



2017 EQUINET WORK PLAN



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.

National Equality bodies are public institutions established by law to promote equality and combat discrimination, on grounds including gender and gender identity, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and other grounds.

The Equinet Network promotes equality in Europe through 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.

EQUINET, THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

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Introduction

Equinet celebrates its 10th Anniversary! This will be highlighted on our website with a special section dedicated to the work of the network and its members over the past 10 years. It will be promoted through our research on *Investing in Equality: The Changing Mandates and Resources of Equality Bodies in the past Decade* and various publications, such as our new *In Focus* briefs. Furthermore, it will be celebrated at a conference that will bring together all those with whom we have worked over the past 10 years, to look at the past, the present and especially the future of equality bodies and equal treatment legislation.

Building capacity and ensuring peer support for equality bodies' staff is a constant priority for Equinet. We will organise seminars for our members to explore ideas and share their work on how to tackle discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities and on how to improve career progression and promotion patterns experienced by women. There will be training sessions for our members based on outputs from 2016 on strategic litigation, on how to build an equal pay case and on how to improve social media use. Our Clusters will focus on the work of quasi-judicial bodies and on how equality bodies carry out research and data collection; and we will run a project which will allow members to look at how to combat violence against women. Our Working Groups will continue to offer members the opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices, as well as learning from external experts.

Contributing to the European Equality Agenda in 2017. Our conferences will bring together members, external experts and stakeholders on key ideas and developments in the field of equal treatment at national and European levels. One conference will aim to discuss the role of equality bodies in contributing to the integration of migrants and refugees. Another conference will raise awareness of the existence and structure of positive and equality duties among decision makers. The third conference will allow us to take stock of the progress made and the contribution of equality bodies in addressing non-discrimination in Europe over the past 10 years, as well as exploring ways forward and possible steps to enhance equality bodies' contribution to an equal Europe. Equinet will also continue to engage with European stakeholders on a regular basis and provide significant input to developments on the European equality agenda.

Standards for Equality Bodies. In 2016, we released our *Working Paper on Standards for Equality Bodies*, which seeks to establish positions that equality bodies could promote, negotiate and advance vis-à-vis European and national administrations for the establishment of standards for equality bodies at European level and their implementation at national level. Following on from this, Equinet will continue discussions with equality bodies on this issue as well as engaging external stakeholders to support the development of standards for equality bodies, making use of all existing resources produced by Equinet and other stakeholders.

Equinet's Strategic Goals

A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

A1 Develop knowledge and skills of staff members of NEBs

A2 Develop strategic and organisational capacity of NEBs

A3 Foster and promote innovative approaches in the work of equality bodies

B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

B1 Contribute to equality policy and law at European level

B2 Convey an expert voice of equality bodies by sharing their expertise, experience and recommendations

B3 Inform and engage with policy makers and partners

C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

C1 Inform and engage equality bodies on relevant European developments

C2 Provide information on equality bodies to external audiences

C3 Facilitate exchange of information and networking among members

C4 Generate, collect and communicate knowledge on equal treatment

D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

D1 Support the development of standards for and in the work of equality bodies

D2 Strengthen the standing of equality bodies in a changing context

D3 Enhance cooperation with stakeholders

D4 Ensure the sustainable development of the network and its capacity to respond to the diverse needs of members

Overview of Activities and Outputs 2017

TOOLS FOR ACTION		OUTPUTS
A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES		
SEMINARS	Equality bodies tackling discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities	1 seminar + summary online
	Breaking the glass ceiling: career progress and promotion patterns experienced by women	1 seminar + summary online
TRAINING	Strategic litigation How to build an equal pay case Communicating Equality: Social media for equality bodies	3 training sessions
CLUSTER	Quasi-judicial bodies Research and data collection	2 members-led clusters
PROJECT	Combating Violence against women	2 meetings Summary report published online
PROJECT	Evaluation Lab	Follow-up on project outcomes & support members with peer support processes
WORKING GROUPS	Gender Equality	2 meetings 1 report (gender & education) <i>Preparation of Gender Seminar</i>
	Communication	2 meetings 5 Online library entries Communication Toolkit on Valuing Equality
	Equality Law	2 meetings ECtHR monitoring system Update of 2011 Equality Law in Practice report on Religion & Belief

B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

CONFERENCES	Integration of migrants and refugees in Europe: the contribution of equality bodies	1 conference + summary online
	Making Europe More Equal: a positive duty?	1 conference + summary online
	10 th anniversary conference	1 conference + summary online
WORKING GROUP	Policy Formation	<p>2 meetings</p> <p>1 Factsheet on LGBTI List of Actions</p> <p>1 Perspective on topic of relevance to be identified</p> <p><i>Preparation of Asylum/Migration Conference</i></p>
ENGAGEMENT	European Institutions and stakeholders	<p>Regular meetings and engagement</p> <p>Reaction to relevant developments in policy and legislation</p>

C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

RESEARCH	Investing in Equality: the changing mandates and resources of Equality Bodies in the past decade	1 Research Paper commissioned
COMMUNICATION	<p>1 Website (with updated European Directory of Equality Bodies, members' area, 10 Year Anniversary page)</p> <p>Equinet Highlights 2017 – Annual Report</p> <p>Newsbook (monthly); Members' Bulletin (bi-monthly, internal)</p> <p>'In Focus' Briefs (4 per year)</p> <p>3 Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Linked In)</p>	

D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

HORIZONTAL ENGAGEMENT	Standards for Equality Bodies	Continued engagement with Equinet members and all relevant stakeholders, such as EU and international institutions, including link to ECRI Seminar, national authorities, civil society, etc.
ENGAGEMENT	Stakeholders from civil society & social partners	1 annual meeting with each of the two groups of stakeholders
ENGAGEMENT	Equality and Human Rights	Regular meetings and engagement
MEMBERSHIP	Membership engagement	Regular meetings and exchanges

A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

SEMINAR 1: Equality bodies tackling discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day capacity-building seminar for staff members of equality bodies on *Tackling discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities*. The seminar will touch upon specific challenges encountered by people with intellectual disabilities and the available framework at international and European levels. It will address issues connected to the day-to-day work of equality bodies, such as underreporting, reasonable accommodation, stereotypes, cooperation with Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) and intersection with other grounds of discrimination. Relevant good practices or cases will also be presented for discussion by equality bodies and external speakers during workshops.

Expected outputs:

1. 45 staff members of equality bodies will participate at this seminar from more than 20 countries.
2. A summary of the seminar will be uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: **C1 C3 C4**

SEMINAR 2: Breaking the glass ceiling: career progress and promotion patterns experienced by women

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day capacity-building seminar for staff members of equality bodies on *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: career progress and promotion patterns experienced by women*. It will explore ways in which equality bodies combat discrimination against women in career progress, including analysing case studies and comparing good practices. Promotional activities, cooperation with employers and awareness-raising activities will also be considered, including exploration of the potential inherent in the proposed Women on Boards Directive. The seminar will extend Equinet's work on gender equality in the field of employment, exemplified in the Equinet perspectives *Equality Bodies Promoting a Better Work-Life Balance for All* and *Equal Pay for Equal Work and Work of Equal Value: The Experience of Equality Bodies*. It will also bring in learning from the work of the Gender Equality Working Group on the *Handbook on how to build a case on equal pay*.

Relevant good practices and cases will be presented for discussion by equality bodies during workshops.

Expected outputs:

1. 45 staff members of equality bodies will participate at this seminar from more than 20 countries.

2. A summary of the seminar will be uploaded on the Equinet website.

[Further objectives met:](#) C1 C3 C4

TRAINING: Communicating Equality: Social media for equality bodies

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day training session that offers social media training for Members' staff working in communication. It will provide expert advice that improves social media use in general and gives practical examples and evaluations of social media campaigns carried out by our members.

This will be based and build on the training session designed and delivered in 2016, in order to extend the reach of this training to more members. The training manual will have been released in late 2016 after the first training session, and will be updated if necessary with any new examples of campaigns from our members or their evaluations.

Expected outputs:

1. 15 members of equality bodies will participate at this training session
2. The training manual will be updated to include recent examples and evaluations.

[Further objectives met:](#) C3 D2

TRAINING: How to Build a Case on Equal Pay

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day training session for experts working with equal pay cases in equality bodies. This will focus on the Gender Equality Working Group's '*Handbook on How to Build a Case on Equal Pay*'. The training session will offer practical tools, methods and examples to successfully litigate equal pay cases. It will also provide a platform for peer learning and sharing of good practices among the participants.

Expected outputs:

1. 15 members of equality bodies will participate at this training session
2. The '*Handbook on How to Build a Case on Equal Pay*' will be disseminated and members will be familiarized with its content.

[Further objectives met:](#) C3

TRAINING: Strategic Litigation

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day training session for senior lawyers and legal policy staff in equality bodies on strategic litigation. The training session will build on the discussions in the Equinet Strategic Litigation Cluster and the '*Handbook on Strategic Litigation*' produced by this Members Cluster in 2016. Participants will have the chance to explore and discuss, using a number of case studies, the benefits and challenges of strategic litigation and the selection criteria and different techniques to be used for successful strategic litigation.

Expected outputs:

1. 15 members of equality bodies will participate at this training session.
2. The *Handbook on Strategic Litigation* will be disseminated and updated as necessary.

Further objectives met: **C3 D2**

CLUSTER on Quasi-Judicial Equality Bodies: Good-Practice Exchange

Equinet will continue the members-led thematic Cluster bringing together staff members of quasi-judicial equality bodies to discuss shared issues of concerns in their work.

Quasi-judicial equality bodies spend the bulk of their time and resources on hearing, investigating and deciding on individual instances of discrimination brought before them. While some can and do take on certain promotional functions alongside these activities, this specific focus on deciding individual cases distinguishes them from predominantly promotion or legal support-type equality bodies.

This thematic cluster will provide a space for interested equality bodies to:

- discuss the specific challenges of a quasi-judicial function,
- share and discuss good practices in addressing such challenges,
- discuss their role in ensuring adequate sanctions in discrimination cases, taking into account the findings of the research commissioned by Equinet in 2015.

Expected outputs:

- The Cluster will meet twice during 2017.
- 15 staff members will participate in this cluster.
- The Cluster will publish a report summarizing their discussions

Further objectives met: **B1C3 C4 D4**

CLUSTER on Research and Data Collection

Equality bodies carry out or commission research to develop knowledge of, and to highlight, the situation of different victims of discrimination. Research establishes the context for the ongoing work of the equality body on a given issue. It communicates the commitment of the equality body to those issues, particularly to those who are discriminated against. Furthermore, it enables an authoritative equality body contribution to policy making on discrimination concerns.

Many equality bodies identify data deficits with regard to different groups. Data deficits are found to hamper research and survey work by equality bodies. Equality bodies also communicate a concern to improve these data deficits by working on new methodologies and by working with bodies responsible for data collection at Member State level.

In order to identify good practices on how to run successful research and overcome data deficits, Equinet will initiate a members-led Cluster bringing together equality bodies' staff members responsible for research and data collection.

This thematic Cluster will provide a space for interested equality bodies to:

- discuss the challenges of research and data collection and try to find ways forward;
- share and discuss criteria for successful research and data collection;
- identify good examples of research and data collection across Europe;
- identify steps to be taken to address data deficits with limited resources.

This one and a half year Cluster will produce a final report in 2018, summarising its learnings and experience. The final report will provide an insight into good research practices and to encourage and assist more equality bodies to develop their own data collection system.

Expected outputs:

1. The Cluster will meet twice during 2017
2. 15 staff members will participate in this Cluster.

Further objectives met: **B2 C2 C3 C4**

PROJECT: Combating Violence Against Women and Gender Based Violence

The project aims to develop upon the ad-hoc initiative of the Working Group on Gender Equality launched in 2014, addressing the topic of Violence Against Women. The [EU Guidelines on Violence Against Women](#) state that “the obstacles to exercising their socio-economic and political rights increase women's exposure to violence”, recognizing the mutually reinforcing relationship between Violence Against Women and discrimination experienced by women in other fields. As such, the project will explore ways of working with the linked phenomena of discrimination based on gender and violence against women and gender-based violence.

The project will allow members to look at new challenges and opportunities presented by the EU's proposed accession to the Istanbul Convention as it applies to equality bodies. Cooperation with international partners and civil society (such as the European Women's Lobby's coalition against violence against women) is foreseen. The project will take place within the framework of the European Commission's year of focus on Violence Against Women. The project will run through 2017, building on the preparations of the Gender Equality Working Group from 2016.

The project will aim to:

- Take stock of equality bodies' experiences in working with violence against women and gender based violence from the perspective of discrimination against women;
- Explore the challenges and opportunities inherent in combining an equality and human rights mandate/perspective on this issue;
- Contribute to the European agenda to combat violence against women.

The final aim of the project is twofold:

- To build capacity, share experiences and explore challenges of equality bodies in working with violence against women.
- To share the experiences of equality bodies in the field of violence against women with international partners

Expected outputs:

1. The members of the project will participate in two meetings.
2. The members of the project will share experiences, map mandates and discuss possible challenges throughout the year.
3. The work done in the project will be shared with Equinet members and external stakeholders at key international events and in the form of a summary report.

Further objectives met: B1 B2 B3 C2 C3 C4 D2

PROJECT: Follow up of the Evaluation Lab

Building on the work of the Equinet Evaluation Lab and maintaining momentum of the project, opportunities for peer support in implementing recommendations from Evaluation Lab report will be developed.

This will be predominately member led and will focus on exchanging best practice and challenges of implementation of recommendations. This exchange will take place utilising online platforms such as email. Minimal support from secretariat will be offered and will include activities such as dissemination of relevant information to interested members.

This group will explore and recommend options for future activities of the Evaluation Lab.

Expected outcomes:

- The work done by the Evaluation Lab will be shared with and promoted to the Equinet members
- Engagement and discussion with the Evaluation Lab members on possible peer support process between Equinet members
- Exploring opportunities and, if appropriate, proposing ways to implement concrete activities in the future relating to the evaluation of equality bodies' work

Further objectives met: C3

WORKING GROUP (1) on Gender Equality

In 2017 the Working Group will:

- Publish a report on *Gender Equality in Education*, following the seminar on the same topic conducted in 2016.
- Outline the experiences of equality bodies in combating discrimination in the workplace, and contribute to the preparation and organization of the Seminar ‘Breaking the glass ceiling: career progress and promotion patterns experienced by women.’
- Prepare and conduct a training on How to Build a Case on Equal Pay, using the handbook prepared in 2016
- Participate in and contribute to the project on Combating Violence Against Women.

Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2017 with around 20 members present.
2. The Working Group will prepare a report on *Gender Equality in Education*.

Further objectives met: **B1 B2 C1 C3 C4 D2 D3**

WORKING GROUP (2) on Communication Strategies and Practices

In 2017 the Working Group will:

- Organise thematic meetings on topical communication challenges that are presented by an expert (internal or external depending on the topic). The group will get to ask questions, identify the values-based messages and work together to develop responses to the challenges.
- Contribute to the development of a Communication Toolkit on Valuing Equality. Following on from the 2012 report on Valuing Equality, the WG members will work together with experts who will undertake in-depth research into the framing of the actual communications that equality bodies use. The final objective is to develop an accessible toolkit for communicators in equality bodies for analysing and designing their own communications with values in mind. This aims to give organisations a set of practical tools that can be adapted to their own contexts, and examples of best practice.
- Support preparation for a second training session on Social Media for Equality bodies with practical examples.
- Continue to develop the Project Library (formerly known as Media Library) internally and externally so as to provide members with concrete examples of how to develop communication actions, as well as promoting the members’ actions to a wider audience.

Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2017 with around 15 members present.
2. Support the preparation of a Communication Toolkit for Valuing Equality.

3. Update the examples used in the Social Media Training in order to have a relevant and up-to-date second training.
4. Add at least 5 entries to the online library.

Further objectives met: **C3 C4 D4**

WORKING GROUP (3) on Equality Law

In 2017 the Working Group will:

- Discuss recent national and international case law on discrimination on the basis of religion and belief, including the legal work of equality bodies on this ground. The discussions will cover religious and faith-based discrimination in all fields of life. Based on these discussions the Working Group will produce an update to its report 'A question of faith? Religion and belief in Europe' published in 2011.
- Discuss, at one of its meetings, the Equinet Handbook on '*How to build a case on equal pay*', its content, and possibilities for its further use.
- Monitor cases communicated by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to identify those that are directly relevant for equality and non-discrimination and the work of equality bodies. The Working Group will also contribute to preparing any third party interventions to the ECtHR on cases of high relevance relating to equality and non-discrimination.
- Contribute to the preparation and organization of Equinet conferences and seminars with a legal focus.
- Provide a platform for case workers of equality bodies to request information and advice from each other relating to specific cases.

Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2017 with around 15 members present.
2. Update of the Equinet report '*A question of faith? Religion and belief in Europe*'.
3. Monitor relevant cases communicated by the ECtHR and contribution to the drafting of any third-party interventions to the ECtHR.

Further objectives met: **B1 B2 B3 C1 C3 C4**

B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

CONFERENCE 1: “Making Europe More Equal: a positive duty?”

Equinet will organise a one-day conference, based on the Equinet research paper on positive and equality duties published in 2016.

General equality duties requiring the duty bearer to have due consideration for equality when implementing any activity are relatively rare in Europe. Positive duties targeting specific areas (like remuneration or staffing policies) are relatively more widespread, yet the role and functioning of both these structural measures aimed at promoting equality have so far been under researched. This conference will serve the dual function of raising awareness of the existence and structure of positive and equality duties among decision makers, while generating more knowledge in the field by bringing together academics and practitioners to discuss the challenges and opportunities inherent in such measures.

Expected outputs:

1. 45 members of equality bodies will participate in this conference from more than 20 countries
2. At least 30 representatives from other stakeholders will participate in this conference.
3. A summary of the conference will be produced and uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: A1 A3 C1 C2 C3 C4 D2 D3

CONFERENCE 2: Integration of migrants and refugees in Europe: the contribution of equality bodies

Equinet will organise a one day conference on the contribution of equality bodies to the integration of migrants and refugees in Europe. Equality bodies have the mandate to protect any victim of discrimination regardless of nationality and citizenship. At a challenging time marked by the rise of far-right parties, hate crime, hate speech and increase of arrivals in Europe, the contribution of equality bodies is essential to protect migrants and refugees from discrimination and support their integration.

The conference will aim to discuss the role of equality bodies in contributing to the integration of migrants and refugees, the challenges they encounter and ways forward for cooperation with relevant stakeholders. It will be based on the experience shared by Equinet members in a survey conducted in May 2016 and the contribution of the Working Group Policy Formation.

Expected outputs:

1. 45 members of equality bodies will participate in this conference from more than 20 countries.

2. At least 30 representatives from other relevant stakeholders will participate in the conference.
3. A summary of the conference will be produced and uploaded on the Equinet website.

[Further objectives met:](#) A1 C1 C3 C4 D1 D2 D3

CONFERENCE 3: 10th Anniversary Conference: past, present and future of equality bodies and non-discrimination in Europe

2017 marks the 10th anniversary of Equinet. Since 2007, Equinet membership has grown from 7 organisations and countries to 46 national equality bodies in 34 European States. The national and European context in which equality bodies have evolved has changed a lot, from key legislative achievements to greater economic and social challenges.

Aligned with our Annual General Meeting, Equinet will organise a conference taking stock of the progress made and the contribution of equality bodies in addressing non-discrimination in Europe. The conference will also showcase the achievements equality bodies at national level over the last ten years as well as focus on the important outlook for the future, exploring ways forward and possible steps to enhance equality bodies' contribution to an equal Europe.

Expected outputs:

4. 45 members of equality bodies will participate at this conference from more than 20 countries.
5. At least 30 representatives from other relevant stakeholders will participate in the conference.
6. A summary of the conference will be produced and uploaded on the Equinet website.

[Further objectives met:](#) A1 C1 C3 C4 D1 D2 D3

WORKING GROUP (4) on Policy Formation

In 2017 the Working Group will:

- Discuss and contribute to the preparation of the conference *Integration of migrants and refugees in Europe: the contribution of equality bodies*, taking into account their experience at national level and the findings of the internal survey conducted by Equinet in 2016.
- Discuss and produce a Factsheet on the *List of Actions by the European Commission to advance LGBTI equality*, taking into account their experience at national level and the learnings from the 2013 Equinet Perspective *Equality Bodies promoting Equality and Non-Discrimination for LGBTI People*.

- Discuss and produce a report/perspective on a European topic and priority of relevance to be agreed with the Executive Board and Working Group members.
- Support dissemination, follow-up and use of previously published Equinet publications, including on the work done by equality bodies on *intersectionality from a gender equality perspective* and on *discrimination against youth people*.

Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2017 with around 15 members present.
2. 1 Factsheet on the *List of Actions to advance LGBTI equality*.
3. An Equinet perspective relating to relevant European developments to be agreed with the Board and Working Group.

Further objectives met: **A1 C1 C3 C4 D2**

ENGAGEMENT with European Institutions and stakeholders

In order to contribute to the European equality agenda from the perspective of equality bodies, Equinet will strive to engage all relevant European institutions and stakeholders and will continue to support key initiatives taken by the European Institutions. Beyond the Equinet initiatives and activities planned for 2017, this engagement will cover all equality grounds and fields with a focus on topical policy and legislative issues such as, but not limited to, the Horizontal Directive, the new EC package on Work-Life Balance (expected to be released by early 2017), the European Commission's mid-term review of the Roma Framework Strategy, the European Accessibility Act and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Equinet will continue to engage directly with the **European Commission**, specifically the Equality Directorate in DG Justice as well as other Directorates and DGs responsible for relevant equality and fundamental rights issues. Equinet will also engage with relevant expert groups and networks of the European Commission. In particular, Equinet will sustain an engagement in its role as Observer to the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Equinet will engage with the **European Parliament (EP)**, in particular with the EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as well as relevant EP thematic Intergroups and Members of the European Parliament interested in the work of equality bodies and in topics relating to equality, non-discrimination and gender equality.

Equinet will pursue and further strengthen its engagement and cooperation with relevant **European Union Institutions and agencies**, in particular the **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)** and the **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)**.

Equinet will continue to support initiatives within the thematic **Cooperation Platforms** established with the European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions. These currently cover cooperation issues in the field of: advancing social and economic rights and socio-economic equality; Roma equality; hate crime and hate speech; and the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Equinet will pursue its ongoing engagement with the **European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)** through continued close cooperation with its Members and Secretariat. This will include linking with ENNHRI's working group focusing on the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** as appropriate. In this context and beyond, Equinet will also seek to contribute an equality bodies' perspective at European level to the work relating to the UN Convention.

Equinet will also strengthen its engagement with other relevant organisations at European level such as the Council of Europe and its bodies, OSCE-ODIHR, UN OHCHR, European Ombudsman, as well as civil society and social partners.

Equinet will:

- Participate in European level events on equality, representing equality bodies and the network's activities.
- Continue to develop strong, supportive and mutually beneficial relationships with the European Commission, the European institutions and agencies, relevant international institutions, and European level stakeholders.
- Promote understanding of and appreciation for the potential, the situation and the learning from the experience of equality bodies among these institutions and organisations.
- Strengthen engagement with and commitment to shared issues and concerns across these institutions and organisations.
- Provide support for initiatives that coincide with the aims and objectives of Equinet (*e.g. supporting the European Commission's mid-term review of the Roma Framework Strategy, progress on ensuring comprehensive equality legislation at EU level, follow-up to the forthcoming EC Package on Work-Life Balance,...*).
- Pursue close cooperation with the European Network of NHRIs (ENNRHI) as well as participating in the various relevant cooperation platforms established between FRA-ENNHRI-Council of Europe-Equinet.
- Participate in joint ventures that coincide with the aims and objectives of Equinet.
- Engage with the IDAHOT Forum, due to take place in Belgium in 2017.

[Further objectives met:](#) C2 C3 C4 D2 D3

C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

RESEARCH on Investing in Equality: the changing mandates and resources of equality bodies in the past decade

Equinet will commission a study on the evolution of the mandates and resources of equality bodies over the past decade, to mark the tenth anniversary of the European Network of National Equality Bodies.

The *Equinet Working Paper on Standards for National Equality Bodies* (2016) discusses four key indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of equality bodies, namely mandate, powers, independence and resources. The planned research will aim to elucidate the relationship between two of these indicators by investigating how the mandates and resources of national equality bodies have evolved over the past decade, including possible correlative relationships between them.

The study will be mainly descriptive in nature, distilling any lessons learned from the experiences of the past decade, and concluding with a summary of policy implications for the promotion of equality in Europe.

Expected output:

1. Publication of a study on the mandates and resources of equality bodies

Further objectives met: **B1 B2 D1**

COMMUNICATION

Equinet's communication is guided by a Communication Strategy revised in 2016 in line with Equinet's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. Equinet aims to provide information on national and EU developments on equality in an accessible manner, thus building the capacity of equality bodies and contributing to the European equality agenda. We promote the work of Equinet and our members and engage with our members and other stakeholders to consolidate the network and position its members strategically. We commit to using a values-based approach in our communication.

In 2017, Equinet will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary, and this will be highlighted in different ways within our communication work throughout the year.

The following tools will be used as part of Equinet internal and external communication work:

- *Website:* A key source of information about Equinet and European equality bodies, as well as developments in equality and non-discrimination more generally. A section will be dedicated to the 10 year anniversary to gather all of the work relating to our anniversary celebrations.

- *European Directory of Equality Bodies*: Provides up-to-date profiles of each of our members and allows for comparative searches across different areas amongst all the equality bodies.
- *Members-only Forum*: Maintain and develop a members-only forum on the website to support communication among member equality bodies.
- *Social media channels*: Predominantly Facebook and Twitter, but also Linked In are used to complement the website, raising awareness about the work of Equinet and its members. This way we aim to build a broader pool of followers, who are not the stakeholders with whom we usually meet.
- *Newsbooks*: External newsletters publicise relevant developments in the field of equality in Europe and highlight the latest news from Equinet, its members, European Institutions and other European stakeholders.
- *Members' Bulletin*: Inform Equinet members about EU and international developments and internal network updates through bi-monthly newsletters.
- *Email alerts*: Circulate email alerts on an ad-hoc basis to notify member equality bodies of important and topical issues and requests originating from members and external stakeholders.
- *Publications*: Our publications for 2017 will include reports, factsheets, perspectives and a toolkit, resulting from the work of the network and work that we have commissioned from experts. Each publication will be developed together with a dissemination plan.
- *Equinet Brief - In Focus*: For 2017, we will develop 3-4 thematic briefs, which will highlight the work of Equinet and its members, as well as EU developments on the given topic.
- *Equinet Promotional Brochure*: 'Equality bodies and Equinet – Promoting Equality in Europe' was released in 2015 and updated in 2016. This is one of our main promotional tools, and will be updated during 2017 if necessary (because of numerous changes in the content) or if they run out.
- *Equinet Annual Report*: Equinet Highlights 2017 will provide a succinct overview of our work, linked to Equinet's strategic goals. This short summary of our work will be presented in an attractive, accessible and easy to read manner, with values-based messages throughout the document.

Expected outputs:

1. A user-friendly, accessible and up-to-date Equinet website, with an aim to reach an average of at least 2000 users¹/month. Includes a well-developed and up-to-date European Directory of Equality Bodies, as well as a focus page on 10 year anniversary with an Equinet Timeline, summarising Equinet highlights over the past 10 years, as well as EU developments.

¹ As per Google Analytics: "users that have had at least one session within the selected date range (this includes both new and returning users)".

2. Use of an effective and accessible Members-only section on the Equinet website, which will include internal documents relating to the governance of Equinet as well as meeting minutes, working groups' updates, internal and external newsletters and other Equinet news and requests.
3. Regularly updated Social media accounts, including a promotional campaigns relating to the Directory and the 10 year anniversary.
4. Regular issue of the following newsletters: *Newsbook*² – monthly; *Members' Bulletin*³ – bi-monthly.
5. 3-4 thematic In Focus briefs, linked to specific topics of interest in 2017.
6. Equinet Highlights 2017 – Annual Report

[Further objectives met:](#) **A1 B2 B3 D3**

² External-oriented newsletter with information on Equinet's and its members work and relevant European developments.

³ Newsletters sent only to members. One is on relevant developments at EU and international level, while the other highlights important internal deadlines or requests related to the life of the network.

D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

ENGAGEMENT on Standards for equality bodies

Equinet has for some years advanced the need for up-to-date European standards specifically on the establishment and operation of equality bodies. The absence of such standards leaves equality bodies in various instances vulnerable to having their potential inappropriately limited or restricts the ambition of equality bodies in realising their full potential. As pointed out in recent documents and reports from the European Commission, this potential also includes contributing to the better implementation of EU legislation and equality bodies acting as watchdogs for equal treatment.

Equinet has developed a body of published work that could assist the development of such standards, including the Working Paper that resulted from Equinet Cluster on Standards for Equality Bodies that convened twice in 2015 to discuss the issue with heads and senior level representatives of equality bodies. In 2016, the *Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies* was released, as a result of the discussions of the Cluster as well as contributions and comments provided by Equinet members.

This Working Paper seeks to establish positions that equality bodies could promote, negotiate and advance vis-à-vis European and national administrations in the establishment of standards for equality bodies at European level and their implementation at national level.

Equinet will continue discussions with equality bodies on this issue as well as engaging with key external stakeholders supporting the development of standards for equality bodies, making use of all existing resources produced by Equinet and other stakeholders.

Expected outputs:

1. Wide dissemination of the *Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies* and the issues that such standards need to address.
2. Produce a policy brief on relationship between the European Commission's Better Regulation Agenda and standards for Equality Bodies.
3. Bringing up the issue of standards as part of meetings and dialogues with relevant stakeholders, encouraging further action in the field.
4. An evolving consensus among equality bodies on the need for standards and on the nature of the standards required.

Further objectives met: **B3**

ENGAGEMENT Meetings with stakeholders from European institutions, Permanent Representations to the EU, civil society and social partners

In order to represent the specific experience and expertise of equality bodies, Equinet will cooperate with all relevant stakeholders working in the field of equality and non-discrimination, including European institutions and agencies, other international organisations, member states, civil society and social partners.

Equinet will convene an annual meeting with stakeholders from civil society and the social partner organisations at European level, with a view to share priorities and information on ongoing or planned activities, and explore areas for potential useful linkages and cooperation. Equinet will also seek to increase the engagement of member states through cooperation with Permanent Representations to the European Union.

Expected outputs:

1. One meeting with at least five stakeholders from civil society and social partners platform

Further objectives met: **B3 C2 C4**

ENGAGEMENT on Equality and Human Rights

Equinet will sustain discussions with relevant stakeholders and institutions at European level to explore the potential of equality bodies that combine an equality, human rights and/or an ombudsperson mandate.

Expected outputs:

1. Sustained debate about the links between equality and human rights and the best means of realising the potential of these links for the mandates of equality bodies.
2. Strong and supportive relationships between relevant platforms and institutions in the fields of equality and human rights that can underpin further progress on these issues.
3. Deepen the understanding and appreciation of the potential and challenges of equality bodies that also hold other mandates, and their approach on how best to realise this potential and address challenges.

Further objectives met: **B3 C2 C3**

MEMBERSHIP Equinet membership engagement

Equinet will strive to support continued active membership engagement in and contribution to the activities of the network, as well as explore potential further developments of the scope of Equinet membership in the future.

Management and Administration

Three different entities are involved in management of the Equinet Network as a whole.

The **General Assembly of Equinet Members** is composed of all current Members of Equinet. It is the main decision body of the network and it decides on matters pertaining to the strategic direction and the general management of the network. For instance, it approves annual Work Plans and multi-year Strategic Plans. It also votes on granting Equinet membership to applying organisations.

The General Assembly of Equinet Members will gather once in 2017 for an **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**, to discuss priority work topics of relevance to equality bodies at European level. Members will also vote on internal matters relating to the network (including accounts for the previous year, minutes of AGM 2016, 2018 Work Plan, and possible membership applications). On this occasion, Equinet Board Elections will take place for a new board mandate (2017-2019).

The **Equinet Executive Board** is the managerial body of the network. It is composed of a maximum of nine representatives of Equinet Members elected for a mandate of two years by the general Assembly of Members and is presided by a Chair. It works to best support the work of Equinet members and their positioning at European level and is responsible for the development and implementation of Work Plans. It also works on the development of strategic visions aimed at ensuring the strength, growth and sustainability of the network. To that end, it develops proposals for multi-annual Strategic Plans that are submitted in due course to the General Assembly of Equinet Members for approval. It also supervises the work of the Equinet Secretariat. At least four **Board meetings** will be held at key points during the year when the Equinet Secretariat will report on the state of affairs. Board Members will take decisions in order to ensure the optimal implementation of the work plan and provide guidance on emerging strategic priorities for Equality Bodies.

The Brussels-based **Equinet Secretariat** is a structure that works towards the daily delivery and effective implementation of the Work Plans proposed by the Board and endorsed by the Members of the network. Under the direct supervision of the Board, it is responsible for the organisation and delivery of all activities planned for the year. It also works towards ensuring the representation, positioning and sustainability of the network. It acts as a point of contact for external stakeholders, funders and other parties working with or interested in cooperating with Equinet and Equality Bodies.

Evaluating the impact of our work

As a professional European network, the credibility of Equinet's work rests both on (i) the effective implementation of the planned activities as well as (ii) its ability, as an organisation, to show the meaningful impact of its activities. As it has done each year, Equinet will commission in 2017 an **external technical evaluation** of its activities (and an external financial review), offering valuable insights, learning and evaluation outcomes of relevance for the Board to steer the action of the network into the future. For activities under each strategic goal, a range of **indicators** have been devised that will help with assessing success, based on objectives that were set for each activity in this work plan and in line with Equinet's Strategic Plan. While the indicators will be measured every year, they will be mainly focused on successfully evaluating the Strategic Plan over the 2015-2018 period.

Output Indicators:

These will be assessed each year in the evaluation of the annual work plan. They will vary from year to year depending on the detail of the actions to be pursued under the work plan.

Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies.

1. The number of staff members of different equality bodies engaged with in the capacity building activities.
2. The number of innovative methodologies used by Equinet during the year

Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda.

3. The number of contributions made to European level policy-making and activity in the field of non-discrimination and equality.
4. The number of European level policy-makers and stakeholders engaged with on issues of equality and non-discrimination.
5. The number of Equinet publications.

Objective C: Serving as a knowledge and equal treatment hub on equal treatment.

6. Number of e-newsletters published.

Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members.

7. Number of meetings with stakeholders that enable coherence and cooperation on shared concerns.
8. Number of initiatives to explore and deepen understanding of links between equality, human rights and ombudsman mandates.

Impact Indicators:

These will be assessed each year in the evaluation of the annual work plan.

Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies.

1. The number of staff members of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of their participation in Equinet activities.
2. The number of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of Equinet activities.

Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda.

3. Evidence of influence by Equinet contributions in policy and legal documents published by European institutions and international organisations.

Objective C: Serving as a knowledge hub on equal treatment.

4. Number of unique visitors and other relevant website analytics (e.g. average time spent per page).
5. Number of followers and other relevant social media analytics.
6. Number of opens and clicks in disseminated Equinet newsletters.
7. The number of equality bodies and stakeholders making use in their work of the research publications.

Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members.

8. Perceptions of equality bodies that their work has been supported and enhanced by the work of Equinet.