

**Strategic Plan  
for  
The Irish Traveller Movement  
Legal Unit  
2003-2006**

June 20, 2003

# Travellers

A uniquely disadvantaged group

Impoverished

Undereducated

‘Often despised and ostracised, they live on the margins of Irish society’

Travellers experience discrimination  
and racism in every aspect of their daily lives

*The economic and social research unit report 1984*

# Despite legislative developments there has been little improvement in the circumstances of Travellers

In 2003 over 1,000 families still live on the roadside without access to basic services such as water and toilets

punitive action without recourse to due process in law

evicting Travellers with nowhere to go and the lack of protection for the family home

discrimination experienced by Travellers has not decreased which is reflected in the high level of cases and queries from Travellers handled by the Equality Authority.

Between 2000-2001, approximately 500 families nationwide were served with eviction notices

- without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection
- families are given only 24 hours to move and must try to get legal representation and establish their case within this period

# Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions), Act

- criminalises trespass on public and private land
- 1,000 families camped on public land are trespassing due to no fault of their own and can be prosecuted
- Travellers will be unable to move from place to place to exercise their right to be nomadic due to the fear of committing a criminal offence.
- is incompatible with the Irish government's international commitments such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

# Structure of the Traveller Legal Unit

Central Group

Legal Working Group

Sub-Groups

Legal-Unit Strategic Forum

Solicitors firm

# The following issues need to be addressed by the legal unit and through the ongoing work of the ITM

1. The lack of nomadic rights of Travellers and the blocking of traditional camping places,
3. The historical discrimination experienced by Travellers,
5. The erosion of Traveller culture which had taken place due to the introduction of negative laws such as the Horses Act and the Trespass Act, and lack of understanding and provision for Traveller culture

# Strategic goals of the Legal Unit

- The overall aim of the legal unit is to promote Travellers human and legal rights as an ethnic minority group within Irish society

# Strategic goals of the Legal Unit

- To advance the right of members of the Traveller community to access expert legal advice and representation.
- To advance Traveller human and legal rights under the various legislative frameworks
- To develop a range of strategic relationships with relevant bodies to ensure change in the situation of Travellers
- To develop the capacity of Traveller organisations to respond to legal issues facing Travellers

**The Legal Unit** will provide another mechanism to advance Travellers human rights

**The Legal Unit** will be a catalyst for discussion and debate on legal issues

**The Legal Unit** will inform Travellers of their legal rights

**The Legal Unit** will engage with the legal system to work for justice and fairness for Travellers before the law