



FIRST-EVER EQUINET SEMINAR ON GENDER EQUALITY E-NEWSLETTER NO. 28

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News from Equinet

Registrations are now open for the 2013 Equinet High-Level Seminar on Gender Equality in the Labour Market: the Role of Equality Bodies (27 June, Brussels)

The seminar aims at sharing with EU level stakeholders experiences and expertise coming from equality bodies' work on the promotion of gender equality, in particular relating to the implementation of EU legislation and policies in the field. It also aims at providing equality bodies with an overview and a platform for dialogue on EU developments concerning the fight against gender inequalities.

The seminar will strive to:

- ▶ **Allow an exchange between equality bodies, EU institutions and stakeholders on how to best cooperate for the promotion of gender equality and effectively tackle gender inequalities;**
- ▶ **Present equality bodies' experiences in the implementation of EU policies and legislation in the framework of gender equality in the labour market;**
- ▶ **Provide a platform for discussion on key priorities, best practices and possible future developments at EU and national level;**
- ▶ **Position Equinet and national equality bodies' work in the field of gender equality at EU level.**

More information about the agenda, venue and registration (**DEADLINE 10 June**) can be found [here](#).

Equality Bodies Supporting Good Practice by Service Providers

In a context of under-reporting of discrimination, prevention of discrimination becomes important for equality bodies. They have to give some priority to **supporting service providers to develop and implement good equality policies and practices**. Equality bodies can impact on a wider range of service users by working proactively with service providers to develop their equality competence.

Equinet launched a good practice guide outlining the key concepts and elements that shape a strategic approach by equality bodies to supporting service providers to promote equality, adjust for diversity, and combat discrimination.

Read more about and download the guide [here](#).

News from Equality Bodies

Belgium – [Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism](#)

▶ In late April the Brussels Criminal Court issued a judgment against a senior inspector of the local police from the Brussels - Midi area who was charged with two cases of **racial violence**. The Centre was a civil party on the side of the two victims. The decision sent a strong signal and emphasized the need for constant sensitisation of the police in their fight against racial violence.

(contact: [Eef Peeters](#))

Croatia – [Office of the Ombudsman](#)

▶ On 1 March 2013 Ms. Lora Vidović was appointed as the **new Croatian Ombudsman** after the Croatian Parliament had previously elected her as the new parliamentary commissioner for protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms for a term of eight years. She has been working in the field of human rights protection and promotion throughout her career, especially from the perspective of public international law. Prior to being appointed Ombudsman Ms. Vidović was the Head of the UNICEF Office in Croatia and before that the Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights.

(contact: [Teodora Matej](#))

Cyprus – [Office of the Commissioner for Administration \(Ombudsman\)](#)

▶ Following the expiration of the deadline for compliance with her final Recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Culture, regarding the **exemption from religious studies in secondary schools**, the Ombudsman, acting as the Anti-Discrimination Body, proceeded with the publication of the legally binding Recommendations in the Government Gazette, for the discriminatory practice to end.

▶ Throughout the month of May, an Officer from the equality body provided training to the personnel of hotels in two major cities on **gender discrimination in employment**, with an emphasis on **sexual harassment in the work place**.

▶ The Ombudsman issued a Report on the obligation of Local Authorities to **secure access to the beach for people with disabilities**. The issue was examined in light of the principle of accessibility, as a necessary precondition for the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities. The Ombudsman acknowledged the official recognition of the necessity for the protection of the right of access of people with disabilities to all touristic areas and services, but noted that the current settings still remain oriented towards the average user. At the same time, adjustments that have been designed for people with disabilities were only partially implemented, due to limited granting of

resources to Local Authorities.

(contact: [Thekla Demetriadou](#))

Czech Republic – [Public Defender of Rights](#)

▶ In 2012 the Defender signed an **agreement with Pro bono alliance, with attorneys providing pro bono services** (www.probonocentrum.cz/english). In the Czech Republic, a clear legislation on free legal aid is still missing, therefore an agreement of this kind was deemed important in the efforts to combat discrimination. Simultaneously, a suitable instrument for **strategic litigation** was created. Until the end of 2012, two cases were handed over to two law offices. Both were concluded by an out-of-court settlement and to the satisfaction of the victims of discrimination.

▶ A first **seminar on anti-discrimination law intended for judges, assistant judges and public prosecutors** was held at the Municipal Court in Prague on 22 May 2013. The seminar was organised by the Czech Judicial Academy, which is responsible for continuous training of persons employed by the judiciary.

(contact: [Iva Hrazdilкова](#))

Denmark – [Danish Institute for Human Rights \(DIHR\)](#)

▶ The Danish Institute for Human Rights has just published a **booklet focusing on some of the challenges faced by health professionals in hospitals when interacting with patients with different ethnic origin than Danish**. The purpose of the booklet is to inspire reflection and discussion among health professionals in order to find good solutions, which ensure equal treatment irrespective of ethnicity. Good solutions may also mean that challenges experienced by health professionals are easier to handle. The booklet covers the following five themes: interpreter assistance, fear of contact and taboos, irritation and resentment, mutual respect, and relatives.

▶ In 2011 The Danish Institute for Human Rights took over the City of Copenhagen's **website for reporting of discrimination**. The website is now called www.sigfranu.dk ("say no now") on which anyone anonymously can report experiences of hate crimes or discrimination on the basis of e.g. sex, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion or faith. On the website a questionnaire is to be filled out after which the answers are subject to a statistical analysis. In this way the institute hopes to uncover the extent of perceived discrimination. This spring the City of Copenhagen ran a campaign in order to stop discrimination affecting the night life of Copenhagen. The campaign encouraged people to report or report discrimination either by calling the police or use the website www.sigfranu.dk. In this way people were made aware of where to report on discrimination and the rate of reporting went up.

(contact: [Christine Bendixen](#))

Sweden – [Equality Ombudsman](#)

▶ The Equality Ombudsman recently received additional funding in order to be able to further intensify its monitoring and promotional activities relating to the **positive obligations placed upon employers and education providers to promote equal rights and opportunities** - commonly referred to as "active measures". The additional budget allocation of 9 000 000 SEK (approx. 1 000 000 EUR) over two years is specifically directed at measures and activities relating to the obligation of employers to carry out pay surveys aimed at identifying pay differences between men and women, as well as the obligation of universities and other academic institutions to conduct goal oriented work to actively promote equal rights and opportunities inter alia through the adoption of equal treatment plans.

As part of its ongoing activities the Ombudsman has selected 470 large employers (with an estimated total of 600 000 employees) for a review of their compliance with the obligation to adopt action plans for equal pay. This review is a follow-up to a similar project carried out by the previously existing Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman which focused on gender equality and sex discrimination.

▶ The Swedish Supreme Court has granted the Equality Ombudsman leave to appeal a case concerning the **level of economic compensation to be paid to victims of discrimination**. This will be the first time the Supreme Court addresses this issue following the adoption of a new Swedish Discrimination Act in 2009.

The facts of the case concern a lesbian woman who was denied medical services related to assisted procreation at her local health clinic and, instead, instructed to use the services at a clinic specializing in providing such services specifically for lesbian and bisexual women. After legal proceedings were brought by the Equality Ombudsman on behalf of the woman, the District Court held that this constituted direct discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and awarded compensation in the amount of 15 000 SEK (approx. 1 500 EUR). Following an appeal by both parties, the Court of Appeal ordered that the compensation should be increased to 30 000 SEK (approx. 3 000 EUR).

In its appeal to the Supreme Court the Equality Ombudsman has argued, inter alia, that the amount awarded by the Court of Appeal is insufficiently dissuasive and does not give full effect to certain changes introduced in the 2009 Discrimination Act specifically for the purpose of increasing the level of compensation to be paid in discrimination cases.

(contact: [Kerstin Jansson](#))

United Kingdom – [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#)

▶ The EHRC has published [guidance to help employers manage and support employees affected by domestic abuse](#), which one in four women will experience at some point in their lifetime. The guidance, developed by the EHRC and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, outlines how employers should respond if an employee is affected by domestic abuse.

The guidance is necessary because domestic abuse is a subject that managers struggle to respond to appropriately. People experiencing domestic abuse can be subject to disciplinary action and even lose their jobs because their behaviour, being late for example, is misinterpreted. A domestic abuse workplace policy will mean that skilled and experienced staff are able to retain their jobs and feel safe and supported in the workplace.

▶ The EHRC has published [guidance to help public authorities in England comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) by giving due consideration to equality issues in their procurement processes.

Public authorities spend £236 billion each year on buying goods, works or services from other organisations. *Buying Better Outcomes* provides clear advice on what the law requires, together with practical examples, so that public authorities can see what they need, and don't need, to do to comply with the PSED.

Following the PSED can be an effective tool for directing resources to where the need is greatest and thus improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. It can allow organisations to better meet the needs of their customers, achieve better value for money and improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Complying with the PSED also helps ensure that organisations meet the requirements of European procurement law. (contact: international@equalityhumanrights.com)

European Developments

- ▶ [The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights has presented the results of its new and most comprehensive LGBT survey done at European level](#)
- ▶ [The European Parliament voted on a regulation on civil law protection for victims](#)
- ▶ [The Court of Justice of the EU issued a preliminary ruling on homophobic statement by a Romanian football club owner](#)
- ▶ [The Court of Justice of the EU decided on an issue of different retirement age between female and male farmers](#)
- ▶ [The Court of Justice of the EU clarified in one of its decisions the concept of disability](#)
- ▶ [The European Court of Human Rights has decided on a case of domestic violence and discrimination](#)
- ▶ [In the case of Leventoğlu Abdulkadiroğlu v. Turkey the European Court of Human Rights held that not allowing a woman to keep just her maiden name in official documents after getting married, whereas married men kept their surname, was a violation of Art. 8 \(right to respect for private and family life\) in conjunction with Article 14 \(prohibition of discrimination\) of the European Convention on Human Rights.](#)
- ▶ [The Migration Policy Group has launched its new website](#)
- ▶ The European Network Against Racism has launched the last two episodes of its 'Recycling Hatred' video series on the themes ['Has anti-Semitism become acceptable again in Europe?'](#) and ['What's worse: being discriminated because you're a woman, blind, or Muslim?'](#)
- ▶ On 25-26 April over 200 civil society organisations from across the EU, came together in Vienna at the **6th Fundamental Rights Platform Meeting** to discuss emerging fundamental rights challenges. This year specific focus was dedicated to two issues: non-discrimination and hate crime. A panel debate on the first day considered how civil society organisations together with other actors could contribute to further advancing anti-discrimination policies in the EU. On the second day, victim support organisations and other practitioners shared their experiences helping victims of hate crime and together looked for promising practices in the field. [Continue reading](#)

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Upcoming events

Please bear in mind that some of these events may be attended upon invitation only. For more details please contact the organisers.

- ▶ **27 June (Brussels) Equinet:** [High-Level Seminar on Gender Equality in the Labour Market: the Role of Equality Bodies](#)
- ▶ Evenbreak series of **live webinars** aimed at [helping inclusive employers attract more talented people with disabilities](#), on one hand, and [jobseekers with disabilities find work with employers that value their skills](#), on the other hand.
- ▶ **27-28 June (Maastricht) - Maastricht University:** [Workshop on \(Il\)legitimate differential treatment](#)

Latest publications

- ▶ [Equality Bodies Supporting Good Practice by Service Providers - An Equinet Good Practice Guide](#)
- ▶ [ENAR, the European Network Against Racism, launched a report on the cost of neglecting the positive contributions of migrants & ethnic minorities](#)
- ▶ [Annual Activity Report from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- ▶ [PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, launched a report on "The Silent Humanitarian Crisis in Greece: Devising Strategies to Improve the Situation of Migrants in Greece"](#)



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