

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre Ireland

Hello, thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Nuala Kelly. I work for the Pavee Point Traveller Enrolment Centre and we've been promoting Traveller Enrolment Human Rights in Ireland for over 30 years now. Travelers are an indigenous minority in Ireland, an ethnic minority, and their population profile reflects that of the populations of developing countries with very high birth rate and the population, 63% of the traveller population is under 25 years of age so it is a young population.

Pavee Point uses a community development approach based on principles of participation, equality and interculturalism to address the needs of travellers in Roma as minority ethnic groups experiencing exclusion, discrimination and racism, particularly in the areas of education, accommodation and health. Our programs involve young travellers and Roma in primary health care programs, men's health programs, violence against women programs and also census participation programs.

This year, on the first of March, the Taoiseach was our leader of our country, it was a symbolic and historic day when after 30 years of campaigning, traveller ethnicity was formally recognised by the state. This achievement was achieved through participation and particularly participation of young travellers in recent years, both men and women. This has implications for young travellers in particular who can now more freely express their cultural identity and feel pride in their cultural heritage, which to date hasn't been the case.

And just one health statistic, the suicide rate of the traveller community, particularly young male travellers, is six times higher than the general population in Ireland. For young Roma we don't know because we don't have the statistics. We'd like to make a couple of recommendations. The first one is that special education and community development measures are needed to encourage strong and positive self-identification and self-esteem of young traveller and Roma.

And we also need traveller youth participation in national mental health programmes and wellbeing programmes. They should be resourced in culturally appropriate ways with targets, budgets and timelines for implementation. And finally, human rights compliant ethnic data collection is needed across government departments and services to facilitate monitoring of access, participation and outcomes in services.