



This project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

FACT SHEET

Roma and Traveller Children



This report provides a summary of two working groups which were held in Ireland and Romania. Participants in both groups were from ethnic minorities, comprising young Irish Travellers and members of the Roma Community. The participants from the Irish Travelling community were accessed through the Traveller Advocacy Group in Galway, Ireland. All eight participants were female aged between 9 and 13. The working group with the Roma children, comprised one female and seven males, aged between 12 and 16.

Understanding Violence

It was evident to the facilitators that the children and young people had an understanding of the forms of violence they could experience as a child. When the children and young people were asked to write down words that they would associate with violence they gave examples of both physical, sexual and emotional abuse:

“Peeps (people) threatening to sell your pictures, physical abuse, fight, being cruel, slagging and gets thick, sexual abuse and emotional abuse” (Ireland).

Issues

Young people understood their right to an identity.

F: “That's right. What does the right to nationality mean?”

P: “I mean you can be a Romanian, of Romanian nationality.”

F: “I understand, it's not a bad example. It is a good example. Other rights.”

P: “The right to be a Roma (Romania).”

The primary issue experienced by the young members of the Roma and Travelling Community was discrimination, predominantly related to their ethnic identity and experienced as part of their everyday lives. For example, the older children within the group of Traveller children noted the discrimination experienced at school and perceived they were treated differently to other (settled) students in the school:

“P8: “Like when she's roaring at ya, ya could say like, why are [you] moving me and not moving anybody else, like say you're not moving the settled people”.

F: “What do you think she'd do?”

P7: “She'd ignore you” (Ireland).

When asked how teachers could treat young people with equality and respect, the young members of the Travelling Community said:

P1: “So, say if they have something and they wouldn’t give it to you, but they’d give it to someone that’s further away from them, even though you’d be closer to them”.

P3: “By treating you equal, like not making you stand outside the door or sending you down to the study hall if you haven’t got books”.

P4: “And not to be roaring at ya”.

P5: “To listen to everyone equally in the class and give everyone a chance”.

P3: “If you’re in class and somebody does something bad to you, you want your teacher to listen to you” (Ireland).

The young members of the Travelling Community also highlighted the issue of reduced timetables, experienced by the older girls attending second level school. They stated that this issue was only applicable to Traveller children attending the school:

P7: “They should be treating you equally, even if you are a different culture”.

F: “And how does the teacher treat people of different cultures?”

P7: “Like, they make ya sit down the back of the class and all that”.

P6: ”Like don’t give just Traveller’s reduced timetables”.

F: “What does that mean?”

P6: “It’s where they cut out half your classes and you only sit two classes a day”.

F: “Why would they do that?”

P6: “It’s discrimination, they just don’t want ya in their class.”

P8: “Yeah, and if you’re in their class, they move ya from the top of the class, to the back of the class, for no reason.”

F: “For no reason?”

P7: “Well, its coz they don’t like ya, coz you’re a traveller” (Ireland).

Endnotes:

1. Reduced timetables remove students from one or more classes throughout the school day. There is currently no legislation or policy regulating the use of reduced timetables, although there are plans to make it compulsory for schools to report on their usage of reduced timetables to Tusla, the National Child and Family Agency in Ireland.

Discrimination in the school system was also experienced by the Roma children:

“P5: The teachers present themselves somehow as representatives of some kind of power, and some teachers even discriminate.

F: What kind of discrimination do they do?

P5: Of color, of ethnicity

F: Does this negative experience with teachers influence you when you think about asking for teacher’s help?

P5: Exactly.

P1: The same for me” (Romania).

In addition to feeling discriminated in their schools, both groups also discussed their distrust in the Police. When asked what professionals would be a good support to them if they were experiencing violence or harm, one participant pointed to the image of the police and noted that:

P5: “I would tell everybody else before them” (Ireland).

While one of the Roma children said:

P1: “If you’re a Gypsy, it’s harder. If you go to a shop, they think you’re stealing. You’re being discriminated, if you’re a Gypsy” (Romania).

When asked what would stop them talking to the police, the same participant said:

P1: “The policeman can be discriminative. He would prefer (to help) Romanians” (Romania).

Support by Service Providers and Institutions

The Irish Traveller group noted that youth workers are a good form of support. When asked what would be a good response from a youth worker if they went to him/her for support, they responded:

P3: “She’d need to be a good listener”.

P1: “the youth worker can tell the social worker coz if you told the social worker yourself they might not believe you”.

Friends and family were also noted as those the children and young people would most likely go to for help:

F: “Who would be most likely to believe you” (pointing to images of professionals)

P3: “The youth worker coz they know you”

P1: “Or you can tell your friend too and then they’ll believe you coz they’ll say “Yeah, I saw it happen too!” (Ireland).