



# The Role of Traveller Associations and the fight against discrimination

A presentation of Good Practice



# This Presentation will address:

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- Traveller Education in the Republic of Ireland, current provision
- The Role of Traveller Organisations with regard to Education Policy for Travellers. The importance of partnership with the Department of Education and Science
- A Vision for the Future: Report on Consultations with Traveller Parents and learners to inform the Traveller Education Strategy

# Traveller Education Current Provision

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- Pre-schools for Travellers: 48 Traveller only pre-schools catering for 500 children.
- Primary Schools: The Department of Education estimate close to 6500 Traveller children enrolled
- Support by Resource Teachers for Travellers provided for 5,700 Traveller children
- Special Schools for Travellers Approx. 160 Travellers attend one of the three special schools. They have a pupil teacher ratio of 14:1



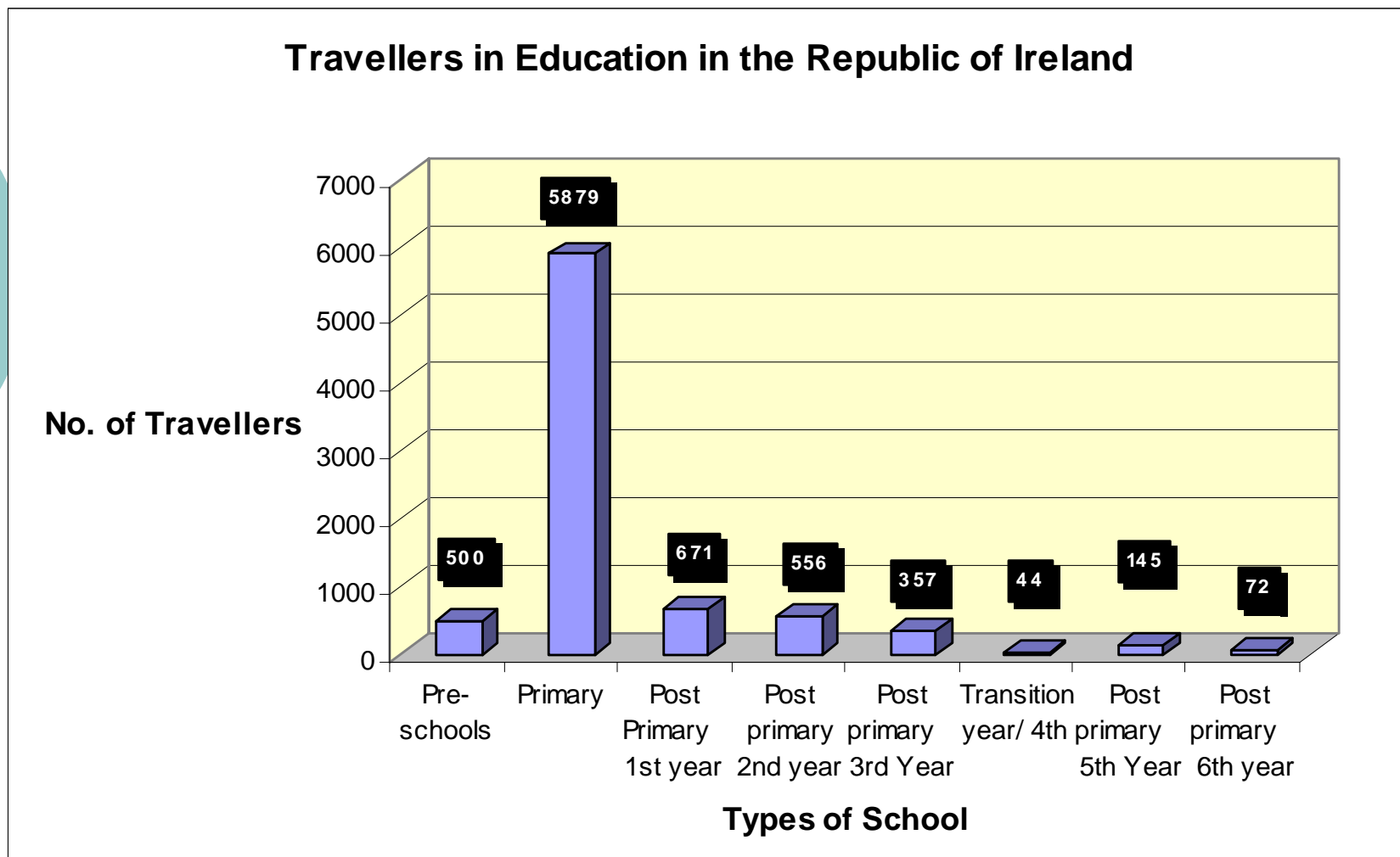
## Traveller Education Current Provision

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### Post Primary level

- Approx. 1,700 Travellers currently attending post-primary school out of a total of 3,500 Travellers aged between 13 and 18.
- Junior Education Centres for Traveller children aged 12 – 15 years, there are currently 4 such centres with approx. 100 children attending
- Senior Traveller Training Centres 32 Senior Traveller Training Centres, 981 Travellers (as of December 2004). 25% of participants are under 18.

# Travellers in Education in Republic of Ireland



Source: Dept. of Education estimates for 2004/2005



# The role of Traveller Organisations

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- For many years Traveller Organisations have provided **Community Education** in response to the needs of the Community eg. Primary Health Care model, providing after school-supports for parents and children, Youth work programmes.
- **Advocacy role** in promoting Equality of Education for Travellers, in representing the voice of the community and ensuring that their voice is heard
- Traveller Organisations have for many years **lobbied** for equality of outcomes for Travellers in Education and expressed concerns regarding Traveller Education in terms of equality of outcomes, data collection, lack of interculturalism in the curriculum and has pushed for the inclusion of Travellers in mainstream education

# The role of Traveller Organisations

## Towards a partnership with the Department of Education and Science

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- In 1998 the **Advisory Committee on Traveller Education** was established. This was the first time Traveller organisations were part of the partnership process at a policy level on Traveller Education.
- This Advisory Committee was the first to call for a **Traveller Education Strategy**.
- In 2003 a joint working group was established for a Traveller Education Strategy. Membership from the Education Disadvantage Committee (EDC) and the Advisory committee on Traveller Education (ACTE).
- This group consists of representatives from Pavee Point, the National Traveller Women's Forum, the Irish Traveller Movement. These representatives have been an integral part of this group in developing the Traveller Education strategy



# The Future Role of Traveller Organisations

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- It is vital that that Traveller organisations continue to be an integral component of a partnership process to **monitor and oversee** the implementation of the Traveller Education Strategy
- Traveller Organisations need to be resourced in order for participation of Travellers, to ensure full implementation of the Education Strategy if real change is to take place within the community



# Consultations with Traveller Parents and Learners

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## Why?

- Traveller Education Strategy was being Developed.
- The Three organisations felt that a consultation had to take place with Traveller learners and parents so that the voice of the community was heard.
- Support from the Joint Working Group



# Process of Consultation

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- Undertaken and Organised by the three Traveller Organisations.
- Five regional consultations: Dublin, Sligo, Cork, Kilkenny and Tullamore in 2004
- A national seminar day took place to explore further the themes arising from the regional seminars
- 450 people attended the seminars from Traveller organisations, Senior Traveller Training centres and other training initiatives for Travellers



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## Workshops facilitated by Travellers themselves

The themes of these workshops were:  
preschools, primary school, post-primary,  
Traveller specific Training, Adult education and  
Third Level



# Recurrent Themes

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- **Access to education**
- **Negative attitude to Travellers**
- **Segregation in provision**
- **Additional Resources and Supports**



# Recurrent Themes

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- **Invalidation of Traveller culture**
- **Ethos in schools**
- **Parental involvement**
- **Outcomes for Travellers**



# Key Strategies identified

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- **Strategy One: Change Attitudes in Educational Settings**
- **Strategy Two: Involving Traveller Parents**
- **Strategy Three: Quality of In-School Experience**

# Key Strategies identified

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## **Strategy Four: Full Interculturalism**

**Strategy Five: Multi Agency Approaches** Building multi-agency approaches to the issues in recognition of the complexity and plural nature of the factors that impact on Travellers' education.

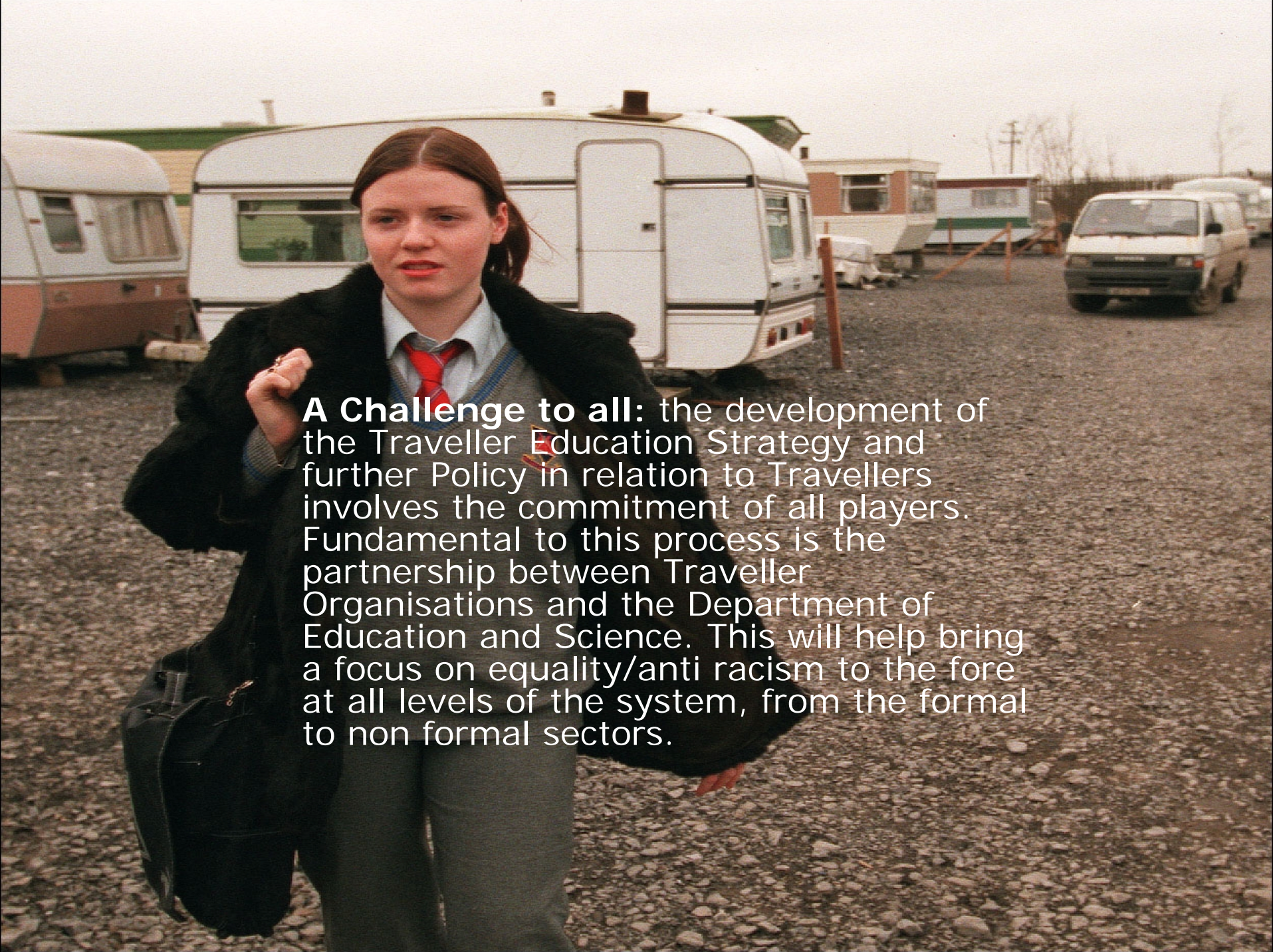
- **Strategy Six: Education Provision for Nomads**
- **Strategy Seven: Inclusion** Providing services to Travellers in an inclusive, integrated setting. Resources should be based on need and not Traveller identity.

# Conclusions

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- **Radical/Real Change rather than Reform**
- **Inclusion in a changed system:** the ending of parallel systems of provision such as Traveller only primary schools, Junior Education Centres, Senior Traveller Training Centre models. Inclusion of Travellers in mainstream provision must involve inclusion into a changed system, one that values Traveller identity and cultural diversity





**A Challenge to all:** the development of the Traveller Education Strategy and further Policy in relation to Travellers involves the commitment of all players. Fundamental to this process is the partnership between Traveller Organisations and the Department of Education and Science. This will help bring a focus on equality/anti racism to the fore at all levels of the system, from the formal to non formal sectors.