



**15th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues
November 30th – December 2nd 2022
Oral Statement: Gabi Muntean, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre**

Pavee Point is a national organisation promoting the rights of Travellers and Roma. There are about 40,000 Irish Travellers in Ireland, just less than 1% of the population, and an estimated 5,000 Roma live in Ireland. As minority ethnic groups, we continue to experience racism, discrimination and marginalisation in our country. We are honoured to participate in this Forum marking 30 years of the UN Declaration on Minorities.

In recent years, we have welcomed positive developments such as the recognition of Irish Travellers as an ethnic group in 2017, along with increased consultation with Traveller and Roma organisations, and the development of key policies such as the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.

However, our work as Minority Rights Defenders remains crucial, as we continue to face significant implementation of Traveller and Roma policies and responses. Lack of political will, adequate resourcing, or a way to monitor progress challenges in the are key issues. We welcomed the National Traveller Health Action Plan last week. With deepening education inequalities for Travellers and Roma since the COVID pandemic, we await a National Traveller Education Strategy which has been committed to in the programme for Government. We need more equality data to monitor the outcomes for Travellers and Roma on the ground.

This year Pavee Point has been following the situation for Ukrainian Roma refugees across Europe since the beginning of the Russian invasion through our connections with European and International NGOs and Human Rights bodies. As we all know, there has been widespread reporting of Ukrainian Roma families (mostly women and children) facing discrimination when trying to access humanitarian assistance.

Since March 2022, Ukrainian Roma families have been seeking refuge in Ireland and we have highlighted emerging concerns, and worked with key agencies involved in the response. We commend the State for their commitment to ensuring the rights and safety of those fleeing conflict in Ukraine. However, it is vital that Ukrainian Roma refugees receive equal and fair treatment under the Temporary Protection Directive of the EU and other international obligations.

Through our work, we know of a number of cases where Ukrainian Roma Families were refused Temporary Protection on arrival. A common thread throughout was the concern about discriminatory attitudes, and differential treatment. With Pavee Point's direct support, some of these refusals were successfully reversed and Temporary Protection was granted. The most recent case required legal intervention from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

It is important that Ukrainian Roma refugees have equal access to and outcomes from the supports under the Temporary Protection Directive and other international obligations in all countries. Collection of disaggregated data and ethnic equality monitoring is needed, as well as anti-racism

training for all officials, support staff and interpreters. Clear criteria is also needed on the evidence required for Protection, as well a clear mechanism for raising concerns about decisions.

These emerging concerns highlight that we continue to need to work to protect and promote the rights of Travellers, Roma and other minorities and this can only be done through the use of urgent and effective implementation and monitoring processes and with the support of the international community.