority families and to train women from ethnic minorities to deliver awareness training to health staff.

(iii) Migration and Interculturalism

<i>Migration and Interculturalism is a special initiative under Sustaining Progress</i>
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The inclusion of Migration and Interculturalism as one of the ten special initiatives under Sustaining Progress reflects the importance the Government attaches to these issues and their cross cutting impact on Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. Designating these issues as a special initiative offers a timely opportunity to analyse and review the building blocks which have been put in place over the past few years and adopt a strategic approach to identifying next steps.

Sustaining Progress contains a commitment that, *"Government and the social partners agree on the desirability for the development of a comprehensive policy framework on migration (immigration and emigration)."* Issues highlighted for consultation with the social partners to achieve this goal include economic migration, integration issues, racism and interculturalism, and issues affecting Irish emigrants. The scoping paper on migration and interculturalism has been circulated and discussed by the social partners. The National Action Plan against Racism is the principal deliverable it contains.

(iv) Racism and Racial Discrimination

National Action Plan against Racism

The National Action Plan against Racism is a key commitment towards eliminating racism stemming from Ireland's active participation in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa in September 2001. The development of a National Action Plan against Racism also represents a significant opportunity to both build upon and enhance existing policies and strategies to address racism in Ireland and to identify new priorities and aspirations.

A Steering Group representative of Government, specialist bodies, other bodies and civil society was formed to assist in the development of the Plan. The consultative phase of the preparation process for the Plan consisted of a national consultative conference, written submissions and regional and thematic seminars. The report on the consultative process and a framework structure for the Plan "Diverse Voices" was published in 2003 and widely distributed. Following consultation with the Social Partners, the Equality Authority and Irish Human Rights Commission, the Plan will be sent to Government for approval and publication in the coming months.

Anti-Racism Awareness/in the Workplace

The National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme (Know Racism) has completed its three year term (2001-2003). A review and evaluation of the programme is currently being carried out with a view to incorporating lessons learned by the programme into the awareness aspects of the National Action Plan against Racism.

Anti-Racism in the Workplace Initiatives continue to be developed in partnership, by the Equality Authority, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, ICTU, the CIF, IBEC and the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland. The Anti-Racist Workplace Week is a

joint venture between the Equality Authority, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, IBEC, ICTU, the CIF and the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland.

Dignity at Work Policy and Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy & Strategy Objectives for the Health Service

The Dignity at Work Policy, which was launched in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy & Strategy Objectives for the Health Service, came into operation 1st May 2004. This Policy document supersedes all existing local policies on dealing with complaints of bullying & harassment. Printed copies of the Policy have been distributed to each agency following launch and the policy is also available to download from Health Services Employers Agency (HSEA) website.

Policy on Migration

The elements of the framework for the development of an Immigration and Residence Bill, which included widespread consultation and a review of best practice elsewhere, have been completed. Work on the development of the specification for the Bill is ongoing.

(v)Refugees and Applicants for Refugee Status

Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

European Refugee Funds are available for projects, the majority of which are involved in the reception of asylum seekers and the integration of refugees. In 2004, a total of €880,000 was made available to sixteen projects working in the areas of reception, integration and voluntary repatriation.

The Small Grants Scheme assists voluntary support groups in a range of activities to befriend asylum seekers to assist them to settle in to local communities and to promote intercultural activities between asylum seekers and the local community. In 2003, a total of €140,000 was made available under this Scheme benefiting over sixty projects. The Scheme is operating again in 2004 when it is expected that approximately €145,000 will be awarded to support groups working with asylum seekers.

The Commemorative Awards Ceremonies initiative welcomes people who have refugee status to Ireland. Commemorative Certificates are awarded to refugees in the presence of their families at an informal ceremony. This initiative was piloted in December 2003 and in February 2004 and was launched during European Week against Racism in March 2004.

Processing Asylum Claims

Over recent years significant resources have been allocated by the Government to the asylum determination process. This high level of investment continues to have very positive results both in terms of speed of processing and numbers of applications awaiting a final decision.

During 2003, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform continued to implement the Government's asylum strategy aimed at:

- achieving greatly increased processing capacity to deliver more speedy decisions in relation to applications for refugee status leading to the completion to finality of the processing of all new asylum applications within a six month period; and

- dealing with the increased numbers of repatriations arising in respect of persons who do not qualify for refugee status.

The number of asylum applications received in 2003 was 7,900 as compared to 11,634 in 2002. In 2003, Ireland experienced the second highest fall in asylum applications in the EU. This trend continued in the first five months of 2004.

Processing continued to move strongly in the asylum processing agencies, namely the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) with 8,641 cases finalised by the ORAC and 5,031 decisions taken by the RAT. In addition, at the end of December 2003, there were 2,896 cases on hand in both agencies over six months old, compared with 6,500 cases over six months old at end September 2001.

In relation to processing times prioritised applications, which represent over 50 per cent of the present caseload, receive a first instance decision in ORAC within six weeks of application and are also dealt with speedily by the RAT.

(vi) Information Provision to Immigrants and Emigrants

A Department of Social and Family Affairs (D/SFA) Working Group has been established to review the information and other services provided to immigrants and emigrants. The D/SFA funds and participates in an Information Seminar in the UK every year in partnership with the Federation of Irish Societies (FIS) and the annual meeting of the Coalition of Irish Emigrant Centres in the USA. The D/SFA will develop further contacts with a view to meeting the information needs of our emigrants in Australia.

In 2003, the D/SFA increased its financial support to voluntary organisations engaged in information provision to emigrants from €127,000 to €427,000 per annum. That significant increase allowed the D/SFA to engage with and support a wider number of agencies involved in information dissemination projects targeted at emigrants.

(vii) Transposing EU directives in relation to race, employment and gender Equal Treatment

The Equality Act 2004, enacted in July 2004, amends the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000. It implements three EU Directives, the Race Directive (2000/43/EC), the Framework Employment Directive (2000/78/EC) and the Gender Equal Treatment in Employment Directive (2002/73/EC). The overall effect of the three Directives is to require Member States to prohibit direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and harassment on grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in relation to employment, self-employment or occupational and vocational training. Victimisation is also prohibited. The directives also prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin in social protection including social security and healthcare, social advantages, education and access to and supply of goods and services, including housing.

(viii) Relevant EU Presidency 2004 Conferences

EU Presidency Conference hosted by the Department of Social and Family Affairs 'Reconciling Mobility and Social Inclusion - the Role of Economic and Social Policy' (Bundoran, Co Donegal 1 & 2 April 2004)

The conference considered the challenges presented by mobility of persons in the EU including the need to provide adequate support and protection to migrants to reduce their risk of experiencing poverty and social exclusion. The importance of a holistic approach to these challenges was stressed at the Conference, given the multi-faceted nature of the problems. This would include the following:

- (a) Development of clear and comprehensive strategies at national level to promote the employment and social inclusion of immigrants, involving immigration, employment and social policy;
- (b) Public to be kept fully informed of the realities and benefits of immigration, with priority also being given to effective provision of information and advice;
- (c) Institutional arrangements at national level should include partnerships between the Ministries with responsibility for immigration, employment and social affairs, and the active involvement of social partners, civil society and, in particular, NGOs from the immigrant communities; and
- (d) Co-operation with countries of origin should be developed, which could be pioneered in relation to people who move between EU countries; the fact that EU citizens who migrate to other EU countries also experience similar risks in relation to employment and social exclusion should be fully taken into account.

The Presidency concluded that these strategic processes could be encouraged and promoted at EU level by facilitating exchanges of knowledge, experience, expertise and good practice. This could be accomplished through the work of the Employment and Social Protection Committees, particularly in the context of the preparation of future action plans on employment and social inclusion.

3rd Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty from EU Countries (Brussels 28 and 29 May 2004)

Following on from conferences held during the Belgian and Greek EU presidencies, the Irish Presidency hosted the third meeting of People Experiencing Poverty from EU countries. The conference sought to develop further ways of promoting the participation at all levels of people experiencing poverty and the structural networks to facilitate this. A particular objective was to promote their involvement in the development of the National Action plans for social inclusion.

Groups identified at the Conference as needing special support included immigrants and ethnic minorities, victims of trafficking, particularly children, those living in sub-standard accommodation, the homeless, people living with disabilities and lone parents.

Travellers

The overall objective of the NAP/Inclusion in relation to Travellers is to improve their life experience through the provision of appropriate education, health and housing services and to remove any remaining barriers to their full participation in the work and social life of the country. Actions under the various targets in the plan are set out below.

(i) Employment

FÁS Services

FÁS records show that there are 1,399 Travellers registered with FÁS in total to date, 734 male and 665 female; included in this figure are 79 who registered as a Traveller with a disability. For the year January-December 2003, 342 Travellers have registered, with 19 registering as a Traveller with a disability.

In addition to the inclusion of Travellers on a range of FÁS programmes, there are a number of special initiatives that have been developed in response to approaches from Traveller support groups locally. Also, at any given time, there are a number of Travellers attending FÁS Programmes who may not have registered as such.

EQUAL Programme

FÁS is one of the partners with Pavee Point on an Equal Project that is exploring the job creation potential of the Traveller Economy. This is a new project and is being piloted at Pavee Point, Galway and Clondalkin. The programme, which has been running since 2002 and is due to be completed in 2005, involves working with Traveller men who want to develop or formalise new businesses. Each programme has 10 participants.

(ii) Education

Traveller Education Strategy

Work commenced in autumn 2003 on developing a five-year *Traveller Education Strategy*. An external expert has been appointed to lead the process with a joint working group drawn from the Educational Disadvantage Committee and the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education. The report on the Strategy is expected to be completed in early 2005. The main focus of the Traveller Education Strategy exercise will be to review/evaluate existing activities, the wide range of inputs, the quality of outcomes and the experience of Traveller learners within the education system. The Strategy will provide recommendations on the way forward in relation to Traveller education and will also recommend a phased implementation plan. The Department's Inspectorate has conducted an evaluation of provision at primary level and a preliminary evaluation at post-primary level as part of the strategy exercise.

A senior official in the Department of Education and Science has been appointed to take a lead role in co-ordinating the measures and support services in place to facilitate Traveller participation at every level of the education system. A national evaluation report on Pre-Schools for Travellers has been published.

On a national basis, the Department provides a continuum of provision for Travellers from pre-school to further education, encompassing the following specific measures: 52 Pre-Schools for Travellers; 520 Resource Teachers for Travellers and an enhanced capitation grant for Traveller pupils enrolled in primary schools; additional teaching resources and an

enhanced capitation grant for Travellers enrolled at post primary level; 40 Visiting Teachers for Travellers which encompass all levels of education; 4 Junior Education Centres which cater for Traveller children aged 12 to 15 years; Senior Traveller Training Centres which provide a programme of general education, vocational training and work experience programme for Travellers in the 15+ age group; and a National Education Officer for Travellers to, *inter alia*, identify the needs of Travellers and assist in planning education provision.

In designing and revising School Plans, schools must affirm minority groups such as Travellers. This requirement is contained in a pamphlet entitled "Schools and the Equal Status Act" which was launched in September 2003. The pamphlet was prepared to assist schools to meet their obligations under the Act.

Placement in Primary Schools

There were almost 6,000 traveller children in primary schools in 2003. The new Traveller Education Strategy will further address the age appropriate placement of all Travellers in Primary schools.

Transfer rate to Post-Primary Education

The School Completion Programme targeted approximately 2000 Traveller children in 2003 and the integrated approach to tackling early school leaving will have particular regard to Traveller children.

The transfer rate to post-primary level was 85 per cent in 2003. There are approximately 1,700 Traveller students in mainstream schools at present out of a possible 4,000 i.e. 40 per cent of all Traveller students of post-primary school age. In addition, there are also over 900 in Senior Traveller Training Centres and over 200 in *Youthreach*. The majority of Traveller children leave mainstream schooling prior to completing Junior Cycle.

Participation in Third Level Education

Recent data from the Central Statistics Office indicated that 1.4 per cent of travellers over 15 years of age, have a third-level qualification.

(iii) Health

Reduction of gap in life expectancy

A Study Group incorporating the members of the Traveller Ethics, Research and Information Working Group and with representatives from relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations in Northern Ireland has been established to progress a Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study. The study has been designed by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland in consultation with approximately 400 stakeholders throughout the country. The Department of Health and Children is currently preparing a Request for Tender for the study which is expected to commence in early 2005. The study will provide national data in relation to the target.

The Traveller Health Strategy

The Department of Health and Children, in consultation with the Traveller Health Advisory Committee, has undertaken and/or completed the following actions specified in the Strategy:

- Regional Action Plans for the implementation of the Strategy have been developed by the Eastern Regional Health Authority/health boards in their areas and priorities for implementation in 2004 have been identified;
- All Health boards have designated a regional Traveller health co-ordinator with responsibility for Traveller health;
- Cultural awareness training is being provided to staff in all health boards;
- Primary Health Care for Travellers projects are currently in place in all health boards;
- The Department of Health and Children, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has established a joint committee to examine issues proper to both Departments;
- The Traveller Ethics, Research and Information Working Group has been established and has met regularly to consider applications on research into Traveller health for ethical approval;
- A Sub-group of the Traveller Ethics, Research and Information Working Group has been established to progress the implementation of an ethnic identifier question on the Hospital Inpatient Enquiry/Perinatal Systems in the Tallaght and Rotunda hospitals; the project in Tallaght Hospital commenced in July 2004;
- The Department, in consultation with the Traveller Health Advisory Committee, has completed a review of the operation of Traveller Health Units in all health boards; and
- Travellers and Traveller organisations are involved in determining health priorities for their community and in decisions on the allocation of resources through membership of the Traveller Health Units in health boards;

Primary Healthcare Project

Since 1994, Pavee Point in partnership with the Eastern Health Board, has helped develop a primary healthcare project for Travellers. Part of this project has been to train Traveller women to work as healthcare workers in their own communities. Other Traveller support groups around the country are now using this model. The Health board provides the training and the tutors and FÁS provides a training allowance. In June 2003 there were a total of 23 projects with 183 participants in Pre Training and 60 in Health Training. Three projects have finished with a total of 113 participants completing training, 41 of whom are now employed.

(iv) Housing/Accommodation

Accommodation supply

At the end of 2003 a total of 1,369 additional Traveller families had been provided with, or assisted in the provision of, accommodation through the local authority five-year Traveller accommodation programme. There were 419 less families on the unauthorised sites than had been on such sites at the beginning of the programme in 2000. The numbers of families on unauthorised sites has been reduced to 788 from 1207.

The Traveller accommodation element of the housing and accommodation special initiative under Sustaining Progress is being progressed through the review of the operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee which had been requested by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to advise him on the operation of the Act, has completed its review of the Act, during which barriers to the implementation of the local authority Traveller accommodation programmes were examined. A response to the recommendations contained in the report is expected at an early date.

Local authorities are in the course of preparing a follow-on Traveller accommodation programmes to the current five-year ones which expire at the end of this year. These new programmes will cover the period 2005 to 2008. In order to assist in giving a renewed focus to making progress on providing accommodation for Travellers, local authorities are now required to include annual targets for the number and type of accommodation to be provided in each year of the programme. In addition, the performance measurement scheme introduced for local authorities provides that the performance of local authorities in relation to Traveller accommodation will be specifically measured against targets set for implementation of the programme.

A High Level Group was established under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, with a remit to ensure that the relevant statutory agencies involved in the full range of services to Traveller focus on the immediate and practical delivery of such services, including accommodation. This group which is chaired by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform has commenced its consideration of the issues involved.

Expenditure on Traveller accommodation 2003/2004

Travellers are provided with accommodation through the local authority housing programme as well as through the provision of new and refurbished Traveller specific accommodation. In 2003, a total of €29 million was spent on the provision of Traveller specific accommodation, with the allocation increased by one-third to €40 million for 2004. This is in addition to the cost of providing standard housing allocated to Traveller families provided and funded under the local authority housing programme. It is expected that the increased accommodation provision of recent years and the reduction in the number of Traveller families in unauthorised encampments will continue.

Promoting tolerance and understanding between the settled and Traveller communities

New approaches to promoting tolerance and understanding with the emphasis on the improvement of relations between the settled and Traveller communities are being considered. Due to the complex nature of this issue, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will arrange a seminar to explore the issues with inputs from Traveller organisations and relevant Government Departments, before deciding on a way forward.

Community Development Programme

The Community Development Programme aims to counter social exclusion by involving people, most especially, the disadvantaged in making changes to their communities which they identify to be important and which put to use and develop their skills, knowledge and experience.

The Programme, operated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, provides funding, on a multi-annual basis, to a network of 175 community development

resource centres and projects in communities experiencing social and economic disadvantage. This funding covers core costs such as staff and overheads. Over €20.6m has been allocated to the Programme in 2004. Projects provide facilities such as meeting rooms, crèches, office facilities and training or education projects to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups in their communities. The Programme also includes groups, which act as a resource for community development work with particular interest groups, e.g. Travellers, lone parents and people with disabilities.

Task Force on the Travelling Community

The Second Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community will be published by end 2004 and will comprise two reports. The first report will focus on the outcomes on the key initiatives since the First Progress Report in 2000. The second report will itemise progress in relation to individual recommendations of the original report.