

**Equinet Executive Board Meeting I  
23 January 2012  
Brussels, Belgium**

**Venue:**

Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism  
Rue Royale/Koningsstraat 138  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

**ATTENDANCE:**

Board Members:

Evelyn Collins (ECo)  
Jozef De Witte (JDW)  
Domenica Ghidei (DG)  
Elke Lujansky-Lammer (EL)  
Julija Šartuch (JS)  
Tena Šimonovic Eínwalter (TE)  
Therese Spiteri (TS)  
Néphèli Yatropoulos (NY)

Board Advisor:

Niall Crowley (NC)

Equinet Secretariat:

Anne Gaspard (AG), Executive Director  
Tamás Kádár (TK), Policy Officer  
Yannick Godin (YG), Administration Officer  
Cosmin Popa (CP), Trainee – Communications  
Assistant

**Apologies:** Csaba Ferenc Asztalos (CA)

**Chair of the meeting:** Jozef De Witte (JDW)

**Minutes:** Yannick Godin (YG)

# MINUTES

## 23 JANUARY 2012

### 1. Opening

Jozef De Witte (JDW) opened the Board Meeting at 09:30 and welcomed all Board Members and Equinet Secretariat team. The proposed agenda for the meeting was reviewed and agreed upon by all participants.

JDW presented apology received from Asztalos Csaba Ferenc for not being able to travel at last minute nor take part in the meeting.

### 2. Announcements

JDW announced that Cosmin Popa, the current Communications trainee at the Equinet Secretariat, has been selected as the successful candidate from the open recruitment and selection procedure to become the next Communications Officer (starting 1 March 2012), following the departure of Caroline Nsenda mid-January 2012.

JDW announced that Peter Reading would be leaving the EHRC in the first half of the year (probably end March 2012). This means that a new Moderator for the Working Group Equality Law in Practice will need to be identified and nominated by the Board in the coming months.

Anne Gaspard (AG) shared the news of her pregnancy (due date at the end of June 2012). Her expected absence (possibly up to around 5/6 months, starting mid- June) will need to be planned for.

### 3. Minutes Board Meeting 30 November 2011

**Amendment: page 3:**

**Instead of:** “Board members were informed that the Equinet perspective *‘Equality Bodies and National Human Rights Institutions – Making the Link to Maximise Impact’* is in final draft form and, since there was no considerable objection to it from Equinet members at the High-Level Meeting (...)”

**It should read:** “Board members were informed that the Equinet perspective *‘Equality Bodies and National Human Rights Institutions – Making the Link to Maximise Impact’* is in final draft form and, since **there were no amendments proposed by** Equinet members at the High-Level Meeting (...)”

**DECISION:** Minutes of the Board Meeting are adopted with the amendment mentioned above and can be uploaded on the website (Members section)

## **4. Board Decisions**

### **▪ Equinet Treasurer**

Board Member Therese Spiteri (TS) expressed her candidacy to the (*pro bono*) position of Equinet Treasurer.

It was agreed that it would also be useful to develop a note defining more clearly the responsibilities for the different parties concerned with Equinet finances:

- Finance Officer
- Executive Director
- Equinet Treasurer
- Equinet Board
- General Assembly of Equinet Members
- Bookkeeper
- External Auditor

In devising the procedures, a strong focus on transparency (towards Members, the EC...) and checks and balances should be observed.

**Evelyn Collins (Eco):** the Equinet annual report should make a clear mention of the external auditing process and of all the elements of the report of the External Auditor of the Equinet accounts. and accounting procedures.

**DECISION:** Therese Spiteri (TS) is appointed as the Equinet Treasurer. The secretariat will liaise with her and the Chair in the coming weeks to work on developing a draft note on clear procedures and division of the tasks implied in managing Equinet finances. This note will be presented to the Board for adoption at its next meeting.

### **▪ Equinet Board Advisor**

*Note: Niall Crowley (NC) left the room for this particular topic*

The Chair proposed to maintain and nominate NC as the Board Advisor for the duration of the mandate of this Board. It was clarified that this is a *pro bono* role (no financial costs implied for this specific input, only coverage of travel costs).

**DECISION:** Niall Crowley (NC) is appointed as the Equinet Board Advisor for the duration of the mandate of this Board. The Annual Report should make a reference to the Board Advisor role and its *pro bono* nature.

### **▪ Moderator WG Policy Formation**

Evelyn Collins (ECo) was proposed for and expressed her interest in the (*pro bono*) position of Moderator of the Equinet Working Group *Policy Formation*.

**DECISION:** Evelyn Collins (ECo) is appointed as the Moderator of the Working Group *Policy Formation*.

## ▪ **Board Elections Procedures: country groupings**

**DECISION:** The Board decides to allocate Poland and Slovenia to Group 2 of the country groupings for future Board Elections Procedures.

**DECISION:** Revised procedure for Board Elections to be proposed at AGM 2012, cleared of the explanatory notes and the reference to the previous mandate of the Board.

It is suggested that the revision of the procedure considers way to ensure representativity of candidates (either by putting a required minimum number of votes received for a candidate to be validly elected or by requiring candidacies to be supported by a certain number of other Member organisations, or through any other system that would need to be defined).

## **5. Equinet High-Level Legal Seminar 2012**

Board Members reviewed the details of the seminar with the Equinet Secretariat and brought some suggestions and changes to the draft programme.

Collaboration with the European Network of Legal Experts in the Non-Discrimination Field should be strengthened and any potential duplication or overlap with the annual Seminar organised by the EC on non-discrimination law should be avoided. New EC Head of Unit (DG JUST – D.1 Equal Treatment Legislation) in charge of the Network and legal seminar will be invited as a speaker to the Equinet Legal Seminar. A possible introduction meeting would also be useful in this context.

## **6. Update on Completion Equinet Work Programme 2011**

Working Groups 2011 outputs & publications

- *WG Policy Formation:* suggestions for possible topics of focus:
  - Rights of people with disabilities
  - Discrimination based on nationality and in access to nationality
  - Impact of the recession on the work of Equality Bodies (number of complaints, budget...)
  - Impact of Equality Bodies

NC reminded that one of the two *Equinet Perspectives* generally concentrates on a relevant current or future European Commission policy process. Current and future projects of the EC should be reviewed before the next Board Meeting to identify a topic for a possible *Perspective* in 2013 (a possible project in the pipeline at EC level is a roadmap for equality for LGBT people).

Tamas Kadar (TK): Ad hoc Initiatives: possible topic: Impact of Equality Bodies

2013 - European Year of European Citizenship: could be a consideration to plan a *Perspective* on nationality and/or race grounds.

ECo: Equinet *Perspective* on NHRIs and Equality Bodies was excellent, timely, well-received and used a lot.

JDW: Need for a strategy to make sure our Members are using our Perspectives.

- *WG Equality Law in Practice*

Possible ways forward were suggested in view of the need for the Board to identify and nominate a future Moderator for the Working Group from April 2012 on (following Peter Reading's leaving EHRC).

**DECISION:** Néphèli Yatropoulos (NY) to consult Defender of Rights internally and contact their member representative of the Working Group about potential interest and suitability of taking up the role of next moderator of the WG Equality Law. WG members should also be informally consulted in due course to confirm suitability of the Moderator nomination.

- *WG Communication Strategies and Practices:*

Libby Kinney accepted to pursue her role as Moderator of the Working Group. Factsheet on Communication principles (to be a digital, web-based tool) is in process of finalisation.

- Ad hoc trans initiative: to take the initiative further would require significantly more input from Members

NC: idea to collaborate with Transgender Europe (TGEU) around the *Equinet Perspective*. Ask them to contact national trans organisations, and Equinet could contact NEB with the suggestion to have a meeting at national level around the perspective.

- Annual Report 2011:

Ideas originating from the work should be brought to the forefront, not the activities. The general context should be explained (mounting austerity, increased case law...). The report should be brief. The success of the Equinet Network should be highlighted. Idea of few testimonials could also be considered.

## **7. Equinet Work Programme 2012**

### Follow-up *Equality and Human Rights Perspective*:

There is clear evidence of a strong demand for the Perspective (at national and at European level).

European Group of NHRIs should be encouraged to come up with its own perspective on the topic and a meeting could then be organised to continue a dialogue.

It is proposed to encourage NEBs to engage with national NGOs on the focus of the Perspective.

This Perspective should also be the occasion to interact with the FRA on the issues raised by it.

Possible focus of an ad-hoc initiative: how to develop an effective integrated (Equality and Human Rights) approach

Equinet and its Members should engage in a reflection on the real implications of the CRPD on the work of NEBs.

Good Practice Guide in promoting equality: this year, it will focus on goods and services. The NEB/expert to possibly lead in the drafting of this Equinet Case Study / guide still needs to be identified.

**DECISION:** NC to draft a clear request / questions to our Member NEBs to collect and identify any relevant or ground-breaking experience or work in the field.

### Legal training

Equinet Secretariat (TK) presented a range of suggestions of possible themes of focus for the next Equinet Legal Training. These possible topics (around 6) were largely drawn from suggestions from previous legal trainings evaluations and suggestions by members, and were discussed by the Board. The Board recommended two particularly relevant themes to be retained for consideration for the next training: (i) Informal and out of court settlements in discrimination cases – mediation / conciliation, and (ii) Examples of reasonable accommodation in different countries.

**DECISION:** Julija Šartuch (JS) and Equinet Secretariat (TK) to discuss and finalise the suitable theme of focus for the programme for the legal training, further to consultation with the Host Lithuanian NEB and the WG *Equality Law in Practice* by end of February.

## **8. Relevant EU and European stakeholders initiatives**

### **Council of Europe:**

**DECISION:** meeting to be proposed with Commissioner Hammarberg to ensure effective follow-up of the Equinet cooperation with the CoE Office of the Commissioner for Human beyond his mandate and with his successor.

### **Equality Summit in Cyprus:**

Possible themes to be suggested to the EC: maximizing impact of Equal Treatment Legislation; new challenges for Equality policies in challenging times; discrimination in education.

**DECISION:** possible themes to be proposed to EC representatives in the coming meeting with the Commission (Lina Papamichalopoulou and Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea)

### **EIGE:**

**DECISION:** EIGE to be invited to host a meeting to present its work to Equinet Members just after the legal training in Vilnius, 23-24 May, including a possible subsequent meeting with Board Members.

## **9. Equinet Membership**

**DECISION:** New Hungarian *Commissioner for Fundamental Rights* was accepted as the successor of the former Equinet Member *Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities* in Hungary.

**DECISION:** Csaba Ferenc Asztalos (CA) to be consulted regarding the letter from Romanian NGOs

**DECISION:** Secretariat to explore the possibility of installing a “marketplace” on the Equinet website where proposals and demands for exchange of staff members will be posted.

## **10. Finances**

Equinet Secretariat (AG) presented the situation of the 2011 Equinet. 2011 accounts should remain positive with possibly up to 25,000eur of unspent budget (from Travel and Accommodation budget).

## **11. A.O.B.**

None

## **12. Next Meeting(s)**

***27 March 2012: Equinet Board Meeting (Brussels)***

***28 March 2012: Equinet high-level Legal Seminar (Brussels)***

23-24 May 2012: Equinet legal Training (Vilnius)

***24 May (pm) & 25 May (am) 2012: Equinet Board Meeting (Vilnius)***

26-27 September 2012: Equinet Training on under-reporting (Malta)

***27 Sept (pm) & 28 Sept (am) 2012: Equinet Board Meeting (Malta)***

*November 2012: Equinet AGM + pre/post Board meeting*