

## EQUINET SEMINAR

### A question of faith. Religion and belief in the work of equality bodies.

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015

LOCATION: Hotel Novotel London West (1 Shortlands Hammersmith International Centre, Hammersmith, London), United Kingdom

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT

[Several reports](#) highlight the worrying rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim incidents in Europe in recent years. In particular, the attacks in Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen had a profound impact on religious communities and triggered the need for collective responses at national and European levels to combat religious hatred and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief, and effectively enforce the right to freedom of religion.

As part of this collective response, in October 2015, the first [Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](#) organised by the European Commission focused on “*Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe*”.

Religion and belief is a highly complicated, sensitive and sometimes politicized ground of discrimination with specific features compared to other grounds. This is illustrated by state laws and policies, court cases as well as cases handled by equality bodies.

The 2011 report from Equinet’s Equality Law Working Group [A question of faith: religion or belief in Europe](#) highlighted the sensitivity and the difficulty in dealing with cases related to religion or belief discrimination. As a complement to this legal analysis, in October 2015, Equinet’s Policy Formation Working Group published a [Perspective on the work and experience of equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief](#). The Perspective will serve as a basis for discussion at this Equinet Seminar.

#### OBJECTIVES

The seminar will take stock of **legal and political developments**, as well as remaining challenges in ensuring freedom of religion and combating religious or faith-based discrimination at European and national levels. It will analyse the **role of and challenges for equality bodies** in addressing issues of religion and belief by discussing good practices in the use of their legal, research, communication and promotional functions.

The seminar will build on previous work by Equinet in this field, notably on publications by its Legal and Policy Formation Working Groups.

**In particular, the seminar will aim to:**

- 1) Update equality body staff members on **recent European developments related to religion and belief**
- 2) **Build capacity of equality body staff members and strengthen their skills in combating discrimination on the ground of religion or belief by:**
  - Facilitating the *exchange of good practices*

- *Sharing and discussing main conclusions of the Equinet Perspective on religion and belief with all Equinet members*
- *Initiating discussions on challenges encountered by equality bodies in this area*

## PARTICIPANTS

This Equinet seminar is dedicated to an audience of approximately **45 staff members of equality bodies with responsibilities in dealing with religion and belief issues**. The seminar programme allows for participation with different professional backgrounds, including **legal and policy** experts.

## AGENDA

### DAY 1

**08:30 – 09:00** Welcome & Registration

### OPENING SESSION

**09:00 – 09:20** *Opening address*  
**Evelyn Collins**, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
**Baroness Onora O’Neill**, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain

**09:20 – 10:00** *Keynote address*  
 Legal challenges to frame religious discrimination  
**Prof. Isabelle Rorive**, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

**10:00 – 10:15** Questions & Answers

### SESSION 1

#### The European legal and policy framework for discrimination on the ground of religion or belief

**CHAIR:** Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

*This sessions aims to give an overview of the European and international legal and policy architecture to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief.*

**10:15 – 10:45** **The EU legal and policy framework for discrimination on the ground of religion or belief**  
**Andreas Stein**, Head of Unit, Equality Legislation, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission

**10:45 – 11:05** **The OSCE/ODIHR framework and activities in the area of freedom of religion and belief**  
**Kishan Manocha**, Senior Adviser on Religion and Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

**11:05 – 11:20** Questions & Answers

**11:20 – 11:45** Coffee Break

### SESSION 2

#### Equality Bodies’ strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief

**CHAIR:** Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy, Equinet Secretariat

*Speakers will present strategies used by equality bodies to challenge discrimination and inequality on the basis of religion or belief.*

**11:45 – 12:05** **Equality Bodies’ Strategies – Findings from Equinet Perspective**  
**Niall Crowley**, independent expert and author of Equinet Perspective

	on Religion and Belief	on Religion and Belief
12:05 – 12:20	Engaging with duty bearers – the case of employers and companies	Sue Coe, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain
12:20 – 12:35	Engaging with policy-makers and producing policy recommendations	Nikolina Patalen, Office of the Ombudsman, Croatia
12:35 – 12:50	Producing communication campaigns and information tools	Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-Christel Skramstad, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway
12:50 – 13:05	Legal advocacy and strategic litigation	Imane El Morabet, Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium
13:05 – 13:15	Questions & Answers	
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch Break	

## WORKSHOP 1

### Developing strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief

*Participants will develop strategies to address specific aspects of religion or belief discrimination. They will use real or fictional case studies as a basis for discussion.*

	<b>Discussion and preparation of strategy papers in small groups</b>	
14:15 – 16:15	Engaging with employers and companies	<b>Facilitation:</b> Sue Coe, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great-Britain
	Contributing to legislative change	<b>Facilitation:</b> Nikolina Patalen, Office of the Ombudsman, Croatia
	Communicating on religious diversity	<b>Facilitation:</b> Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-Christel Skramstad, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway
	Legal advocacy and strategic litigation	<b>Facilitation:</b> Imane El Morabet, Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium
16:15 – 16:30	Coffee Break	
16:30 – 17:30	Reporting in plenary and discussion Each group will present a strategy paper based on the case study and the group discussions.	
20:00	Dinner at the <a href="#">Gate Restaurant</a> , 51 Queen Caroline Street, London	

## DAY 2

### SESSION 3

#### Multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds

**CHAIR:** Imane El Morabet, Legal Advisor, Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium

*This session focuses on multiple discrimination from a religion and belief perspective and on the potential conflicts of religion or belief with other grounds of discrimination.*

09:00 – 09:30	Multiple discrimination, intersectionality and conflicts with other grounds	Erica Howard, Associate Professor, Middlesex University London
09:30 – 10:00	Presentation of the findings of the	Zuzana Pavlíčková, Slovak National

	<b>2015 Equinet Perspective and the 2012 Equinet Legal Report on religion and belief</b>	Centre for Human Rights and member of Equinet Policy Formation Working Group & <b>Jayne Hardwick</b> , Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain, and moderator of Equinet Equality Law Working Group
<b>10:00 – 10:20</b>	<b>The gender equality perspective: women and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief</b> Presentation of the project “Forgotten women: the impact of islamophobia on Muslim women”	<b>Julie Pascoët</b> , Policy Officer, ENAR (European Network against Racism)
<b>10:20 – 10:40</b>	<b>Sexual orientation and gender identity perspective : LGBTI and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief</b> Presentation of the joint project with ILGA-Europe on the interface between religion or belief and LGBTI rights	<b>Alan Murray</b> , President, ENORB (European Network of Religion and Belief)
<b>10:40 – 11:00</b>	<b>Questions &amp; Answers</b>	
<b>11:00 – 11:30</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
<b>WORKSHOP 2</b>		
<b>Addressing multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds</b>		
<i>Participants will discuss good practices, challenges and potential strategies in relation to multiple discrimination and conflict between grounds of discrimination from a religion and belief perspective.</i>		
	<b>Discussion in small rotating groups (one rotation after 45 minutes)</b>	
<b>11:30 – 13:00</b>	<b>Litigation and conflicts of rights – the Lee v Ashers Baking Co Ltd “Cake” Case -</b>	<b>Facilitation: Anne McKernan</b> , Director Legal Services, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
	<b>Intersection of religion or belief with gender equality</b>	<b>Facilitation: Julie Pascoët</b> , Policy Officer, ENAR (European Network against Racism)
	<b>Intersection of religion or belief with sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination</b>	<b>Facilitation: Alan Murray</b> , Director of ENORB (European Network of Religion and Belief)
<b>CONCLUDING SESSION</b>		
<b>13:00 – 13:30</b>	<b>Rebecca Hilsenrath</b> , Interim Chief Executive, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain <b>Anne Gaspard</b> , Equinet Executive Director	
<b>13.30</b>	<b>Closing Lunch</b>	

