

Equinet Executive Board Meeting I 22 January 2015 Brussels, Belgium

Venue: Hotel du Congrès – Meeting room, Rue du Congrès 40-42, Brussels, Belgium

ATTENDANCE	
<p><u>Board Members</u></p> <p>Anna Błaszczak (AB) Kosana Beker (KB) Michiel Bonte (MB) Evelyn Collins (ECo) Sandra Ribeiro (SR) Mari-Liis Sepper (MLS) Tena Simonovic-Einwalter (TSE) István Haller (IH)</p>	<p><u>Equinet Secretariat</u></p> <p>Anne Gaspard (AG), Executive Director Yannick Godin (YG), Administration & Finance Officer Tamás Kádár (TK), Senior Policy Officer Ilaria Volpe (IV), Policy Officer - Gender Equality Sarah Cooke O'Dowd (SOD), Communications Officer Jessica Machacova (JM), Project Officer (starting 2 Feb) Marina Gachmova (MG), Assistant (trainee) Martina Meneghetti (MM), Assistant (trainee)</p>

Chair of the meeting: Evelyn Collins (ECo)

Apologies: *Board Member* - Nepheli Yatropoulos (NY); *Board Advisor* - Niall Crowley (NC), *Treasurer* - Therese Spiteri (TS)

Minutes: Yannick Godin (YG), Marina Gachmova (MG)

MINUTES

OPENING OF THE EQUINET BOARD MEETING

The Chair opened the Board meeting at 9.15 by reviewing the items on the agenda and by inviting any initial announcements or information to share.

SR highlighted recent developments in her professional situation, namely that her mandate as President of CITE in Portugal had ended and hence she was no longer going to hold this position from January 2015 on. This development (no longer working within the equality body) will have as an implication that SR will no longer be in a position to pursue her involvement in Equinet and she therefore tendered her resignation from the Board (see related Board decision page 3).

TSE announced the happy news of her pregnancy and that she will step out from professional engagements for the period of her maternity leave from May 2015. TSE was warmly congratulated by all board and secretariat colleagues.

MB explained that since the Belgian Centre became interfederal last year, it had gained full competence on issues related also to the regions in Belgium. A new board is still to be appointed as well as the future directors of the Centre. A new structure is being worked upon, that will entail the merging of some units. The Equinet Board reminded that, in view of the changes in the recent legal status of the Centre, Equinet would need to be advised of these changes officially in written communication.

MLS announced that her organisation took up the competencies under the UN Convention for People with Disabilities (CRPD). This will broaden the scope of competence of the organisation. There are further talks of merger with another Estonian organisation. MLS's current term as Commissioner will come to an end in October 2015.

ECo updated colleagues about the current case supported by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland which raises the extent to which suppliers of goods and services can refuse service on grounds of sexual orientation, religious belief and/or political opinion. It has attracted a considerable level of political and public commentary.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES 15 OCTOBER 2014

DECISION: The Draft Minutes of the Equinet Board meeting of 15 October 2014 in Belgrade were approved and adopted. Board Minutes to be made available to Members on the restricted Members Section of the Equinet Website.

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE EQUINET AGM 4 DECEMBER 2015

The Board reviewed the draft AGM minutes and noted the event general support from the membership for piloting third party interventions in connection with cases before the ECtHR and plan set for the Legal Working Group in 2015. The Board also noted and commented on the overall positive evaluation feedback/report from AGM participants.

DECISION: The draft Minutes of the AGM will be reviewed and finalised for adoption at next Equinet Board Meeting and forwarded to the General Assembly of members for voting at the Equinet AGM in October 2015.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Communication of the new Equinet Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Equinet Members should be encouraged to read the Equinet Strategic Plan as well as to disseminate it within their equality body and possibly among relevant national stakeholders as appropriate. Translation could be foreseen by Members if they so wish wherever needed and possible. The Equinet Strategic Plan 2015-2018 will be published and widely disseminated to Equinet Members and relevant external stakeholders across EU/international levels (e.g. ECRI individual members, MEPs...). The electronic version uploaded on the website should be of a dynamic layout and in an easy to read format.

EC Horizontal Directive proposal

The proposal for a Directive is still under discussion but blocked in the EU Council due to opposition by some Member State/s.

DECISION: the Board agrees with the suggested steps set out in the draft proposal and update document on the topic of the EC Horizontal Directive. Members will be informed of the current status of the directive and will be invited to support the legislative proposal at national level to the best of their capacities. In particular, contacts will be made with FADA in Germany to discuss the issue and how best to improve the chances of the Directive being supported by individual Member States and of being adopted by unanimity in the Council.

Equinet Cluster on Standards for Equality Bodies

The concept note proposed to frame and take forward the work of the Equinet Cluster on Standard for Equality Bodies was welcomed by the Board. The draft note was discussed with further inputs and comments received which will be incorporated in a revised version.

DECISION: The updated document will serve as an Information Note for equality bodies and a framework for the forthcoming work of Equinet Cluster. The Note will be

circulated to Equinet Cluster Members as part of the invitation to participate in the first Cluster Meeting to be held on 29 April.

EQUINET GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Board Membership

The Board discussed the implications of the recent changes in Sandra Ribeiro (SR)'s professional situation in view of her status as a Board member, according to the Equinet statutes and the regulations regarding board elections.

DECISION: The Board accepted SR's resignation from the Board as she is no longer an employee of an Equinet member body. The Board warmly thanked SR for her contribution as a Board member and as the Moderator of the Equinet Working Group on Gender Equality (for which a new moderator will need to be identified). The approach to the vacant seat within the Board will be reviewed by the Board.

Membership Update

- ***Review Membership Application – Bureau of the Federal Ombudsman for People with Disabilities, Austria***

The membership application and related submission documents were reviewed and screened by the Equinet Board.

DECISION: the membership application of the Bureau of the Federal Ombudsman for People with Disabilities is deemed complete and in compliance with Equinet membership criteria and statutes. The membership application is therefore approved by the Board, and will be presented to the Annual General Assembly of Members for ratification at the next AGM 2015 as final step formalising potential future membership. The Federal Ombudsman will be informed of this process and encouraged to start engaging in selected relevant Equinet work as an observer for the period until the AGM.

- ***Group Allocation of the Republic of Albania (new Member NEB ratified at AGM 2014) under Equinet Board Elections Procedures***

DECISION: the Board decided to allocate Albania to the second geographical group under the current Equinet Board Elections Procedures.

UPDATE COMPLETION OF EQUINET WORK PROGRAMME 2014

The Board reviewed and commented on the various activities updates and areas of work pursued and completed by Equinet under its work programme implementation for the year 2014.

Considering the decision taken by the Secretariat in December 2014 not to produce and get published an Annual Report 2014 at this particular moment, in view of limited team capacity, the Board underlined the importance of producing an alternative

document designed for external audiences that would showcase Equinet's activities over the period.

DECISION: the report on *Strategic Planning and Equality Bodies* produced by the Working Group Strategy Development will be made available in electronic format, slightly reworked, as an internal document and collection of good practices on the topic (new title and clear introduction accordingly, possibly inclusion of testimonials about strategic planning).

PLANNING EQUINET WORK PROGRAMME 2015

- *Equinet Working Group activities*

A new Moderator for the WG on Communications is still to be identified and appointed during 2015, as well as a future Moderator for the Working Group Gender Equality.

- *Training on Access to EU funds*

The target audience is expected to be staff from NEBs with limited or no experience in the process of EU funding application. Some of the training inputs and experts could come from equality bodies with a strong experience and record in the field accessing and using EU funds for projects and parts of their work. The training should be very operational and narrowly focused on applying to a specific programme.

Other relevant planning items of Equinet activities and work under its Work Plan 2015 were discussed and reviewed with Board inputs and guidance, as well as updates relating to ongoing European stakeholders' engagement and priority initiatives.

The Board meeting was closed at 16.00 pm by the Chair **ECo**