

# **Equinet Communication Strategy 2016-2018**

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Increasing impact through effective communication  
and engagement



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## 1. MISSION STATEMENT

Equinet is the European Network of Equality Bodies.

The 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.

With this communication strategy, we aim to increase the impact of the work of equality bodies and Equinet through effective communication and engagement.

## 2. CONTEXT

Equinet, as the European network of equality bodies, **serves as a hub for generating, gathering, communicating and sharing information, between and within the European and the national levels.** On the one hand, it seeks to support and promote the work of equality bodies, while on the other, it plays an important role within the overall European equality architecture. In order to be successful as a connector between equality bodies and the full spectrum of relevant European level policy makers and stakeholders, Equinet needs to have an effective communication strategy that covers the needs of internal and external communication for maximum impact.

**Equinet's membership** is currently made up of 45 equality bodies across 33 countries. Equality bodies are public institutions set up across Europe to promote equality and tackle discrimination on grounds of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability or other grounds. Their role is defined in accordance with EU equal treatment legislation requiring Member States to set up equality bodies to combat discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, as well as gender. While many Member States have gone beyond these requirements and ensured that equality bodies can also deal with discrimination based on the other grounds mentioned above, some Member States are going in the opposite direction and threatening equality bodies' independence and effectiveness through cuts in their functions and powers. This means that the work of Equinet in providing a forum for equality bodies to communicate with each other is vital, both to exchange good practice as well as to discuss how to overcome common challenges.

Additionally, we must consider that mandates differ across countries and equality bodies. As regards **internal communication**, this means that Equinet has to provide messages that are of equal scope and relevance to all of our members. Furthermore, while some of our members are also party to other European networks and thus need us to develop stronger synchronicity with them so as not to duplicate their work, others rely predominantly on the work of Equinet to increase their European presence and need us to cover all the themes on which they work.

As regards **external communication**, having been set up as the European network of equality bodies, we aim to represent the voice of equality bodies at EU level, yet it can be a challenge to make sure we have correctly heard all of our members' voices. We are positioned between policy



makers and civil society stakeholders, thus giving us a niche position that we should carve to our own advantage with succinct key messages that have maximum impact. These messages should be tailored based on the audiences that we are trying to reach, and promote the values that Equinet wishes to convey. Identifying the appropriate messages for the appropriate audience will be one of our main endeavours in this strategy, but will be a continual work in progress over the years.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this communication strategy is to ensure that Equinet's values-based communication supports its strategic objectives.

- A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES
- B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA
- C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT
- D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

Our communication objectives therefore, are to:

- A. Regularly engage with our members and ensure that all staff are informed about capacity building opportunities**
  - Inform staff within our member organisations about upcoming capacity building opportunities, as well as follow-up information on their outcomes where possible.
  - Facilitate a horizontal flow of information between equality bodies in order for them to develop their peer support network, such as through regular meetings (working groups, seminars, training sessions, cluster meetings, conferences etc.) and appropriate online tools.
- B. Position Equinet as a key player in the European equality institutional architecture**
  - Contribute to equality policy and law at European level through responses to consultations, publications and conferences on equality and non-discrimination topics of interest to our members.
  - Convey an expert voice of equality bodies at European level, basing our key messages on their expertise, experience and recommendations.
  - Engage with policy makers and partners on equality and non-discrimination issues in order



to identify their needs from a network such as ours and thus provide appropriate responses.

**C. Serve as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment**

- Inform and engage members on relevant European developments.
- Efficiently inform members on network updates.
- Provide information on equality bodies to external audiences, ensuring that the work of the network and of our members is clearly understood.
- Generate and disseminate key values-based messages on equal treatment to target audiences through tailored communication outputs.

**D. Communication for sustainable development of network**

- Build interest in the network and the work of equality bodies amongst our target audiences.
- Strengthen the standing of equality bodies in changing context by highlighting their achievements, impact & potential.
- Engage policy makers and key stakeholders including NHRIs and Ombudsmen, as well as building consensus amongst members.

## 4. TARGET AUDIENCES AND KEY MESSAGES

The **target audiences** of Equinet are:

- **Internal** – Members
- **External** – European institutions, networks, social partners and NGOs; national authorities, equality experts and indirectly, the media

Our **main messages to members** are:

- Equinet is here to support the work of equality bodies through capacity building events and providing tools for networking and peer support opportunities.
- Equinet supports national equality bodies in their advocacy work to promote EU laws and values at national level.
- Equinet wishes to represent equality bodies' views at European level. Make your voice heard by letting us know what you are working on and what your interests at EU level are.
- We encourage Equinet members to proactively contact Equinet so we can inform other equality bodies about your new initiatives.
- We encourage national equality bodies to develop good internal communication to spread the learning from Equinet throughout their organisations.



Our main messages to **external audiences** are:

- Equinet highlights the valuable potential of equality bodies to contribute to positive change for individuals, organisations and institutions, and society as a whole.
- Equinet understands the needs and challenges of national equality bodies and supports them in maintaining their independence and effectiveness.
- Equinet offers an expert voice on equality bodies at EU level, and as such, aims to contribute to the development of equality and non-discrimination policy and law.
- Equinet promotes equality in Europe by engaging with European level actors to identify common goals and priorities on equality and non-discrimination.

## 5. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

We have a number of tools with which we communicate with our internal and external audiences. They are:

- 5.1 [Website](#)
- 5.2 [Newsletters](#)
- 5.3 [Social Media](#)
- 5.4 [Promotional Material](#)
- 5.5 [Publications](#)
- 5.6 [Events](#)
- 5.7 [Member Engagement](#)
- 5.8 [Equinet and its members: Branding](#)
- 5.9 [Stakeholder Engagement](#)

### 5.1 WEBSITE

The website is the key source of information about Equinet and its member equality bodies. It should serve as the main platform for interaction between Equinet and its members and between Equinet and external organisations/general public. It informs about developments in Equinet, within member institutions and at the European level in an accessible manner.

#### 5.1.1 WEBSITE (EXTERNAL)

Equinet information:

- ‘Static’ information regarding our strategic plan, work plan, working groups and other more administrative items, updated as necessary throughout the year.



- Regular updates regarding our publications, events, calls for proposals, news items etc. Also gathers the external newsletters in one place. This is generally the information that is shared on social media.

Members information:

- The current area highlighting our members work is out of date and being redeveloped. The new tool, the **European Online Directory for Equality Bodies** will inform policy-makers, stakeholders, researchers, people interested in the field, and (last but not least) potential victims of discrimination, about the work of each equality body. It should provide a snapshot of the state of equality bodies in Europe and allow some limited comparability among them. Providing a comprehensive and attractive overview of our members is one of our main priorities and we aim to have this section finished as soon as possible.
- We also highlight the work of members through news articles which promote their publications, their projects and any other news they consider interesting for a European audience. This information will be linked to their profile within the European Online Directory for Equality Bodies as mentioned above.

#### 5.1.2 WEBSITE (INTERNAL – MEMBERS’ AREA)

This tool aims to:

- Act as a deposit for Equinet’s **main documents** (newsletters, AGM and Board Meeting Minutes, Members’ Contact List...)
- Provide an **alternative communication channel with members** to emails
- Provide a **forum for discussions, questions...**
- **Promote Equinet’s work** to our members and build a “sense of belonging”

Currently, the Members’ Area includes links to external and internal Equinet newsletters, information on Equinet working groups, governance, membership and other projects such as Equinet clusters on Standards and Strategic Litigation and the Equinet Evaluation Lab. In addition, a Forum provides members with a space for discussion and interaction that aims to develop contacts, get answers to legal questions and exchange updates and good practices.

#### 5.2 NEWSLETTERS

The **Members’ Bulletin** is an internal newsletter which is sent to Equinet contact persons, Board members and working group members via email twice a month and is also available on the Members’ Area:

- At the beginning of each month, the [Members’ Bulletin](#) gathers the latest **EU and international developments**
- Around the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, the [Members’ Bulletin](#) summarises the latest **Equinet network updates**



The Equinet [Newsbook](#) gathers the latest Equinet and member news, as well as relevant EU developments in equality and anti-discrimination on a monthly basis. It is sent via Mailchimp which enables us to track the number of subscribers, open rates, top links and other useful statistics for our impact assessment.

### **5.3 SOCIAL MEDIA**

Well organized and consistent social media engagement is vital to increasing our impact. In order for our work to have as wide an impact as possible, social media channels will become more and more important as we try to reach more deeply into existing audiences, as well as developing new audiences, with tailored messaging. Social media campaigns should be developed, highlighting different themes, the work of equality bodies across a given topic, and of course linked to European and international events.

At present, Equinet uses its social media channels to raise awareness about the work of Equinet, in particular recent publications, events, and other important network developments. Equinet also aims to highlight its member equality bodies through social media. According to the Equinet Report [The Public Profile of Equality Bodies](#), written by members of the Working Group on Communication Strategies and Practices, just over half of Equinet members currently use one form of social media or another as an integral part of the promotion of their work. Equinet's social media aims to highlight the accounts of our members by linking to them regularly in our posts.

We also use social media to inform about policy and legal developments regarding anti-discrimination on EU level, as well as the work of other stakeholders and civil society groups focusing on issues of equality and activities of Equinet. This could be developed based on partnerships with other stakeholders, making sure that we promote each other's work via these channels.

We predominantly use Twitter and Facebook, and a Linked In account should also be developed (moving from a closed group to an open profile). Ideally, every post should include a link to Equinet's webpage (or to the webpage of Equinet's Member) in order to promote our websites, however in order to achieve that, we must substantially increase the number of articles we are currently posting.

Equinet's Facebook page and Twitter accounts should be promoted within all Equinet communication (Members' Bulletins, Newsbook, Spotlight, promotional material).

### **5.4 PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL**

Equinet has a wide collection of promotional material, which either aim to inform people about





the basic work and mission of Equinet (such as the Equinet Highlights and brochure), or simply act as a reminder of what Equinet is (folders, notepads, pens, roll-up stands etc).

As regards the content related material, Equinet will continue with the **Equinet Highlights** covering July 2015 – December 2016, to be released early 2017, and then have annual Equinet Highlights for 2017 and 2018. The **Equinet Brochure** will be updated every two years if necessary, based on the arrival of new members, or changes in the mandates of our members.

## **5.5 PUBLICATIONS**

Equinet currently produces about five to six publications per year. These are generally developed by the working groups, or by an expert on the topic, informed by the work and experience of the member equality bodies, and finalized under the guidance of the Board. Globally, their objectives are to:

- Collect, share and develop information on and experience of equality bodies
- Provide stakeholders and policy-makers with facts-based analysis and insights based on the work of equality bodies.
- Provide expert input in response to relevant developments in the equal treatment field and the network's strategic priorities.
- Communicate the outcomes of working groups, conferences, seminars, training events, specific research activities, or project initiatives undertaken.
- Promote the network, its activities and the member equality bodies.

The range of content-based publications that we currently produce are as follows:

- **Perspectives** are policy papers produced to feed into topical issues at European level or put specific issues on the agenda, with our main target groups being policy makers at EU level.
- **Reports** collect the experience of equality bodies on a certain topic and make it available to a wider audience. The target is a broad audience, including policy makers, academia and equality bodies.
- **Discussion Papers** are the result of a scoping exercise on a certain topic and highlight the particular challenges that national equality bodies identify on that topic. They provide input for Equinet events, such as seminars or conferences. Similarly to reports, the target audience includes policy-makers, equality bodies, academia, as well as event participants.
- **Research Studies** aim to create new knowledge. While the content relates to equality bodies' experiences, this is the least equality body-focused type of publication, aiming rather at positioning Equinet as a center of excellence on equality issues. Again, we aim at a wide audience including policy-makers, and targeting academia strongly.
- **Handbooks** are practical tools on a given topic, primarily, if not exclusively, for equality body staff. They offer hands-on and step-by-step advice on tackling a certain issue that



could be legal (e.g. equal pay cases), policy (e.g. how to issue recommendations), or communication.

- **Training Manuals** are practical tools, similar to Handbooks. A distinct feature (and difference to Handbooks) is that they should allow for basic learning of a particular set of skills and it should be possible to use them as a basis for organising training events on their topic. The target is equality body staff, and they may remain as online publications only.

Each publication that Equinet produces should have a **mini communication strategy** developed along with it, which outlines our target audience (along the lines of the outline given above, but with a more specific focus on those linked to the topic if applicable), what tailored communication outputs and segmented messages we wish to provide for which channels (executive summary, briefing note, press release, social media post, tweet), whether it should be printed or remain in online form, whether there is a need for translation, and ideally identify European stakeholders to whom it should be sent if printed (and thus identify the number of copies we need to print). The development of these strategies should be included in the Work Plan each year as part of the tasks for the working groups working on each publication.

In order to successfully disseminate these publications, Equinet has online and offline strategies as outlined below:

- **Online:** All publications are made available on our WEBSITE (in the publications and news sections) and circulated via NEWSLETTERS (NEWSBOOK and MEMBERS' BULLETIN) and SOCIAL MEDIA channels, in order to reach as wide a target audience as possible. Social media, as explained above, is increasingly becoming a platform providing widest dissemination of our work. For this reason, social media strategies should also be developed within the publication strategies for each publication. Furthermore, when a given publication is linked to a topical event (International Day, Conference, publications by other stakeholders), it will be mentioned in relation to the topical event so that people interested in that issue are again made aware of our publications.
- **Offline:** Equinet aims to do a general mailing of its publications twice a year, or more if necessary. The Equinet Secretariat will update and maintain a database for mailing purposes, making sure to include the most relevant contacts from the target audience. This will be continually updated based on contacts made at meetings and conferences throughout the year. Additionally, Equinet publications are made available at our EVENTS, sent on to stakeholders for dissemination at their events, and also handed out during face-to-face meetings with internal and external audiences.

## **5.6 EVENTS**

Equinet holds a number of events throughout the year, from working group meetings or small



training sessions aimed solely at our members, to European level conferences aimed at our members as well as a European audience. We use these opportunities to promote our learnings, disseminate our outputs, and engage with members and the external audience on different aspects of equality and non-discrimination.

## **5.7 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT**

As a membership organisation, Equinet aims to support and enable the work of equality bodies. One of our main objectives is to build capacity and peer support of equality bodies' staff, as well as consolidate the network and the position of its members. Therefore, successful internal communication to build member engagement is one of our most important tasks. For basic information exchange, we contact Equinet members through internal email communications, and as previously mentioned, the internal section of the Website and the Members' Bulletin Newsletters.

Equinet organizes an annual general meeting once a year with all its members in order to discuss, decide and vote on issues pertaining to the network's mission and objectives. Furthermore, we use every opportunity to organise bilateral meetings with our members. Equinet remains at Members' disposal to contribute to their event as speakers. Where possible, we aim to organize training sessions for staff members other than our contact points within each organisation, and if a meeting takes place in a given country, other staff members are more than welcome to attend.

For new Equinet members, tools such as the Membership guide and login accesses to the Members' Area will be communicated to them as soon as their membership has been ratified by the AGM. In the past, various tools targeting Equinet members and potential members have been developed:

- The **Membership Information Guide** targets potential Equinet members. It provides them with information related to the structure and work of Equinet.
- The **Membership Handbook** provides Equinet members with information related to Equinet internal procedures.

In addition, a list of Equinet Contact Persons has been made available on Equinet's Members' Area and is updated by the Equinet Secretariat on a regular basis.

## **5.8 EQUINET AND ITS MEMBERS: BRANDING**

One of the main objectives in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018 is to consolidate the network and the position of its members. To do this, we take a two-pronged approach. First we make sure to raise the visibility of all our members within Equinet's outputs and secondly, we wish to encourage each member to highlight their membership of Equinet in their outputs.



### **Members' visibility within Equinet**

As a membership organization, Equinet's objective is to highlight the members who form part of the network on a constant basis. In order to do this, we highlight the names and websites of each member in all PUBLICATIONS. There is a dedicated section of the WEBSITE that lists all members and gives a brief overview of their work. This is currently being updated and will become the European Online Directory for Equality Bodies, as mentioned previously. This will highlight their work, as well as their websites and social media accounts. In Equinet's SOCIAL MEDIA, the accounts of our members are highlighted where possible. We aim to forward their posts where possible (especially in Twitter) and have established a list entitled 'Equinet Members' so that subscribers automatically receive all our members' posts. Additionally, our members are invited to send us information to display at events if they have appropriate material on the event topic.

### **Equinet visibility amongst Members**

The involvement of national equality bodies within the network should be visible and included in their communication strategies and public materials. National equality bodies should inform their public about the existence of Equinet, their activities on the European level and other (policy and legal) EU provisions dealing with equality and non-discrimination.

Equinet should inform its members about the importance of their public identification as an Equinet member, and offer tools to help them carry this out. Where there is an interest on a particular topic, Equinet members could be invited to translate given material into their national language in order to take ownership of it and promote our work more easily at national level.

Publicly communicating the Equinet membership is an important part of the equality body's communication strategy because:

- It informs the users of the services provided by the national equality bodies about the European equality treatment frameworks and the existence of Equinet.
- It contributes to the strengthening of the network among the national equality bodies and encourages further collaboration among members.

## **5.9 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Equinet can better reach its strategic objectives by engaging and collaborating with other organisations working in the field of non-discrimination and equality. Collaborations and exchange with an external audience allow us to be better informed on EU developments. Regular engagement with EU policy makers enables us to contribute directly to the European equality agenda. And such exchange also gives us the opportunity to share the knowledge and expertise from national equality bodies, and consolidate the network and the position of our members by concerting agreement on the need for standards for equality bodies and a better implementation of European legislation.



Equinet will engage with stakeholders as follows:

- Extend participation in Equinet events to stakeholders as participants and/or speakers where appropriate
- Participate in external events on areas linked to discrimination grounds and highlight the work of Equinet and equality bodies when possible
- Organise bilateral meetings with external stakeholders such as EU policy makers and representatives of EU networks and NGOs, in order to identify common interests, future work plans and possible areas of cooperation
- Regular monitoring of webpages from external stakeholders in order to stay informed about recent developments in the field of anti-discrimination and equality (this also includes subscribing to organisations' newsletters)
- Participating in new forms of knowledge exchange by actively engaging in initiatives that aim to improve communication across Europe: to share information, experiences, contacts (journalists for example) and good practice. FRA, ENNHRI, COE and Equinet also have a Communication Platform where they meet once a year to discuss communications topics that interest all of the organisations and their members.

## 6. EVALUATION

Equinet's **Strategic Plan 2015-2018** has outlined a series of overall indicators that have been selected for the final assessment of the implementation of the Strategic Plan:

1. Perceptions among equality bodies of enhanced effectiveness in their operations.
2. Perceptions among equality bodies that they are better equipped to engage with European level policy and activity related to their mandate.
3. Evidence of influence by Equinet contributions in policy and legal documents of the European institutions.
4. Perceptions among European level policy makers and stakeholders that they are better able to appreciate the contribution of equality bodies.
5. Perceptions among European level policy makers and stakeholders that European standards for equality bodies are needed.
6. Adequacy and diversity of funding and other supports for the network.

Equinet's communication work will be vital in reaching our objectives, and based on the indicators outlined in the yearly Work Plan, we have measurements to see how well our objectives have been met.

**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.