

**Equinet Executive Board Meeting I**  
**19-20 March 2013**  
**Berlin, Germany**

**Venue:**

**Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA)**

Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes

Glinkastraße 24

10117 Berlin, Germany

**ATTENDANCE:**

<p><u>Board Members:</u> Jozef De Witte (JDW) - Chair Evelyn Collins (ECo) Domenica Ghidei (DG) Therese Spiteri (TS) Julija Sartuch (JS) Tena Simonovic-Einwalter (TSE)</p> <p><u>Board Advisor:</u> Niall Crowley (NC)</p>	<p><u>Equinet Secretariat:</u> Anne Gaspard (AG), Executive Director Tamás Kádár (TK), Senior Policy Officer Yannick Godin (YG), Administration Officer Cosmin Popa (CP), Communications Officer Ilaria Volpe (IV), Policy Officer (Gender) Vassiliki Gkesouli (VG), Trainee</p>
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**Apologies:**

Csaba Ferenc Asztalos (CA)

Elke Lujansky-Lammer (ELL)

Néphéli Yatropoulos (NY) – *provided written notes to agenda points that were brought to the discussions as relevant*

**Chair of the meeting:** Jozef De Witte (JDW)

**Minutes:** Yannick Godin (YG)

# MINUTES

## 19-20 March 2013

### 1. Opening

Jozef De Witte (JDW) opened the Board Meeting on Tuesday 19 March at 14:00 and welcomed all Board Members and Equinet Secretariat team. The proposed agenda for the meeting was reviewed and agreed upon by all participants.

JDW presented apologies received from Csaba Ferenc Asztalos, Elke Lujansky-Lammer and Néphèli Yatropoulos.

### 2. Announcements

**JS:** The head of the Lithuanian body (Ausrine Burkneikiene) is soon reaching the end of her mandate. The government has not yet given indication as to a possible (re)appointment for the next term of mandate.

**TS:** Following the general elections of this year in Malta, a new government has come to power. There is a new Minister in charge of anti-discrimination as part of her responsibilities.

**NC:** The planned merger between the Equality Authority and the Human rights Institution in Ireland came to a standstill. A significant number of staff has left the Irish body (from 58 in 2008 to 11 in 2013) and the situation does not seem to be close to being resolved at this point with legislation and appointment of Chief Commissioner still awaited.

**TSE:** a new Ombudswoman has been appointed at the helm of the Croatian body

**DECISION:** A congratulations letter from Equinet will be sent to the new Head of the Equality Body in Croatia

### 3. Minutes of last Equinet Board Meeting (4 December 2012)

**ECo:** in relation to point 4. Strategic Issues of the Minutes (relating to the process of recruitment for the position of gender policy officer within the Secretariat) and following her participation as Member of the Selection Committee as Board representative, ECo made a note that she had been impressed and assured by the selection and interview process put in place and pursued for the recruitment of the new Policy Officer.

**DECISION:** the minutes of the Equinet Board Meeting held on 4 December 2012 are adopted by the Board and can be uploaded on the Equinet website's Members section.

## 4. Strategic Issues

- **Equinet input into the EC's review of the implementation of the EU's Race and Employment Directives**

The Equinet contribution submitted end December 2012 was well received by the European Commission. Further feedback and indication on the directions and timetable for this work on the joint implementation report will be sought from the EC. Andreas Stein (Head of Unit D2 Equal Treatment legislation DG JUST- responsible for the review of the Directives) has been invited to make a key contribution to the upcoming Equinet Legal Seminar on the topic.

Individual NEBs were also invited by the EC to make submissions in their own name. Another important Equinet contribution from the Working Group *Equality Law in practice* aimed to feed into the process of the EC Review of the Implementation of the Race and General Framework Directives, will be completed by the end of April and presented at the Equinet Legal Seminar. The EC is expected to issue the joint Report on the application of the directives by the end of the year 2013.

- **Standards for Equality Bodies**

- **Equinet Note to European Commission**

It is encouraging that the EC is open to discuss and address the theme of standards and means of protection for NEBs as confirmed by a meeting with Equinet on the subject convened by EC DG JUST Director for Equality on 30 January 2013.

Equinet is still waiting for a response of DG JUST Equality Directorate to Equinet's note on the issue of standards for Equality Bodies, sent end February as agreed and requested by the EC at the prior meeting of 30 January.

There are also indications in the meantime that four pilot letters were sent by the EC to some Member States where legislation is deemed not to be in line with EU law.

**DECISION:** Following reaction and response from the EC, Equinet will seek opportunity for another meeting with EC representatives to discuss possible work ahead and ways forward. The added-value of Equinet's contribution lies in that it directly draws from the NEBs Members' experience. In the meantime, Equinet could already start exploring work areas and actions it could take to advance this cause.

- **Equinet Report/Paper on indicators for measuring the impact of NEBs<sup>1</sup>**

The Board reviewed the draft Terms of Reference proposed by the Equinet Secretariat for this project and agreed that experience in the field of impact assessment and evaluation should be added in the Terms of Reference as an area of expertise requirement of the proposed expert / subcontractor, to be assessed as part of the review of tender proposals.

**TS:** importance of clear consideration and assessment of price versus quality and expertise level of the subcontractor in the context of a (restricted) tender approach for this work.

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<sup>1</sup> NC – as a potentially interested expert for this work - was absent from the room for this item of Board discussion.

**DECISION:** The draft terms of reference will need to be reviewed and updated. Subcontracting amount (5000 EUR) allowing, in line with EC regulations, the Board agrees for a restricted call for tender to be launched under a short timeframe and sent to few (around 5-6) selected possible expert subcontractors, for follow-up and review by Equinet Secretariat.

○ **ECRI Seminar with specialised Equality Bodies (30-31 May 2013)**

ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance - Council of Europe) will organise its annual Seminar with NEBS in Strasbourg on 30-31 May 2013 focusing on *Challenges faced in the current institutional and budgetary environment*, linking to the topic of means of protection and standards for NEBs (Equinet/JDW and NEBs invited to contribute to the programme).

○ **Cooperation with FRA**

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) also seems keen to engage on the priority topic of standards and protection for NEBs.

The Board reviewed the Draft Programme for the joint Meeting of the FRA (7-8 October 2013, Vienna) with 'National Human Rights Bodies – NHRBs', the Council of Europe and the European Ombudsman. The Board expressed strong reservations on the current programme proposal for the joint meeting/event. A message should be conveyed to the FRA outlining the Board concerns to suggest and support the review of the programme proposal by the FRA in consultation with representative groups involved in the planning of this joint meeting. Some Board concerns and suggestions related notably to the use of the term NHRBs, more emphasis to be put on workshops and other interactive techniques (rather than long plenary settings), greater focus on experiences and contribution of bodies at national level rather than presentation of European/international projects, consideration of gender balance on panels, invitations to be extended to ombud institutions.

- END OF DAY 1 -

## **5. Priority Issues – Work Programme 2013**

- **Follow-up nomination Moderator of Equinet new *Working Group on gender issues***

**DECISION:** Sandra Ribeiro (President CITE, Portugal) is nominated as the Moderator for the Working Group on Gender related issues.

The Secretariat and the Board highly appreciated the interest and the credentials of Maria Karageorgou (Greek Ombudsman) and recommended to explore ways to involve her more deeply as appropriate for example for relevant parts of the work of the WG drawing from her high level of expertise.

- **Follow-up nomination of Moderator of Equinet *Communications Working Group***

**DECISION:** Thekla Demetriadou from the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) in Cyprus is nominated as the Moderator for the Equinet Communication Working Group.

The Board and Secretariat appreciated and thanked the former Moderator Libby Kinney (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland) for her commitment and very valuable contribution to the Working group, and welcome the fact that she will continue to engage in the work as a WG member.

- **Common cause project on values**

**DECISION:** The Board agrees to the principle of commissioning the project to Common Cause, pending on prior consent (relating to the applicable financial rules) and confirmation from the EC of the 2013 Equinet budget.

Common Cause will be invited to refine and submit a detailed proposal to Equinet Secretariat for the implementation of this project work (including methodology approach, tasks/steps and work plan, expert person and detailed budget).

- **Equinet high-level Seminar on Gender-related issues**

The Board reviewed and commented on the draft proposal for the Seminar Programme presented by Equinet Secretariat (IV). Relevant NEBs should be identified and invited to contribute as experts in the field to present their analysis of the problems and issues rather than just present what they do/have done. The theme of the seminar should be more clearly framed and defined.

- **Good practice guide on reasonable accommodation**

**DECISION:** The Board agrees to launch a communication and call to Equinet Members inviting equality bodies to inform the Secretariat of specific experience or projects relating to the field of the planned Equinet Good Practice Guide and to express interest in providing lead expertise and drafting for this work on reasonable accommodation.

- **Outcomes and recommendations of Equinet External Evaluation 2012**

The Board is satisfied with the fresh look at Equinet and its work that the new expert evaluator (Transform ltd) allowed to bring to the external technical review. Findings and recommendations emerging from the external evaluation report were noted and will be considered by the Board as part of future work planning and in the context of preparing a next Strategic Plan for Equinet.

## **6. Planning issues - Equinet Work Programme 2013**

- **Planning Equinet Board Elections & AGM 2013**

**DECISION:** The Board agrees to the proposed steps/timeline planning and communication with Members calling for the nomination of candidates to the Board Elections at the next AGM. The Equinet AGM should be maintained and planned as a one-day event (in Brussels on 28 November 2013).

- **Outline approach proposal for preparation of Equinet Strategic Plan 2015-2018**

The Board reviewed the proposed approach (key steps and indicative timeline) for the preparation of Equinet next Strategic Plan.

JDW: There should be a drive to promote internal consultation and discussion with their staff members by the Member NEBs as part of the development process of the Plan. This can be supported and encouraged for instance by submitting draft versions for comments and reviews by Members within a reasonable timeframe allowing for internal consultation of their staff.

**DECISION:** The Board agrees to the proposed planning and approach for the preparation for the next Equinet Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

## **7. Equinet Membership**

- **Equinet Board Elections Procedures – Group allocation of FYROM / new Member**

**DECISION:** Following AGM ratification of the membership application of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination which joined as a new Member in December 2012, the Board agrees to add the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to Group 3 (geographical electoral grouping) of the *Equinet Board Elections Procedures*.

- **Membership**

- Italy – application of *Consigliera Nazionale di Parità* (National Advisor for Equality)

**DECISION:** Following review of the submission, the Board approves the Membership application of the National Advisor for Equality in Italy to be presented for ratification by Members at the AGM. A formal response will be sent to the candidate member body accordingly.

- Slovenia Equality Body

No reaction received to date in response to the Equinet support letter sent following request of the Slovenian equality body to national representatives in December 2012.

## **8. Finances and Administration**

Equinet Secretariat (YG) reported on the final accounts for the year 2012 that were closed and audited, and which will form part of the Equinet grant final report to be submitted to the EC by 31 March 2013.

=== *The Chair JDW closed the Board Meeting at 12:30 on Wednesday 20 March* ===