



National Traveller MABS

Unit 2, North Park, North Road, Finglas, Dublin 11
01 864 8510 - www.natraveller-mabs.org

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of **The Tharrie Times** for 2010. To date the year has proved challenging for the nation in terms of the economy and indeed the weather. However while we are all aware in MABS of the hardships of economic recovery, we can at least hope for improvements in the climate.

In this edition of The Tharrie Times, we bring you a variety of topics, from a report on the European Year for combating Poverty and Social Exclusion to the establishment of a new Think Tank for social inclusion.

We also update you on our work with the prison services, and report on how budget cuts are affecting Travellers. Finally we give a brief reminder of the Traveller community's efforts to gain recognition as a distinct ethnic group.

We hope you can spare a minute to read this edition of The Tharrie Times and look forward to receiving your opinion and comments.

Nancy Power
Nuala Ní Ghabhann
Coordinators

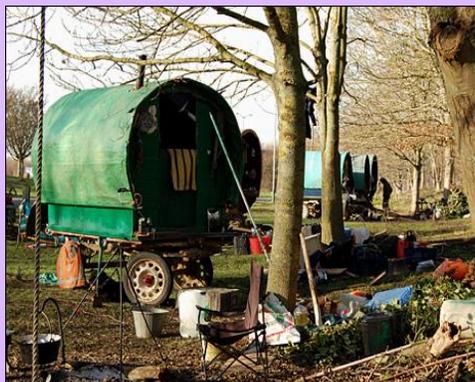
Traveller Ethnicity – The campaign

In June 2009 The Tharrie Times highlighted the ITM (Irish Traveller Movement) petition calling for the official recognition in Ireland of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group. The characteristics which make up a person's ethnicity include

- Family
- Ancestry
- Language
- History
- Religion
- Beliefs/values
- Culture/way of life

Travellers in Ireland see themselves as Irish nationals with a distinct ethnicity, sharing with each other a commonality in all of the above.

Indeed our nearest neighbour, the jurisdiction of England and Wales, has recognised Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority through the courts¹ and Northern Ireland expressly includes Irish Travellers in their equality legislation under the definition of an ethnic minority².



Yet, in spite of this, the Irish government has continually refused to recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority. Recent developments within the Government however may prove positive with the Green Party passing a motion at their Convention this year, calling on the Irish Government to recognize Travellers as an ethnic group in line with legislation in the UK and NI.



The ITM Traveller Ethnicity Petition for this is ongoing and we would encourage any MABS staff who wish to find out more, or sign the petition, to access www.itmtrav.ie or call 01 679 6577

¹ *O'Leary v Allied Domecq*, unreported 29 August 2000

² Article 5(2)(a) of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 says: "In this Order, 'racial grounds' ... includes the grounds of belonging to the Irish Traveller community"



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A Savings Club for Mountjoy Prison



'The North Circular Road Savings Club' was established in Mountjoy Prison in October 2009. The club was the result of a six year attempt by National Traveller MABS, Dublin North City MABS, Mountjoy Prison and Phibsborough Credit Union to allow prisoners become credit union members. While the club does not allow prisoners individual membership of the credit union, the participating prisoners are saving in a credit union club account.

To date, 30 prisoners save regularly, with amounts varying between €5 and €10 per week. The figure of 30 members exceeds the initial expectation of 15 participants. The support from the Prison officials and administration staff within Mountjoy, through their active promotion, monitoring and positive relationship with the prisoners, has seen this scheme go from strength to strength. This pilot scheme will run for a two year period. National Traveller MABS plan to carry out an initial evaluation in October 2010 using specific indicators to measure success and identify areas for reflection.

The evaluation process will also allow us an opportunity to explore with key stakeholders, including members of the Club, the positive and negative aspects of the scheme. The results of the evaluation will be presented to the Irish Prison Service and will be available to any MABS interested in the project. A possible positive outcome of the evaluation would be a replication of the scheme in other prisons nationwide.



Is Féidir Linn

Is Féidir Linn is a think tank concerned with equality and social justice issues. It is made up of an ad hoc group of individuals with a commitment to or involvement in community work, social inclusion, anti-poverty, human rights and equality issues. Is Féidir Linn aims to be part of a sustained movement committed to bringing about a better society through the development of an alternative political, economic and social model of development for Ireland. By declaring its goals as outlined below, Is Féidir Linn hopes to stimulate discussion and understanding of the need for and content of such an alternative model.

Following from this, Is Féidir Linn hopes to build consensus, momentum, solidarity and alliances among those interested in their vision

and goals, with a view to working towards an inclusive, equal and sustainable Ireland.

Is Féidir Linn's Goals:

- 1. Sustainability:** A model of development that ensures economic and social security, eliminates environmental risk, accommodates a variety of different economic structures and forms of ownership and recognises global interdependence.
- 2. Income, Taxation, and Wealth:** A model of development where income and resources are distributed more equally so as to avoid poverty, inequality and excesses of wealth. This requires high levels of taxation and social expenditure and high quality public services.
- 3. Public Services:** A model of development which prioritises invests in and develops high quality, efficient and effective public services for all.
- 4. Equal status:** A model of development where society and its institutions appropriately and adequately value the diversity that makes up society, and eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- 5. Democracy:** A model of development that enables greater diversity of influence through an enhanced system of representative democracy and a more inclusive, participatory and active democracy including an autonomous and critical civil society.

More information of the group can be found by visiting

www.communityplatform.ie



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2010 The European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

2010 has been designated the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Year was launched by the European Commission in Madrid on January 21st. The Social Inclusion Division in the Department of Social and Family Affairs has been appointed the National Implementing Body for the Year in Ireland.

The underlying principles guiding the year include:

1. Everyone has a right to live with dignity and participate fully in their community.
2. Everyone is responsible for social inclusion and the policies we put in place to make it a reality.
3. Everyone, the privileged and the disadvantaged, benefit from social inclusion.

2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion

The aims of the European Year include:

- Raising public awareness of poverty and social exclusion in Europe,
- Raising public awareness that poverty and exclusion are obstacles to social and economic development,
- Raising public awareness that tackling poverty is a benefit not a cost to society,
- Re-affirming the importance of collective responsibility
- Giving 'voice' to people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Each country has developed its own priorities for the year. In Ireland our priorities reflect the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007 – 2016) which use a life cycle approach: children, people of working age, older people and people with disabilities, and communities.

In February an international seminar entitled "Building a Social Europe: from Crises to Opportunity" was organised by the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN). Participants and speakers from throughout Europe discussed and analysed the current financial crises and how it has impacted most heavily on those who have the least.



Fintan Farrell (Director, EAPN Europe) called on participants to recognise poverty and social exclusion as a fundamental denial of human rights, as such akin to slavery. He suggested wealth redistribution, as a way forward that has not yet been tried. Wealth includes not just income but access to such things as resources, services, and decision making.

Throughout 2010 there will be conferences and seminars focusing on different priorities and cross cutting themes. A Seminar on Traveller issues, facilitated by the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, is due to take place in September. Additionally, the two weeks beginning May 15th and October 17th have been designated Social Inclusion weeks, and will feature locally based activities to raise awareness of the issue. A calendar of events in Ireland and around Europe can be viewed on www.2010againstopoverty.eu.

For more information on upcoming events and on how to get involved please visit www.eapn.ie



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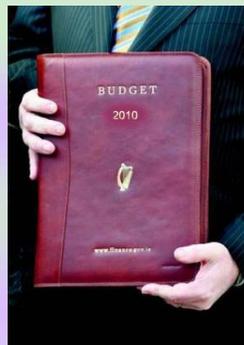
Travellers and the 2009 Budget

Anticipation for the December 2009 Budget was such, that when it was finally announced, it did not appear to be as severe as we had all feared. There appeared to be some protection put in place for the elderly and for families on social welfare, and deflation it was said, would counteract any cuts.

However, deflation impacts differently on different income groups with the better off benefiting most from recent developments such as cuts in mortgage interest. On the other hand, government changes to rent supplement have left many tenants dependent on social welfare, including Travellers, with a higher cost of living.

The Economic Social Research Institute put it very succinctly when comparing the December 2009 Budget to the 2008 Budget “*These results contrast with those for last year’s budget, which saw gains for those on the lowest incomes and losses which were greatest in proportionate terms for those on the highest incomes.*” (Irish Times, Budget 2010; The Pain and the Gain; Tim Callan, Claire Keane and John Walsh; 11/12/09).

The impact for Travellers of the recent Budget is far reaching. Travellers with children in school have to deal with the 50% cut in a capitation grant. 300 places have been cut from Senior Traveller Training Centers when the opportunity for employment has been drastically reduced. The cuts to Jobseeker’s Allowance by €100 for new, young, unemployed, aged 20-21 is an extension of the cut introduced for 18-19 year olds last year.



At a time when we have a faltering economy and remembering when unemployment rates for Traveller men stood at over 70% during the boom, measures adopted in the Budget appear to punish the symptom rather than tackle the issue. Recently FÁS announced plans to cut the training allowances for those not eligible for job seekers allowance. This will directly affect many Traveller women on FÁS schemes, who need the payment to cover costs such as childcare and travel.

In the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, the 2009 Budget should have offered more protection for those who benefited least from the boom that shrouded our island for the past 15 years.

Appointment of Dr. Stuart Stamp to the Board of the CIB



The Board and staff of National Traveller MABS were delighted with the recent appointment of Dr. Stuart Stamp to the Board of the CIB.

As we are all aware, Stuart has worked with and for MABS in many capacities since its inception.

Indeed we in NTMABS were privileged to have Stuart on our Board for the past two years.

While we will sadly miss him in this role, we would like to wish him all the best in his new appointment and look forward to continuing to work with him in combating financial exclusion in the future.