



EQUINET **HIGHLIGHTS 2017**

Equinet at a Glance



Equality is a fundamental value of the EU, and the European Network of Equality Bodies is a fundamental part of defending our values against attack and our citizens against discrimination

First Vice-President of the European Commission, **Frans Timmermans**

10 **E** Equinet European Network of Equality Bodies 2007-2017

Equinet is the European Network of Equality Bodies, a membership organisation bringing together 46 equality bodies from 34 European countries including all EU Member States. Equinet promotes equality in Europe by supporting and enabling the work of national equality bodies. It supports equality bodies to be independent and effective as valuable catalysts for more equal societies.

Equality bodies are champions for the core EU value of equality and defenders of the right to non-discrimination. They are public organisations assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and contributing to an awareness of rights and a societal valuing of equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all of the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union (EU) law – gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.

Equinet aims to enhance the strategic capacity of its member organisations and to strengthen the skills and competences of their staff. Equinet contributes to the European equality agenda by conveying an expert voice of equality bodies drawn from the learnings of their work on the ground, and enhances their recognition and

strategic positioning in relation to all stakeholders at European level. Finally, Equinet serves as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment.

To achieve these aims, Equinet organises regular training events and seminars for staff members of equality bodies, as well as working groups to support capacity building and the exchange of information, data and expertise among equality bodies. Equinet engages closely with policy makers and partners at EU and international level, and promotes the work of equality bodies through relevant publications, as well as participation at conferences and other meetings. Equinet communicates widely on relevant themes relating to the work of equality bodies and developments in the field of equality and non-discrimination in Europe.

The highest decision-making forum within Equinet is the Annual General Assembly of Equinet members. Every two years, the General Assembly elects an Executive Board responsible for the overall management and the strategic leadership of the Network. The operational structure consists of thematic working groups bringing together equality bodies' experts and a small Brussels-based Secretariat.



Let's keep on trying to achieve our vision of an equal Europe where together we can make a difference for people and ensure protection from discrimination and ensure implementation of rights for all citizens

Anne Gaspard, Equinet Executive Director

EQUINET HIGHLIGHTS 2017

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Foreword

Equality as a core value of the European Union motivates a shared concern for human dignity; the participation by all in economic, social and cultural life; a voice for all groups in decisions that impact on them; and a celebration of diversity. A European Union that values equality, and that gives life to this value, creates societies where all people and social groups flourish. European equal treatment legislation was created to reflect this core value by ensuring the basic principle of equal treatment, and supporting and protecting people who face discrimination. **National equality bodies are champions for the core EU value of equality and defenders of the right to non-discrimination.**

Over the past ten years, the Equinet Network has been working hard to strengthen the vital work of equality bodies as equality champions, and provide a broad range of knowledge to effectively implement EU law and support those who have experienced discrimination. Throughout 2017 we consolidated Equinet's platforms for peer support and built the capacity of equality bodies in a number of ways.

In particular, we worked on tackling discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities and on identifying ways to break the glass ceiling and promote career progress for women. We developed members' legal capacities through training sessions on how to build an equal pay case and how to litigate strategically. Through our working groups, we continued to work on the promotion of gender equality (including a focus on combatting violence against women), policy formation (with a focus on LGBTI equality, and the links with Ombudsman offices), successful communication strategies and practices (particularly linked to the importance of framing equality) and equality law (focusing on developments in legislation dealing with religion and belief).

At the European level, we promoted the importance of equality duties, and looked at how equality bodies can better support the integration of migrants and refugees in Europe. Through our international partnerships, we supported the engagement of the members on the European Pillar of Social Rights, and promoted a call to action on inclusive education, especially for Roma children. We engaged with European and international developments on key non-discrimination issues. New and innovative tools, such as the use of videos, a timeline and new thematic newsletters were developed in order to raise awareness of the work of Equinet and national equality bodies, linked to our 10th anniversary.

Equinet continues to be a pan-European Network working for its members and led by its members. Their expertise, contributions and insights, together with our expert and dedicated staff in the Equinet Secretariat, provide the foundations for all our achievements. We owe considerable gratitude to the members of the Equinet Executive Board for steering the Network with great enthusiasm and professionalism, which was renewed in October 2017.

We greatly appreciate the fruitful cooperation with all our stakeholders and, lastly, wish to express our special gratitude to the European Commission for its support through the EC *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme* and for its ongoing commitment to the work of Equinet and equality bodies.



Anne Gaspard
Executive Director



**Tena Šimonović
Einwalter**
Equinet Chair

10 YEARS WORKING TOGETHER FOR AN EQUAL EUROPE

2017 saw the Network celebrate its 10th anniversary. Throughout the year, we had the opportunity to take stock of the progress made and the current challenges in the field of equality, as well as the work of equality bodies and Equinet in progressing equality and non-discrimination over the past decade.

We created videos highlighting the work of equality bodies supporting victims of discrimination, our close cooperation with civil society stakeholders and a video voicing the opinions of our members as to why Equinet is an important organisation for them. A timeline was developed, allowing us to look back over the past 10 years to get a flavour of some of the successes and main milestones of the Equinet Network, its members, and developments in equality and non-discrimination policy and legislation at EU level.



On the 10th October, Equinet organised a conference entitled 'Together for an Equal Europe', which brought together high-level speakers and guests from equality bodies, European institutions, international organisations, civil society, national governments and parliaments, academics; many of those with whom Equinet has worked over the years. It aimed to create a forum for discussion and shared visions on the perspectives and challenges ahead for equality, particularly the work of national equality bodies in a shrinking space for equality and fundamental rights.

Spotlight

10 YEARS WORKING TOGETHER FOR AN EQUAL EUROPE



Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies, provides a key platform for peer support among equality bodies and for identifying and communicating the policy lessons from our work. Equinet has achieved much in its first 10 years and can point to a valued contribution to advancing equality in Europe. It is well placed to continue this contribution at a time when our ambitions for equality are being sorely tested across Europe.

Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board 2013–2017



When Equinet was created 10 years ago, it was with a hope of constant progress towards more rights, more equality and with an ambition that I think was not only to fight against discrimination, but to also be part of a process of the defence of fundamental rights, of fundamental liberties, of democratization.

Constance Rivière, Secretary General, Defender of Rights, France



Equality bodies are a centrepiece of the strong EU legal framework - and they are not a standard feature outside of Europe. It is an achievement and something that Europe can share with other parts of the world.

Birgit Van Hout, Regional Representative for Europe, UN Human Rights Office (UN OHCHR)

1 BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

Objective 1 - Areas for action:

- Develop knowledge and skills of staff members of equality bodies
- Develop strategic and organisational capacity of equality bodies
- Foster and promote innovative approaches in the work of equality bodies

I. Promoting Equality for people with Intellectual Disabilities

SEMINAR: EQUALITY BODIES AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

9 – 10 March, organised with the Office of the Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities, Croatia

In this seminar we learned that:

- Children with disabilities should go to the same schools as other children.
- Everyone should be able to decide on their own life, including where and with whom they want to live.
- Some people with intellectual disabilities need support, but they don't need others to control them.
- People with intellectual disabilities need information about what to do if they experience abuse or discrimination.
- Information about rights should be written in an understandable way.

Equality bodies should promote these aims and support people with intellectual disabilities to tackle the challenges they meet. There was also a focus on girls and women with intellectual disabilities, who can experience discrimination both because they are girls and because they have a disability. Equality bodies must be aware of the extra challenges that some girls and women can face.

Senada Halilcevic, Vice-President of Inclusion Europe and Self-Advocate and **Oliver Lewis**, Executive Director of the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre talk about the main definitions and challenges faced by persons with intellectual disabilities





Sharing good practices at Equinet meetings and via online fora has facilitated networking, peer learning and bilateral good working partnerships, cooperation in cases concerning more than one country.

Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Hungary

II. Building a Case on Equal Pay for Work on Equal Value

TRAINING SESSION: [HOW TO BUILD A CASE ON EQUAL PAY](#)

31 August–1 September, hosted by the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic

In 2016, the Equinet Working Group on Gender Equality drafted the Equinet Handbook: How to Build a Case on Equal Pay. The handbook gives practical advice on equal pay cases, drawing on the experience of equality body experts. This seminar built on the handbook and looked at:

- Lessons learnt from Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) cases on equal pay, and challenges related to establishing work of equal value, considering the fact that most equal pay cases will involve the need to establish equal work or work of equal value.



HANDBOOK: [HOW TO BUILD A CASE ON EQUAL PAY](#)

(2016)

- Tools to shift the burden of proof, including the crucial importance of pay transparency and the (potential lack of) cooperation by an employer as a means of shifting the burden of proof.

Workshops provided the opportunity to look at how best to conduct interviews and undertake data collection in preparing a case, challenges in identifying the comparator and assessing the need for a comparator – real or otherwise, how to deal with arguments justifying unequal pay and pay transparency and the use of gender neutral job evaluation systems. Participants analyzed cases and shared their experiences and challenges in building equal pay cases in their national contexts. The need for strong pay transparency provisions was highlighted as crucial to bringing forward more equal pay cases and developing jurisprudence.

Participants at the Training in Brno



Equinet brings together so many equality bodies with a widespread scope of missions, grounds of discrimination... The exchange in seminars, conferences etc between all those different backgrounds are extremely fruitful.

Centre for Equal Treatment, Luxembourg

III. Supporting Career Progress for Women

SEMINAR: BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING. CAREER PROGRESS FOR WOMEN

13-14 November, organised with the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia

This Equinet seminar aimed to provide an introduction to the reasons behind women's lack of career progress compared to their male peers, as well as to discuss the consequences of this gender gap on the labour market. To assist those seeking to promote gender equality in career progress, arguments supporting the utility of equal opportunities in career progress were

discussed, as well as good practice examples where the inequality experienced by women throughout the course of their working lives has been effectively addressed. The legal perspective was addressed by looking at tools that can be used to address discrimination women may face in access to promotions and career progress.

Keynote speaker Linnar Viik speaking to participants on the topic of 'The Glass Ceiling in a Digital World'



IV. Strategic Litigation

TRAINING SESSION: STRATEGIC LITIGATION

4-5 December, hosted by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland

Throughout 2015-2016, a members-led thematic cluster brought together legal experts from equality bodies with an interest in strategic litigation in discrimination cases. Their learnings have now been developed into an Equinet Handbook on Strategic Litigation, which was the basis for the training given by members of the Cluster.

HANDBOOK: STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Strategic litigation is already used by some equality bodies, while others are currently considering the use of this tool to take up cases that can result in important clarifications and adjustments of the applicable law, as well as positive changes that go beyond the particular case. The training provided a space for interested equality bodies to discuss the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of strategic litigation, share and discuss criteria for strategic litigation and analyse successful examples of court cases where strategic litigation brought about positive results and developments in the law.



Participants at the Training in Warsaw

2 CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

Objective 2 - Areas for action:

- Contribute to equality policy and law at European level
- Convey an expert voice of equality bodies by sharing their expertise, experience and recommendations
- Inform and engage with policy makers and partners

I. Gender Equality

EQUAL PAY

Equinet continued to engage with the crucial topic of equal pay leading up to the launch of the European Commission Action Plan to tackle the gender pay gap in November 2017. The Equinet Board contributed its views to the European Commission, as well as to the relevant opinion of the European Commission's Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. In working to ensure equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, Equinet reiterated the need for:

- Strong pay transparency provisions
- A definition of "work of equal value"
- Proportionate, dissuasive and effective sanctions in line with CJEU case law
- Strong monitoring mechanisms, including strong equality bodies

These considerations are reflected in the final iteration of the European Commission Action Plan, and Equinet will continue to follow its implementation.

COMBATTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Equinet and its members contributed to the European Commission's Year of Focused Actions to End Violence against women by supporting a seminar on the topic organized by the European Commission in Tbilisi, Georgia, where the issue of institutional responses to the problem of violence against women was raised. Standards for strong institutions were discussed, and Equinet members from Belgium, Croatia and Portugal shared good practice examples of how their equality bodies work to combat violence against women, engaging in discussions with local stakeholders in Georgia as well as other Eastern Partnership countries.



Tena
Šimonović
Einwalter,
Equinet Chair,
speaking at the
Colloquium



Members of Equinet's Project on Violence against Women and Gender Based Violence engaged with the Council of Europe, EIGE, FRA, Eurostat, ENNHRI and representatives of civil society over the course of the year, discussing monitoring functions, indicators and challenges such as online violence and misinformation regarding violence against women. The Equinet project moderator hosted the Council of Europe's monitoring body for the Istanbul Convention (GREVIO) to launch GREVIO's first monitoring reports in Brussels, and to discuss lessons learned from the first cycle of national level monitoring. Equinet members also followed developments on the signature of the Istanbul Convention at European level and welcomed this development in 2017.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS – WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN TURBULENT

Equinet was represented at this high-level Colloquium by some of the Executive Board members, equality bodies and Secretariat Staff who raised the following points:

- We need leadership, support and investment from the European Commission in framing and communicating a new and positive values-based narrative about gender equality as a goal for and a value of the European Union.
- An action plan for building a popular prioritisation across the EU of the values of dignity and equality is required. This could usefully be prioritised by the European Commission on foot of the Colloquium.
- The European Commission could strengthen the equality infrastructure in Europe working to promote the values, practice and achievement of gender equality. This could take the form of channelling substantive support to the work of all actors promoting equality for women.
- Enabling equality bodies to tackle all issues relevant to women's rights was raised by the FRA paper 'Challenges to women's human rights in the EU'. A step in this direction, and toward ensuring implementation of the EU gender equality acquis, would be to set European standards for national equality bodies ensuring their independence, resources and effectiveness so they can fulfill their role of making rights a reality for all women on the ground and fulfill their potential of supporting the impact of equality infrastructure to meaningfully advance gender equality.

Nebojša Paunović, Office of Croatian
Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, addresses
participants at the meeting in Georgia

II. *Disability and the UNCRPD*

2017 marked the year Equinet developed stronger links with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and key stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention. The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol are the key international instruments protecting the human rights of persons with disabilities. In 2017, 32 Equinet members had a mandate to address discrimination on the ground of disability. Among them, 15 are designated as independent monitoring mechanisms under article 33(2) of the UNCRPD.

GENERAL COMMENT ON ARTICLE 5 OF THE UNCRPD COMMITTEE

In 2017, Equinet contributed to the drafting process of the General Comment on Article 5 (Equality and Non-Discrimination) of the UNCRPD. Equinet's written submission put forward seven recommendations. They are based on Equinet's work in the areas of disability, equal treatment legislation and standards for equality bodies. Among the main recommendations, we can highlight:

- EU and State Parties to the UN CRPD should adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination outside employment.
- EU and State Parties to the UN CRPD should adopt legislation explicitly regulating multiple and intersectional discrimination.
- Lack of reasonable accommodation should be recognized as a form of discrimination in national and European legislation.
- EU and State Parties should ensure that independent monitoring mechanisms designated under article 33 have a broad mandate, sufficient independence, human and financial resources and an appropriate institutional architecture.

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON THE UNCRPD

In October, Equinet co-organised a technical workshop with the UN Office for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the European Disability Forum (EDF) on engaging with the UNCRPD Committee. The workshop gathered Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) from 13 countries coming up soon for review by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Two equality bodies (Unia, Belgium and the Office of the Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities, Croatia) were invited to present their work in the context of their mandate of article 33 independent mechanisms.



Participants at the UNCRPD technical Workshop in Brussels

III. Equality and Anti-discrimination in the EU and UK: The Impact of Brexit

CONFERENCE: END OF A FRUITFUL DIALOGUE – IMPACT OF BREXIT ON EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION IN THE EU & UK

9 October, co-hosted with MEP Claude Moraes (Chair of LIBE Committee, S&D, UK) and ARDI (European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup)

The conference aimed to highlight challenges raised by Brexit and its impact on equality and anti-discrimination, as well as identify ways forward. Speakers from equality bodies, civil society organisations and the European Parliament agreed on the key role played by the UK to shape the EU equality and anti-discrimination framework. They also detailed the numerous uncertainties raised by Brexit, such as its impact on the Good Friday Agreement and the protection of EU and non-EU immigrants in the UK.

On that occasion, Evelyn Collins, Equinet Chair (2013 – 2017) recalled *"The EU is a valued champion for the values of equality and non-discrimination. Britain and Northern Ireland make and have made significant contributions to advancing these values and the policies required to underpin them at national and European levels. We hope that any future relationship would enable this contribution to be sustained and would be designed to lead to a further strengthening of these values in the EU and beyond."*

Participants at the Brexit Conference, held in the European Parliament



Equinet raises the profile and authority of equality bodies at a European level, thus increasing the influence and reputation domestically for such institutions.

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain

IV. Positive Duties

CONFERENCE: ADVANCING EQUALITY. THE POTENTIAL OF POSITIVE DUTIES

4 May, Belgium

Equinet commissioned research in 2016 assessing the prevalence and state of play of equality duties in Europe. The study 'Making Europe More Equal: A Legal Duty?' concludes that there are three main categories of statutory duties in place in Europe today: preventive, institutional and mainstreaming duties. The study highlighted that there is an uneven spread and development of these statutory duties across Europe.

With this conference, Equinet wanted to explore the potential and current context for such duties, discuss the contribution of statutory equality duties to advancing equality, looking at what is in place across Europe and how the learning from this can be used to contribute to institutional and societal change. Conference conclusions found that equality duties can in fact change peoples'

RESEARCH PAPER: MAKING EUROPE MORE EQUAL. A LEGAL DUTY?

(2016)

lives. To be able to make such changes, duties have to be action-based. The balance between stimulus and sanctions needs to be struck to make duty bearers implement the duties effectively. Stronger institutional mechanisms, including equality bodies, are needed. Challenges include:

- the need for tools ensuring evidence based policies;
- lack of resources for implementation;
- the need to move beyond formulaic approaches while being aware of tensions between no guidance and too detailed guidance (again leading to formulaic approaches);
- support from political and administrative leadership.



Panel of experts left to right: **Eileen Lavery**, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; **Rita Žemaitytė-Tack**, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania; **Louise Warde Hunter**, Northern Ireland Civil Service; **Catherine Naughton**, European Disability Forum; **Alvaro Oliveira**, European Commission; **Eva Hodges**, Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic of the EU; **Stefano Valenti**, ECRI

V. Combatting Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation

FACTSHEET: EQUALITY BODIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE LIST OF ACTIONS TO ADVANCE LGBTI EQUALITY

The List of Actions by the European Commission to advance LGBTI equality is a welcome policy tool available at EU level. It is essential to ensure its swift and ambitious implementation. Nonetheless, it remains crucial to adopt comprehensive EU legislation to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, ensuring full legal protection for all LGBTI people in all spheres of life.

This Factsheet highlights some of the ways in which the work of national equality bodies in Europe contributes to the implementation of action n°4 “Supporting key actors responsible to promote and advance equal rights for LGBTI people in the EU” and provides insights and good practices in four areas:

- Addressing bullying and harassment of LGBTI people

- Supporting education actors to advance LGBTI equality
- Supporting businesses to advance LGBTI equality
- Supporting key actors to promote and enhance equality in access to healthcare for LGBTI people.

10E Equinet
European Network
of Equality Bodies

**AN EQUINET
FACTSHEET**

Equality Bodies contributing to the List of Actions by the European Commission to advance LGBTI equality

September 2017

While there has been progress on legislative protection of LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex) people in recent years, they continue to face discrimination in all areas of life across Europe. The prevalence of hate speech and hate crime, threats to LGBTI organisations and activists, the recent rise in political discourses hostile to equality, as well as political pressure on the independence of some equality bodies, are worrying trends which undermine progress on equality for LGBTI people.

The 2015 List of Actions by the Commission to advance LGBTI equality is a welcome policy tool available at EU level and it is essential to ensure its swift and ambitious implementation. Nonetheless, it remains crucial to adopt comprehensive EU legislation to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual

orientation and gender identity, ensuring full legal protection to all LGBTI people in all spheres of life.

This factsheet aims to highlight some of the ways in which the work of national equality bodies in Europe contributes to the implementation of the List of Actions. It focuses on action n°4 “Supporting key actors responsible to promote and advance equal rights for LGBTI people in the EU”. It seeks to complement the conclusions of the *Annual Report 2016 to Advance LGBTI Equality* and contribute to upcoming exchanges of good practices.

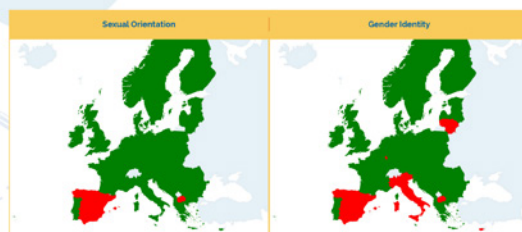
It is based on the input of 21 Equinet members, as well as the 2013 Equinet Perspective on equality bodies promoting equality and non-discrimination for LGBTI people.

National equality bodies are independent public organisations established on the basis of EU equal treatment directives¹ with a mandate to provide independent assistance to victims of discrimination and promote equality through surveys, reports and recommendations.

In 2017, 34 Equinet members had a mandate to address discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and 30 had a mandate to address discrimination on the ground of gender identity in employment or beyond education, housing, social protection and goods and services². This work includes dealing with complaints, providing legal support, providing guidance to

duty bearers (including equality duties), conducting research, pursuing legislative and policy change and raising awareness about discrimination issues.

However, establishing an equality body combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is not an EU requirement. This therefore risks retrogression as a country could restrict the mandate of an equality body in these areas due to the absence of EU and European legal safeguards. In practice not all countries covered by Equinet have an equality body which can deal with these grounds of discrimination.



Green: countries with an equality body with a mandate to address discrimination against LGBTI people
Red: no equality body to address discrimination against LGBTI people

Source: Equinet European Directory of Equality Bodies – 2017

¹ Directive 2000/43/EC (Race Directive), Directive 2004/112/EC (Gender Goods and Services Directive) and Directive 2006/54/EC (Gender Recast Directive)

VI. Combatting Discrimination Against Roma and Travellers

CALL TO ACTION: [BRING CHILDREN TOGETHER FOR DIVERSITY](#)

On 13 November, Equinet joined a call to action entitled 'Bring children together for diversity', calling for a redoubling of efforts to bring children together in the spirit of Europe's commitment to dignity, equality and human rights. The call was co-signed by Equinet, the UN Human Rights Office's Regional Office for Europe, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, the OSCE-ODIHR and the European Network of NHRIs (ENNHRI) and came on the 10th anniversary of the landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights on the segregation of Roma children in education (D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic).



A member of the Spanish Council for the Elimination of Ethnic and Racial Discrimination, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, presented their work on Good practices and cases of discrimination Roma in employment at the ERIO meeting

The D.H. case triggered Europe-wide efforts to end separate, substandard schooling for Roma. Despite these efforts, desegregation has not yet succeeded. On the contrary, although the participation of Roma in education is steadily increasing Europe-wide, school segregation is manifestly worsening. This has to change.

This joint statement adds to Equinet's existing body of work for the rights of Roma and Travellers, notably the Discussion Paper on Fighting Discrimination on the ground of race and ethnic origin published in early 2017 and the [annual workshop co-organised with ERIO and equality bodies](#), which in September 2017 focused on ending discrimination of Roma in employment.

VII. Economic and Social Rights

Equinet followed the development of the European Pillar of Social Rights, continuing to engage with European Union decision makers in 2017, as well as contributing to the Council of Europe Turin process. Both Equinet and its members contributed to the public consultations on the European Pillar of Social Rights, emphasizing a rights-based approach and equality mainstreaming throughout. On 26 September 2017 Equinet, together with the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency and ENNHRI, supported the Latvian Ombudsman in raising awareness on state obligations to reduce inequality at the national level, particularly vis-à-vis the Latvian Ministry of

Finance which was undertaking a comprehensive tax reform in 2017. Equinet also raised awareness with stakeholders on the mutually reinforcing links between poverty and discrimination. Particular emphasis was placed on the principle of non-discrimination making economic and social rights justiciable for victims that might otherwise struggle to access these rights. Equinet also engaged with the organizers of the European Social Summit in Gothenburg. In an open letter to the Prime Minister of Sweden and the President of the European Commission, Equinet stressed the importance of equality mainstreaming and not leaving discriminated groups behind when building a more social Europe.

3 SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB

Objective 3 - Areas for action:

- Inform and engage equality bodies on relevant European developments
- Provide information on equality bodies to external audiences
- Facilitate exchange of information and networking among members
- Generate, collect and communicate knowledge on equal treatment

I. Framing Values-based Messages for Better Communication

TOOLKIT: [FRAMING EQUALITY: COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK FOR EQUALITY BODIES](#)

Why do stories matter? What is framing? And how can we create the right messages to talk to a given audience? 'Framing Equality: Communication Toolkit for Equality Bodies' explains the importance of framing - how the stories told interact with our thinking - and explains how to craft our communication to create sustainable social change. It incorporates research insights, examples from Croatia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain and Portugal and practical activities to offer a useful and creative guide for communication.

In short, we need to understand our goals, our audience and what it is we want to say, before following five main points to create a good frame:

- 1) Speak to people's best self
- 2) Create common ground
- 3) Talk about change
- 4) Make it real
- 5) Avoid reinforcing unhelpful frames



*We need to put a face
on inequality, show real
people and stories.*

Michael O'Flaherty, European
Union Agency for Fundamental
Rights



II. Communicating Equality Through Social Media

TRAINING: SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING FOR EQUALITY BODIES

4-5 April, Facebook Dublin Office, Ireland

As part of our capacity building for members, we organised training sessions on how to make the most of social media for equality bodies (in October 2016 and April 2017). The main



GUIDE: COMMUNICATING EQUALITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA. A GUIDE FOR EQUALITY BODIES

learnings from these training sessions were brought together in a manual to help members to set up a social media strategy, identify how best to monitor their results, how to create engaging content for the appropriate audience, get the most from the tools available, develop successful social media campaigns and deal with negativity on social media channels.

Participants at the Social Media training in the Facebook Offices in Dublin

III. Meet the Equality Bodies

EUROPEAN DIRECTORY OF EQUALITY BODIES

The way equality bodies across Europe work differs from country to country. Equinet is very proud of the diversity in its members, and strives to highlight the work of each of our individual members. The recently updated

European Directory of Equality Bodies provides individual profiles of each of our members, and includes comparative sections which look at their mandates, functions and accountability.





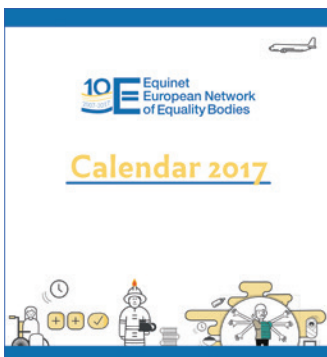
Equinet raises the profile and authority of equality bodies at a European level, thus increasing the influence and reputation domestically for such institutions.

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Lithuania

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN: #MEETNEBS

In order to understand the broad range of work equality bodies do on a day to day basis, we took to social media and opened up our Twitter account to the members, allowing them to take over our account a week at a time linked to the #MeetNEBs hashtag. We got to meet the staff of equality bodies across Europe, find out about the many different activities taking place in each organisation, and accompany them to their events and meetings. It was a very enriching experience and one which we will repeat in 2018.

CALENDAR 2017



Our 2017 Calendar was a practical way of highlighting successful stories from across Europe, as well as a great example of promoting positive stories from within the membership, and giving a broad overview of the types of cases that equality bodies are involved in. This was warmly received by everyone, so we repeated the

experience for 2018.

TIMELINE 2007-2017

As part of our 10th anniversary, we created a Timeline that brings together Equinet milestones, major changes in European anti-discrimination legislation, as well as highlights, projects and other developments for national equality bodies. It also shows the different ways in which equality bodies engaged with Equinet over the past decade.



4 CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

Objective 4 - Areas for action:

- Support the development of standards for and in the work of equality bodies
- Strengthen the standing of equality bodies in a changing context
- Enhance cooperation with stakeholders
- Ensure the sustainable development of the Network and its capacity to respond to the diverse needs of member

I. Standards for Equality Bodies

Since our [Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality bodies](#) was released in June 2016, it has been translated into nine languages and used by many of our members to support their work and positioning at national level. On 3 May 2017, Equinet organised a strategic meeting for its members to discuss further steps that could be taken to achieve the introduction and strengthening of standards for equality bodies. This was held in advance of the annual ECRI seminar, which in May 2017 focused on revising the GPR No. 2: Specialised bodies to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance at national level, initially adopted in June 1997.

The focus on standards for equality bodies was prominent throughout our 10th anniversary conference, especially during the panel session 'Promoting equality in a challenging environment'. Well-resourced, independent equality bodies with sufficient powers would ensure more adequate protection for the whole of society, with the potential to create change at the broader societal level. Unfortunately, the context is currently more of rising inequalities and hostile public discourse, thus equality bodies' work is constantly challenged.

Strategic meeting in Brussels





One of Equinet's main achievements is the development and promotion of a unified system of standards for equality bodies.

Commission for Protection against Discrimination, Bulgaria

ECRI Seminar in Strasbourg



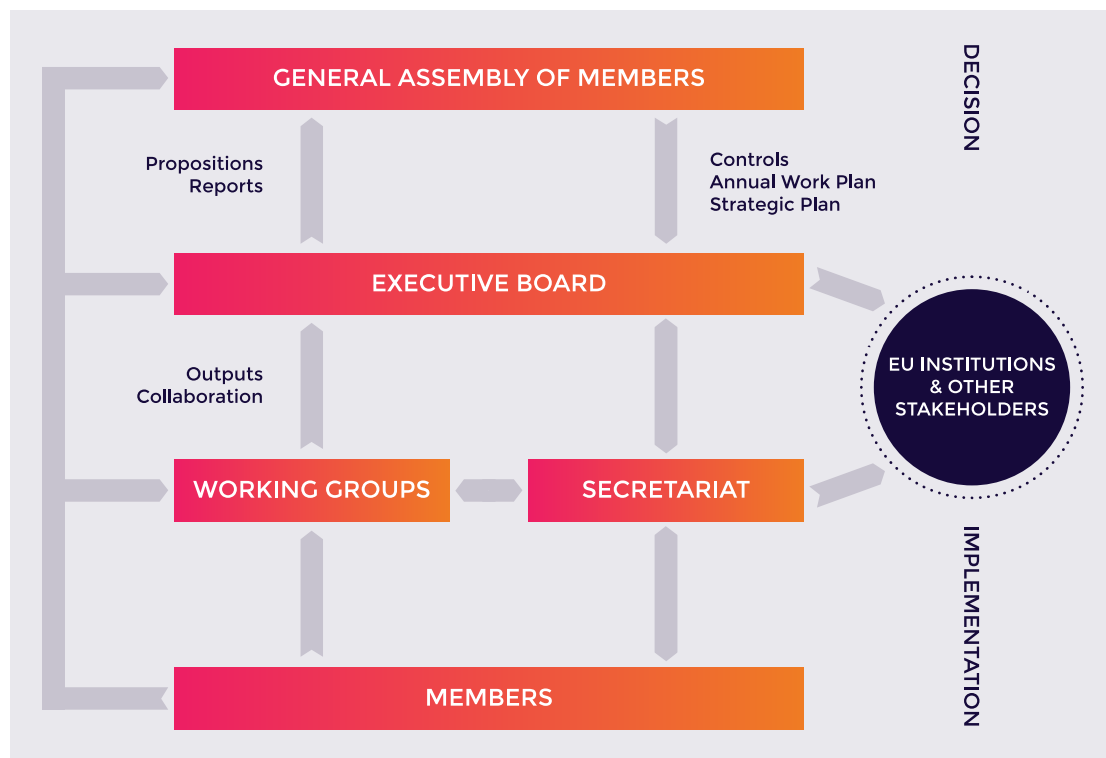
In 2017, several Equinet members highlighted cases of political pressure to their leadership and important budget cuts impeding their capacity to implement their mandate.

A. Bodnar (Poland), R. Todorova Dimitrova (Bulgaria) and E. Collins (Equinet Chair) on 10th Anniversary conference panel 'Promoting equality in a challenging environment'



Equinet Governance

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



The main decisions concerning the general steering of Equinet are taken by the General Assembly of Members (GA) that is made up of all the current members of the Network, and is convened at least once a year for an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The GA:

- ratifies new members into the Network
- elects representatives on the Executive Board every two years
- takes decisions on the strategic direction of the Network by participating in the development, reviewing and voting on the annual Work Plan for the next year prepared and proposed by the Executive Board

- is entitled to amend the statutes of the organisation and to approve budgets and accounts

During the course of the year, the GA delegates the management and the administration of the Network to the Executive Board. The latter devises the strategy for implementing the work plan for the year, ensures that the means are in place to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of the Network and acts in the best interest of the Network and its members throughout the year. All of the Executive Board members, the Expert Advisor and the Equinet Treasurer execute their tasks pro bono.

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2017–2019

- **Tena Šimonović Einwalter** (Chair), Deputy Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia
- **Laurence Bond**, Director, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland
- **Patrick Charlier** (Treasurer), Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium
- **Valérie Fontaine**, Advisor for partnerships and public relations, Defender of Rights, France
- **Sandra Konstatzky**, Deputy Director, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
- **Kalliopi Lykovardi**, Deputy Ombudsman for Equal Treatment, Greek Ombudsman, Greece
- **Kirsi Pimiä**, Ombudswoman, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland
- **Petr Polák**, Head of Division of Equal Treatment, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic
- **Sylwia Spurek**, Deputy Human Rights Commissioner, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland



From left to right – P. Polák, V. Fontaine, S. Konstatzky, T. Šimonović Einwalter, K. Lykovardi, P. Charlier, S. Spurek, K. Pimiä, L. Bond

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2015–2017

- **Evelyn Collins** (Chair), Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- **Sarah Benichou**, Head of Access to Rights and Discriminations Unit, Defender of Rights, France
- **Anna Błaszczak**, Deputy Director of the Constitutional and International Law Department, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland
- **Patrick Charlier**, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium
- **Sandra Konstatzky**, Deputy Director, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
- **Kalliopi Lykovardi**, Deputy Ombudsman, Greek Ombudsman, Greece
- **Kirsi Pimiä**, Ombudswoman, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland
- **Petr Polak**, Head of Division Equal Treatment, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic
- **Tena Šimonović Einwalter**, Deputy Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia

Equinet Advisor: Niall Crowley, Independent Expert

Equinet Treasurer: Patrick Charlier, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium

WORKING GROUPS

The Equinet Working Groups are essential parts of the inner functioning of the Network. Composed solely of staff experts from member organisations, they are the central platforms for effective cooperation and sharing of expertise amongst member equality bodies and their staff, alongside the Equinet training events and seminars. Each group is headed by a Moderator from a national equality body who, assisted by the Equinet Secretariat, is responsible for the organisation and the implementation of the work as planned in the annual Work Plans.

The Working Groups focused on the following main themes:

- **Communication Strategies and Practices – Supporting Equality Bodies in their communication work**

*Moderator: **Katrine Gaustad Pettersen**,
Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud,
Norway*

- **Equality Law in Practice – Supporting Equality Bodies in their legal work**
*Moderator: **Veronika Bazalová**, Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic*
- **Gender Equality – Supporting Equality Bodies in their work on gender issues**
*Moderators: **Nathalie Schlenzka**, Federal Anti-discrimination Agency, Germany;
Katarzyna Wilkolaska-Zuromska, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland*
- **Policy Formation – Supporting a dialogue on the learning from the work of Equality Bodies**

*Moderator: **Tena Šimonović Einwalter**,
Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia*



Policy Formation Working Group meeting in Zagreb, September 2017

SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat assists the Executive Board in implementing the annual work plan of the organisation. It is responsible for organising and managing the daily activities of the Network and assists individual members and stakeholders with their requests. It supports and coordinates the work of the Equinet thematic Working Groups. The Secretariat regularly reports on the status of its activities to the Executive Board throughout the year.

In 2017 the Secretariat team included:

- **Anne Gaspard** - Executive Director
- **Sarah Cooke O'Dowd** – Communication Officer
- **Yannick Godin** - Administration & Finance Officer

- **Tamás Kádár** – Head of Legal and Policy Team
- **Jessica Machacova** – Membership and Policy Officer
- **Katrine Steinfeld** – Policy officer (Gender Equality)
- **Mathew Augusteyns** – Finance and Communication Assistant (*May – December 2017*)
- **Floriane Charles** – Policy and Communication Assistant (*June-December 2017*)
- **Silvana Röbbstorff** – Policy and Communication Assistant (*August 2016 – March 2017*)
- **Ingrid Thorsnes** - Policy and Communication Assistant (*January - July 2017*)



From left to right – S.Cooke O'Dowd, T. Kádár, A.Gaspard, F.Charles, Y.Godin, K.Steinfeld, M.Augusteyns, J.Machacova

List of Activities

A warm **thank you to all equality bodies that have contributed to the realisation of our activities by hosting and/or co-organising different events during this time.*

CONFERENCES

- **Making Europe More Equal: a positive duty?**, Belgium, 4 May
- **End of a fruitful dialogue? Impact of Brexit on equality and anti-discrimination in the EU and UK**, co-organised with MEP Claude Moraes, Chair of LIBE Committee, S&D, UK and European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, Belgium, 9 October
- **Together for an Equal Europe – 10th Anniversary Conference**, Belgium, 10 October
- **Integration of migrants and refugees in Europe: the contribution of equality bodies**, Belgium, 7 December

SEMINARS

- **Equality bodies tackling discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities**, organized with the Office of the Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities, Croatia, 9-10 March
- **Breaking the glass ceiling: career progress and promotion patterns experienced by women**, organized with the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia, 13-14 November

TRAINING SESSIONS

- **Communicating Equality II: Social media for equality bodies**, hosted by Facebook Dublin, 4-5 April
- **How to build a case on equal pay**, hosted by the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic, 31 August – 1 September
- **Strategic Litigation**, hosted by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland, 4-5 December



Workshop held during the seminar 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling', Estonia



Project meeting on Combating Violence against Women, Hungary

CLUSTERS

- **Quasi-judicial bodies**, hosted by Commission for Protection against Discrimination, Bulgaria, 31 March; hosted by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, Netherlands, 29 November
- **Research and data collection**, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium, 20 June; hosted by Federal Anti-discrimination Agency, Germany, 30 November

PROJECT

- **Combating violence against women**, hosted by the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Hungary, 22 March; hosted by Equinet, Belgium, 19 October

WORKING GROUPS

- **Communication Strategies and Practices**, hosted by the Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria, 21 March; organized with the National Council for Combating Discrimination, Romania, 6 November
- **Equality Law**, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium, 10 May; hosted by the Greek Ombudsman, Greece, 10 November
- **Gender Equality**, hosted by the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Hungary, 23 March; hosted by Equinet, Belgium, 18 October
- **Policy Formation**, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium, 1 March; hosted by Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia, 19 September

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

- Hosted by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland, 16 March
- Hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium, 14 June, 13 December
- Hosted by Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, UK – Northern Ireland, 14 September

STRATEGIC MEETING

- **Strategic meeting on standards for equality bodies**, hosted by Equinet, Belgium, 3 May

COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET COOPERATION PLATFORM MEETINGS

- **Designing effective tools for the promotion and protection of social and economic rights**, hosted by the Council of Europe, France, 28 March
- **A rights-based approach to combating poverty in Europe: between policy and (good) practice**, hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman, Latvia, 26 September
- **4th Meeting of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE)**, organised with the Defender of Rights, France, 15-16 May



Study visit on Quasi-judicial bodies, Bulgaria

Publications

PERSPECTIVES



Enhancing the impact of Equality Bodies and Ombudsperson Offices: Making Links

REPORTS



Faith in Equality: Religion and Belief in Europe

HANDBOOKS

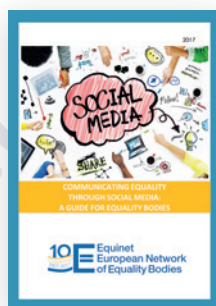


Framing Equality: Communication Handbook for Equality Bodies



Strategic Litigation

GUIDES



Communicating Equality through Social Media: A Guide for Equality Bodies

FACTSHEETS



Equality Bodies contributing to the List of Actions to Advance LGBTI Equality

IN FOCUS BRIEFS



Equinet: A Network for the Watchdogs of Equality

Equinet Member Equality Bodies

ALBANIA

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination
www.kmd.al

AUSTRIA

Austrian Disability Ombudsman
www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at

AUSTRIA

Ombud for Equal Treatment
www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at

BELGIUM

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men
www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be

BELGIUM

Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities)
www.unia.be

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina
www.ombudsmen.gov.ba

BULGARIA

Commission for Protection against Discrimination
www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com

CROATIA

Office of the Ombudsman
www.ombudsman.hr

CROATIA

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality
www.prs.hr

CROATIA

Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities
www.posi.hr

CYPRUS

Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)
www.ombudsman.gov.cy

CZECH REPUBLIC

Public Defender of Rights
www.ochrance.cz

DENMARK

Board of Equal Treatment
www.ast.dk

DENMARK

Danish Institute for Human Rights
www.humanrights.dk

ESTONIA

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner
www.volinkee

FINLAND

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman
www.syrjinta.fi

FINLAND

Ombudsman for Equality
www.tasa-arvo.fi

FRANCE

Defender of Rights
www.defenseurdesdroits.fr

GERMANY

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency
www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

GREECE

Greek Ombudsman
www.synigoros.gr

HUNGARY

Equal Treatment Authority
www.egyenlobanasmod.hu

HUNGARY

Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights
www.ajbh.hu

IRELAND

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
www.ihrec.ie

ITALY

National Equality Councillor
www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale

ITALY

National Office against Racial Discrimination – UNAR
www.unar.it

LATVIA

Office of the Ombudsman
www.tiesibsargs.lv

LITHUANIA

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson
www.lygybe.lt

LUXEMBURG

Centre for Equal Treatment
www.cet.lu

(FYRO) MACEDONIA

Commission for the Protection against Discrimination
www.kzd.mk

MALTA

Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
www.crpdp.org.mt

MALTA

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
www.equality.gov.mt

MONTENEGRO

Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)
www.ombudsman.co.me

NETHERLANDS

Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
www.mensenrechten.nl

NORWAY

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud
www.ldo.no

POLAND

Commissioner for Human Rights
www.rpo.gov.pl

PORTUGAL

Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality
www.cig.gov.pt

PORTUGAL

Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment
www.cite.gov.pt

PORTUGAL

High Commission for Migration
www.acm.gov.pt

ROMANIA

National Council for Combating Discrimination
www.cncd.org.ro

SERBIA

Commissioner for Protection of Equality
www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs

SLOVAKIA

National Centre for Human Rights
www.snslp.sk

SLOVENIA

Advocate of the Principle of Equality
www.zagovornik.gov.si

SPAIN

Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination
www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es

SWEDEN

Equality Ombudsman
www.do.se

UNITED KINGDOM - GREAT BRITAIN

Equality and Human Rights Commission
www.equalityhumanrights.com

UNITED KINGDOM - NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
www.equalityni.org



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www.equineteurope.org

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