

EQUINET Training
COMMUNICATING EQUALITY.
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR EQUALITY BODIES
Monday 30 & Tuesday 31 May 2011, Copenhagen

SUMMARY REPORT

The Equinet training “*Communicating Equality: Effective Communications Strategies for Equality Bodies*” was held on 30-31 May 2011 in the premises of the Danish Institute of Human Rights, Copenhagen, Denmark. The event was attended by representatives of equality bodies with a mandate and interest in communication strategy.

The main goals achieved by the event were:

- The exchange of NEBs’ experiences and good practices in devising communication strategies and implementing communication activities aimed at promoting equality, raising awareness and providing information on rights
- Participants gained practical knowledge and understanding of strategic issues surrounding communication in the field of equality and non-discrimination
- Participants reflected upon how to involve and collaborate with stakeholders in the field of equality to combat under-reporting and lack of awareness of people’s rights
- Participants exchanged insight and experience on how to strategically use social media tools and manage the related risks

Session 1 “How can national Equality Bodies develop appropriate strategy, tactics and evaluation on a budget?”

The event was opened on Monday morning by Susanne Nour, Head of the Department for Equal Treatment & Diversity at the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Ms Nour spoke of the importance of effective communications for equality bodies and the need for equality bodies to plan strategically in order to control any situations that may occur. Mandana Zarrehparvar, Chair of the Equinet Board, followed with an introduction to the training.

Setting the Scene

Communications Consultant Mags Patten gave the introductory lecture to participants, highlighting the importance of planning to ensure effective communication, especially when faced with a reduced budget. The significance of using research to inform communications planning was discussed as were some of the difficulties encountered when choosing the best target audience which, and especially on a budget, might not necessarily be the most obvious one and that it is important to adapt the language used depending on the target group. Ms Patten also pointed to the need of practicing good internal communication in order to communicate the message of equality bodies externally.

Learning from equality bodies’ experience



The second half of the morning session focused on learning from the experience of equality bodies in their own communications practice. Presentations were given by Marysha Molthoff, Communication Adviser (Dutch Equal Treatment Commission), Signe Hinz-Andersen, Project Manager (Danish Institute for Human Rights), Denisa Lazar, Head of Communication and Public Relations Office (Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination).

Dutch Equal Treatment Commission

Ms Molthoff's presentation focused on how the Equal Treatment Commission develops, implements and monitors its communication strategy. The participants were presented with the two campaign case studies from the ETC: "Everyone is entitled to equal treatment" (2007) and "Unpleasantly or illegally?" (2009).

The key learning outcomes identified in designing, implementing and monitoring communication activities by the Dutch Equal Treatment Commission were:

- Create a message
- Focus campaigns on, not about the target groups
- Keep repeating the message
- Join target group focused media and organisations
- Threats versus opportunities

Danish Institute for Human Rights

Signe Hinz-Andersen gave an overview of the Danish Institute for Human Rights MIA Award as an example of how equality bodies can communicate the message of equality through stakeholders.

The key learning points presented by the DIHR regarding their experience with the MIA Award were:

- It allows equality and anti-discrimination to be shown in a positive light
- The initiative is a concrete action with a number of measurable outcomes
- An integral aspect of the DIHRs work on the MIA award is direct contact with business
- Direct contact is also of key importance in attracting the attention of the media
- It is important to translate the message of anti discrimination and equal treatment into the vocabulary of the target audience

Romanian National Commission for Combating Discrimination

Ms Lazar presented the audience with an outline of internal communication strategy of the NCCD. The presentation covered the principles, actions, monitoring and implementation of the NCCD's internal communication strategy.

The key learning points outlined by the NCCD on internal communication strategy were:

- Internal communication enables employees to understand and support the vision and mission of an institution
- It increases the motivation and efficiency of the workforce
- It needs to be a strategic, continuous and consistent process
- The NCCD elaborates communication plans for each of its key projects
- It is important to assess the efficiency of internal communications; the NCCD use several means of monitoring staff feedback



Session 2 – Workshop

The second session of the event was a "world café" workshop, facilitated by Cailin MacKenzie of MIMAT. This was the first time that Equinet has used this method. It allowed dynamic discussions to develop around 4 key aspects of equality bodies' communication practices.

Members of the Equinet Working Group on Communications Strategies and Practices acted as table hosts and helped participants to exchange their communications experiences, learning and good practice, to discuss the challenges they face in their work and to explore steps that could be taken in the future.

The questions addressed by the participants were:

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Media (2 Tables)	What are the problems you encountered when dealing with the media?	Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?	Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.
Closed Communities	What are the problems you encountered when reaching out to closed communities (e.g. Roma people, Trans people and other hard to reach communities?)	Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?	Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.
Vehicles	What are the problems you encountered when choosing a communication vehicle/format?	Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?	Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Why is the issue of evaluation & monitoring important? What is its impact?	How do you strategically use the results of your evaluation & monitoring?	Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.

The responses, summarized by the session's facilitator Cailin Mackenzie with the assistance of the 5 table hosts were as follows:

Media Tables

What are the problems you encountered when dealing with the media?

Associated costs (publicity expensive)

Difficulty in attracting Media attention on equality issues



Figures and statistics are spun
Lack of statistics on the part of equality bodies
Bad media perception of equality bodies and issues
Generally negative coverage of minorities in the media
Use of minorities as a scapegoat – Journalists don't want to be taught/lectured
Complexity of Issues
Spin put on information
Journalists think/write in the short term

Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?

Develop personal relationships with journalists – phone them personally
Network with media professionals
Repeat positive message
Correct negative/incorrect messages without attacking
Collect own statistics – positive data on minorities
Attract journalists' attention through the use of human interest/emotions/individual stories
Tailor the language used when speaking to media - simplify
Make press releases as complete as possible
Give stories (short term result) not an agenda (business plan of NEB) in press releases
Exaggerate negative and positive aspects of stories
Don't ignore questions just because you don't like them
Train a spokesperson from your organisation in media relations
Battle for a seat in the discussion – avoid situations of 'empty chairing' – add voice of equality bodies to the debate
Dare to be proactive in putting out information, not just reactive
Use monitoring and evaluation to get more statistics

Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future

Training:

- NEB staff on how to manage media professionals/ act as NEB representative/spokesperson
- NEB staff on media monitoring and its uses
- NEB/journalist sessions

Non-discrimination sessions for journalists

Media award

More circulation of interesting cases/media success stories throughout network via Equinet

Collection of good/bad practice information

Media toolbox

Knowledge bank

Development of Journalist code of practice/ethics

Closed Communities Table

What are the problems you encountered when reaching out to closed communities (e.g. Roma people, Trans people and other hard to reach communities?)

Lack of organisation
Lack of flexibility
Communication



Don't like to talk about the problems they have
Only listen to the 'representatives'/ leaders of minorities
Gatekeepers
Social distance
Language barriers

Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?

Don't expect them to come to us
Choose the right venue
Communicate with people on a personal level
Think out of the box to address closed communities
Research – find out the fears of these communities
Find a common element – e.g. women/children
Find a mediator
Use complaints to raise awareness among people who are potential victims of discrimination
Informal meetings
Networking
Training sessions on rights
Provide advice about their rights
Through education system
Discussion groups
Use role models
Language courses
Presence of NEB at events (gay pride, etc)
Raise awareness of potential discriminators not just those who are discriminated against

Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.

Equinet as a platform to share good and bad examples

Vehicle Table

What are the problems you encountered when choosing a communication vehicle/format?

Costs
Getting message across
Time limits
Experience
Resource constraints
Lack of policy coherence
Lack of knowledge of target group

Which techniques did/could you use to address these problems?

Internal communications vehicles
 Newsletter
 Common intranet
 Press releases
 General emails on equality/anti-discrimination updates
External



- Information campaign
- Leaflet
- Films
- Guides seminars/conferences/
- Facebook
- Radio profile

Electronic information
Consultation with stakeholders (target group/NGOs) regarding language, channels
Adapt language
Research
Plan
Ongoing evaluation and assessment
Network
Get stakeholders involved
Use existing resources

Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.

- Share best practice
- Film clips
- Prepare presentations
- Conference calls
- Web meetings
- Video conferencing
- Tool kits
- Synergise outlets for communication
- More independence from governmental pressure for equality body mechanisms
- Joint political pressure
- Train the trainer
- Work out overview of what is required for independence
- Shared knowledge wall
- Thematic training – social media/identifying target groups

Monitoring and Evaluation Table

Why is the issue of evaluation & monitoring important? What is its impact?

- Measure the impact of your work
- Feedback
- Resources
- Building reputation
- Did you reach your audience?
- Did you get your message across?
- Were resources well allocated?
- Is the ROI right?
- Benchmarking
- Ongoing process
- Data collection
- Transparency



Success depends on objectivity

How do you strategically use the results of your evaluation & monitoring?

Offer regular evaluation (and therefore it should be part of the strategic plan)

Cooperation with different sections of your organisation

Create a definition of terms

To build a business case

Can be used to highlight key successes

Allocation of resources

Shows what's working/what's not

Shows where to go next

Where to go next? Think about how Equinet could support your work and share your perspectives for the future.

Share outcomes across bodies/ special actions and projects

Share models of questionnaires for evaluation of events or tools of evaluation

Share models of evaluation and monitoring

Create and observatory to monitoring and follow up the situation of equality

Ensure that monitoring and evaluation informs future policy

Equinet seminar on evaluation and monitoring

Share instead of compare

Partnerships for monitoring other organisations

Country specific studies rather than compare figures all over Europe

Evaluation from the work of NEB → how they do it to improve evaluation

Tools on how to collect information for strategic communications plan

NB: Suggestions and comments arising from the group discussions will be conveyed to the Equinet Executive Board and will receive careful consideration during the development process of the Equinet work plan 2012.

Session 3 “How to integrate key partners into communication strategies developed by national equality bodies”

The second day began with a panel discussion. Led by Jozef De Witte, Director of the Belgian Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism four panellists, representing the perspective of a trade union, a journalist, a business and an NGO discussed the ways in which they had worked with equality bodies to communicate the message of equality and non-discrimination.

The panellists described the projects they have undertaken with equality bodies and their experience of the collaboration, the floor was then opened to questions from the audience.

The key points of the discussion were:

- The importance of developing a strong working relationship between Equality Bodies and partner organisations.
Heidrun Silhavy, Member of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) pointed out that her good working relationship with a staff member of the Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment has enabled the rapid development of common projects and the informal sharing of knowledge and information (e.g. 'be able to pick up the phone and call to ask a question informally').



- Spur a multiplier effect.
Partner organisations can relay messages to specific communities and gather information on behalf Equality Bodies. In some cases, collaborative work can engender an increased level of trust from targeted communities and level of reporting of incidents of discrimination. A successful example of effective collaboration is the awareness campaign co-developed by the French Equality Body and FNASAT – Gens du voyage, a French NGO protecting the rights of Roma people.
- Equality Bodies should continue to raise journalists’ attention to the issue of discrimination and pair up with journalists to combat negative portrayal of certain communities.
The series of regional training events organised by Perugia School of Journalism Alumnus Association and funded by UNAR is a pertinent example of good practice and collaborative work. These training events intend to challenge common places, fight prejudices and offer better knowledge of the "Roma" community to journalists.
- Equality Bodies should explore the potential of diversity awards and certifications aimed at medium to large companies.
These prizes can act as an impactful publicity tool both for award-winning companies and Equality Bodies. It also reveals the mentoring capacity of Equality Bodies as they usually provide crucial guidance and audit to companies competing for the prize and support them throughout the design, implementation and monitoring of required equality policies.
Louise Agius, Head of Diversity, Learning & Development at HSBC Bank evoked the perceived benefits of the Maltese Equality Mark and the unique bond developed with the Maltese Equality Body.

Session 4 “How can national Equality Bodies unleash the potential of social media”

The final session focused on using social media to communicate the message of equality and non-discrimination. The participants first heard from independent social media expert Alan Anstead who talked about the potential of social media for equality bodies before hearing from representatives from equality bodies, João Paiva of the Portuguese CIG and Nathalie Morgenthaler of the Luxembourg Centre for Equal Treatment who presented their organisations’ experiences.

Equality, UK charity working to uphold and secure the rights of ethnic minorities in Britain (UK) and Europe

Social media expert and Chief Executive of Equality, Alan Anstead then gave the presentation “*Engagement through Digital Communications*”. The presentation focused on the role that social media can play in communications strategies.

The key learning points presented by Mr Anstead were

- Think strategically when planning communications
- Find out what makes your audience comfortable, go to them instead of having them come to you are allow the contact to be on their terms
- In terms of risk management it can be better to engage with the people who voice negative opinions rather than ignore them
- Using social media is about building communities of networks in order to encourage participation and engagement

Luxembourg Centre for Equal Treatment



Ms Morgenthaler spoke from the perspective of a small NEB (the CET is staffed by 2 people) with a focus on her organisation's use of Facebook as a communication tool.

The key learning points presented by the CET's experience were:

- Facebook proved to be low cost, low resource and easy to use as a method of interaction
- Allowed access to the youth audience
- It can be used as a means of increasing traffic to the website
- It can raise the organisations profile
- There are some negative aspects, for example: unwanted posts/spam

Portuguese Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality

Mr Paiva presented an overview of the range of communication tools used by the CIG including the organisation's equality portal and its social media resources.

The key learning points highlighted by the Commission were:

- Using resources such as Facebook and YouTube have allowed the CIG to reach a more diverse public, especially in terms of youth participation
- Social media is an easy way to publicise the activities of the organisation
- Good planning dictates the success or failure of activities
- New communications technologies have allowed for a greater level of interaction between the Commission and citizens

Conclusions

A number of common learning threads ran throughout the event and were identified not only as key learning points by the expert speakers but also came up as solutions across each of the topics discussed during the round table workshop.

Internal Communication

Strong internal communication within an Equality Body is an important starting point from which to develop external communication strategy. This includes ensuring that all members of staff are 'on message' and support the vision and the mission of the organisation.

Plan. Assess. Address

Strategic planning of communication activities is a key way of saving resources in the future. Assessing and evaluating activities allow bodies to understand what is working, stopping if something is not working and to use past experiences to inform future decisions. As part of the planning process research is an important component, research data was identified as a solution to problems such as the spinning of statistics by the media, identifying target audiences and in finding ways to reach closed communities and in the allocation of resources.

Use the right language

In order for a communication to be successful, or even to receive attention in the first place the language used by Equality Bodies needs to be tailored to the audience. This includes staying away from specialised and/or technical Equality language when talking to people who don't work in this area; using business language when communicating to employers and using popular language when writing press releases.



Develop strong working relationships and use the personal touch

'Picking up the phone' is an important part of developing relationships with stakeholders and the media. In getting people on board in campaigns, such as the MIA award of the DHRI, in communicating the message of equality and non-discrimination to journalists and assessing the needs and wishes of closed communities, personal relationships can lead to more productive communications.

Go to them!

Don't expect your target group to come to you. This includes closed communities when you are trying to raise awareness of rights and journalists when you are trying to communicate a message of equality via the media. A need to make target groups feel comfortable was also identified in relation to this discussion.

