

**E** Equinet  
European network  
of equality bodies



# **EQUINET HIGHLIGHTS**

August 2015 - December 2016

[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)



## EQUINET AT A GLANCE



**E**quinet is the **European Network of Equality Bodies**, a membership organisation bringing together 46 equality bodies from 34 European countries including all EU Member States.

**Equinet promotes equality in Europe** by 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.

**Equality bodies** are public organisations assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and promoting equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all of the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union (EU) law – gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.

**Equinet aims** to enhance the strategic capacity of its member organisations and to strengthen the skills and competences of their staff. Equinet contributes to the European equality agenda by conveying an expert voice of equality bodies drawn from the learnings of their work on the ground, and enhances their recognition and strategic positioning in relation to all stakeholders at European level. Finally, Equinet serves as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment.

To achieve its aims, Equinet:

- Organises regular **training events and seminars** for staff members of equality bodies, as well as **conferences** on key topics relevant to the European agenda on equality and non-discrimination;
- Supports research and exchange of information, data and expertise from and among equality bodies through:
  - » **Working groups** structured around thematic work areas of relevance to equality bodies, such as Communication Strategies and Practices, Equality Law, Gender Equality and Policy Formation;
  - » **Reports, policy perspectives, handbooks and good practice guides** on relevant themes relating to the work of equality bodies and developments in the field of equality and non-discrimination in Europe;
  - » **Communication channels** such as the Equinet website, social media profiles, monthly newsletters and regular email updates.

The highest decision-making forum within Equinet is the Annual General Assembly of Equinet members. Every two years, the General Assembly elects an Executive Board responsible for the overall management and the strategic leadership of the Network. The operational structure consists of thematic working groups bringing together equality bodies' experts and a small Brussels-based Secretariat.

# EQUINET HIGHLIGHTS

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# EQUINET TIMELINE AUGUST 2015 – DECEMBER 2016

“ A warm **thank you** to all equality bodies that have contributed to the realisation of our activities by hosting and/or co-organising different events during this time.





**15 4-5 APRIL 2016**

Seminar on *Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation*, hosted by the Disability Ombudsman (Austria)

**16 20 APRIL 2016**

Roundtable at European Parliament on *The parenthood penalty? Work-life balance, pregnancy and parenthood related discrimination: equality bodies and MEPs contributing to new EU and national initiatives*, co-organised with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK – Great Britain), hosted by Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D) (Belgium)

**17 21 APRIL 2016**

Working Group on *Gender Equality meeting on Equal Pay*, hosted by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (Belgium) and the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels

**18 18 MAY 2016**

Cluster meeting on *Strategic Litigation*, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) (Belgium)

**24 29 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Orientation meeting on the *EEA and Norway Grants* (Belgium)

**25 29-30 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Annual General Meeting (AGM) - Equinet welcomes a new member:

- Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**26 6 OCTOBER 2016**

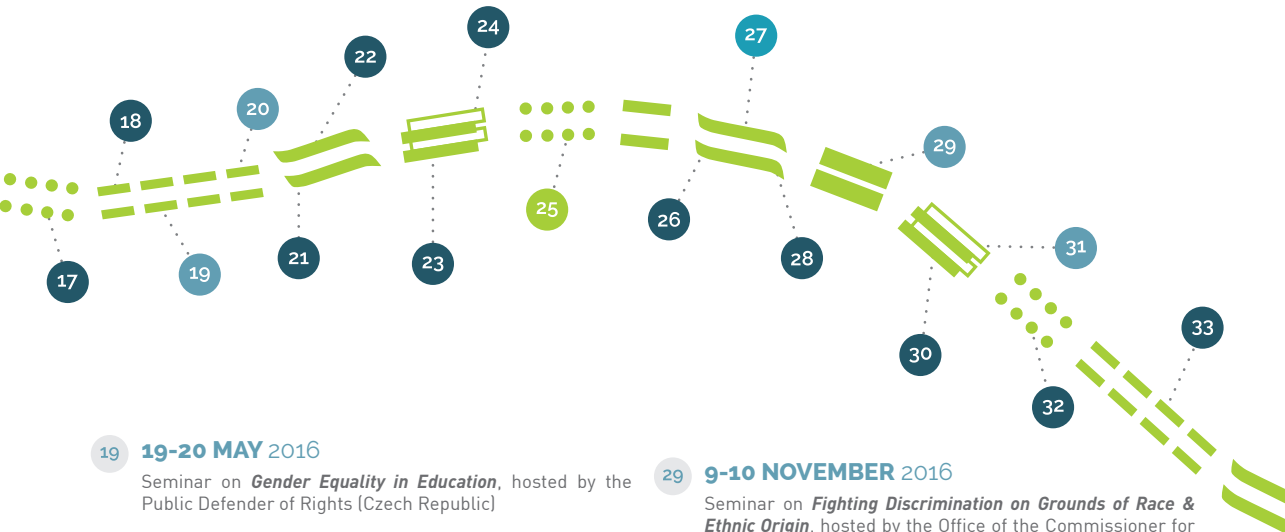
Working Group on *Policy Formation meeting on Youth Discrimination*, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) (Belgium)

**27 13-14 OCTOBER 2016**

Training on *Communicating Equality: Social media for Equality Bodies*, hosted by Facebook Offices (Ireland)

**28 4 NOVEMBER 2016**

Working Group on *Gender Equality meeting*, hosted by the National Commission for the Protection of Equality (Malta)

**19 19-20 MAY 2016**

Seminar on *Gender Equality in Education*, hosted by the Public Defender of Rights (Czech Republic)

**20 16 JUNE 2016**

Conference on *Strengthening the effectiveness of European Equal Treatment Legislation*, hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee (Belgium)

**21 30 AUGUST 2016**

Consultation meetings with **social partners** and **civil society organisations**, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) (Belgium)

**22 19 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Meeting of the *Evaluation Lab Project*, hosted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK - Great Britain)

**23 22 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Working Group on *Equality Law meeting on Discrimination on the Grounds of Race and Ethnic Origin*, hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman (Latvia)

**29 9-10 NOVEMBER 2016**

Seminar on *Fighting Discrimination on Grounds of Race & Ethnic Origin*, hosted by the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (Hungary)

**30 21 NOVEMBER 2016**

Working Group on *Communication Strategies and Practices*, hosted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights

**31 7 DECEMBER 2016**

Conference on *Diverse, Inclusive and Equal: Innovating at the Intersections of Gender Equality*, hosted by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (Belgium)

**32 12 DECEMBER 2016**

Meeting of Cluster on *Strategic Litigation*, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) (Belgium)

**33 16 DECEMBER 2016**

Meeting of Cluster on *Quasi-Judicial Functions*, hosted by Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) (Belgium)

## FOREWORD

This report covers the highlights of Equinet activities from August 2015 until December 2016. Looking at this one and a half year period allows us to review not only some of the key activities during that time, but also to highlight the achievements in delivery of our priorities under the first period covered by our Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

Like every year, our Work Plans for 2015 and 2016 were developed on the basis of a comprehensive and wide-ranging consultation process, both with our member organisations and key partners in order to learn about their expectations and needs from Equinet. This process gives us very useful feedback, and has shown that the work and services of Equinet are highly valued, while at the same time indicating potential areas of further development. As a result, much of Equinet's work from August 2015 until December 2016 was centered on fine-tuning existing training events, seminars and working groups to provide platforms for peer support and build the capacity of equality bodies. New and innovative tools, such as the European Directory of Equality Bodies and the Equinet Promotional Brochure, were developed in order to raise awareness of the work of Equinet and national equality bodies.

An important priority on the Equinet agenda has been the development of stronger European standards for the work of equality bodies.

This came as a response to a clear demand from our members, especially in times of economic and financial crisis, when austerity policies pose challenges to equality and the work of equality bodies. A number of reports and policy papers from international and European institutions and agencies recognise the important role of independent and effective equality bodies. More information on the Working paper on the Development of Standards for Equality Bodies can be found in the Spotlight section.

Equinet continues to be a Network working for its members. Their expertise, contributions and insights, together with our expert and dedicated staff in the Equinet Secretariat, provide the foundations for all our achievements. We owe considerable gratitude to the members of the Equinet Executive Board for steering the Network with great enthusiasm and professionalism.

We also greatly appreciate the fruitful cooperation with all our stakeholders and, lastly, wish to express our special gratitude to the European Commission for its support through the *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme* and for its ongoing commitment to the work of Equinet and equality bodies.



**| Anne Gaspard**  
Executive Director



**| Evelyn Collins**  
Equinet Chair

## SPOTLIGHT: STANDARDS FOR EQUALITY BODIES

In the current context of rising inequalities and discrimination, equality bodies aim to provide essential support to individuals, guidance for institutions, and an authoritative voice within society to advance equality and challenge discrimination. However, in order for them to do so successfully, they need to be independent, well-resourced and effective institutions.

EU Directives require all EU Member States, accession countries and EEA countries to designate one or more equality bodies for the promotion of equal treatment on certain grounds. However the **Directives provide only minimum standards for the competences and functional independence of equality bodies and do not adequately guarantee independence, effectiveness, sufficient powers and adequate resources.** Our *[Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies](#)* outlines how this could be addressed, based on member discussions within the Equinet Cluster on Standards in 2015, as well as contributions and comments provided since then.

15 June 2016 saw the launch of this paper, in the presence of Věra Jourová, Commissioner of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality and other important stakeholders. The Commissioner highlighted that *“Equality bodies are key to combatting discrimination and ensuring the effective implementation of equal treatment legislation. **For more inclusive societies throughout Europe, it is vital to have independent and effective equality bodies with the powers and resources to ensure that our rights to equality are applied on the ground and made accessible to all.** The European Commission is determined to help strengthen equality bodies and create conditions in which they can reach their full potential”.*



Equinet Chair Evelyn Collins hands over our Working Paper to Commissioner Jourová

## SPOTLIGHT: STANDARDS FOR EQUALITY BODIES

*“Equality bodies have a vital role to play in promoting and protecting fundamental rights,”* according to Director of the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights, Michael O’Flaherty. *“For equality bodies to do their job, it is of the utmost importance to ensure they have a sufficiently broad mandate and enjoy financial and organisational independence. Only then do they have the power to actively work towards improving access to justice for victims of discrimination.”*

In order to be independent and effective as valuable catalysts for more equal societies, Equinet and national equality bodies call for European standards on the independence, effectiveness, functions and powers of equality bodies. Equinet Chair Evelyn Collins highlights the need for strong European standards for national equality bodies: *“We need European standards for national equality bodies that ensure the potential of*

*equality bodies to support the achievement of full equality in practice. They are needed to empower equality bodies with an authority and a standing that protects them from being undermined or diminished in the exercise of their functions. Strong European standards for national equality bodies will result in more equal societies for all.”*

Equinet has engaged with stakeholders on a national and European level in order to promote awareness about the importance of standards for equality bodies, and has been greeted with broad support. We will continue to promote this work in an effort to safeguard and enhance the work of our members in the future.

\*The Working Paper is currently available in the following languages: Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Serbian (Cyrillic and Latin) and Slovak, with more translations underway.

## OVERVIEW - A FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS

### MANDATE

Standards need to secure a mandate that covers:

- **Equality, diversity and non-discrimination**
- Public and private sectors and the fields of employment, vocational training, goods and services, education, housing, social protection and social advantages
- All **Treaty grounds** (article 19), **multiple discrimination** and article 21 of the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**

### EFFECTIVENESS

Standards should address and secure:

- Adequate financial, staff and physical **resources**
- **General powers**, such as: commissioning and conducting research, making recommendations, conducting general investigation, challenging domestic legislation...
- Specific powers to underpin **promotional-type functions**
- Specific powers to underpin **tribunal-type functions**

Any expansion of the mandate of equality bodies should be **coherent** with the original mandate and involve the allocation of **adequate resources**.

### INDEPENDENCE

Standards need to secure **complete independence**, including:

- Own **legal personality and stand-alone structure**
- A governance structure reflecting diversity of people and social forces in society with all leadership positions appointed through a **transparent and independent procedure**
- Systems of **accountability** ensuring independence
- Absence of **external pressure** and undue interference

### INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

- When separate equality bodies are established in one country, **linkages** should be created to ensure coherence
- Overall national institutional architecture should include **tribunal type and promotional type functions**
- Where equality bodies have their mandates combined with other bodies (E.g. NHRIs), standards should ensure a **coherent legal basis** and **adequate resources**
- Equality bodies should be the **first step** for those seeking to make a claim of discrimination within **accessible and coherent pathways for access to justice**
- Equality bodies should be enabled to give leadership in and support the **wider infrastructure to promote equality**



## OBJECTIVE

## 1

## BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

Areas for action:

- Develop knowledge and skills of staff members of equality bodies
- Develop strategic and organisational capacity of equality bodies
- Foster and promote innovative approaches in the work of equality bodies

Highlights in 2015 and 2016 include:

### I. COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

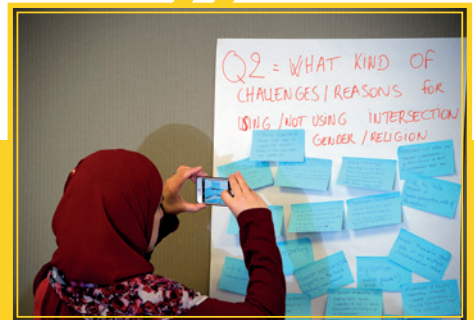
#### SEMINAR: A QUESTION OF FAITH. RELIGION AND BELIEF IN THE WORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

9 – 10 November 2015, hosted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK - Great Britain)

#### PERSPECTIVE: A GROWING AGENDA: THE WORK OF EQUALITY BODIES ON THE GROUND OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Although EU Directives do not require the establishment of an equality body with a mandate working on discrimination on the ground of religion or belief, many Equinet members do cover this ground. In September 2015, Equinet's Policy Formation Working Group published the Perspective '[A Growing Agenda: the Work of Equality Bodies on the Ground of Religion or Belief](#)', which was the basis for the seminar. The Perspective highlights issues relating to the manner in which the ground of religion or belief is addressed in equal treatment legislation, such as:

- the absence of a definition of religion or belief,
- the lack of a requirement on employers and service providers to make reasonable accommodation on the ground of religion or belief,
- religious ethos related exemptions that have been used to discriminate on other grounds despite being prohibited in the EU Directives and,
- the limited scope where EU legislation does not include a prohibition on discrimination in the provision of goods and services on the ground of religion or belief.



## II. COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF DISABILITY

### SEMINAR: ACCESSIBILITY AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

4-5 April 2016, hosted by the Disability Ombudsman (Austria)

Equinet's previous publications on disability highlighted progress as well as outstanding challenges for equality bodies in promoting reasonable accommodation and accessibility for persons with disabilities and served as a basis for discussion at the Equinet capacity-building Seminar on this topic. The Seminar focused on specific challenges and ways forward in relation



to accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities. It looked at the promotion of accessibility and reasonable accommodation in the field of employment and beyond, as well as good practice examples of equality bodies and situations when the ground of disability intersects with other protected grounds of discrimination. **Amongst the main outcomes of the Seminar, we would highlight the importance of cooperating with companies, local authorities and Disabled People Organisations (DPOs), using Easy-to-Read tools and clearly distinguishing between the concepts of accessibility and reasonable accommodation.**

## III. IMPROVING THE COMMUNICATION CAPACITIES OF EQUALITY BODIES

### TRAINING: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR EQUALITY BODIES

13-14 October 2016, hosted by the Facebook Offices (Ireland)

### REPORT: THE PUBLIC PROFILE OF EQUALITY BODIES

All equality bodies seek to achieve positive change in society by investigating complaints, following the implementation of the legal and institutional framework for equality, and actively promoting equal treatment and tolerance within their national context. Nevertheless, in order to maximize the effect of the work being done, **an equality body should consistently and strategically remind people of its existence, accessibility, effectiveness, independence and reliability.** For that purpose the Working Group on Communication Strategies and Practices drafted the Report '*The Public Profile of Equality Bodies: An Equinet Report*', containing equality bodies' own experiences of dealing with public-profile building.



According to the report, over half of Equinet members use one form of social media or another as an integral part of the promotion of their work, and this number is growing. To cater to this growing trend, Equinet organised a training session to teach staff members of equality bodies how to improve their social media use. In order to extend this learning to all members, a manual is being developed by the trainers, training participants and working group members to support good social media practices for all equality body staff, and will be available following the next social media training, due to take place in April 2017.

## OBJECTIVE

## 2

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN  
EQUALITY AGENDA

Areas for action:

- Contribute to equality policy and law at European level
- Convey an expert voice of equality bodies by sharing their expertise, experience and recommendations
- Inform and engage with policy makers and partners

Highlights in 2015 and 2016 include:

## I. EQUALITY BODIES WORKING ON MIGRATION

FACTSHEET AND COMPENDIUM OF GOOD PRACTICES: EQUALITY BODIES AND THE INTEGRATION OF  
MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is key to ensuring inclusion and equality for all in Europe. It is also an important area of equality bodies' work as part of their mandate of promoting equality and combating discrimination. Based on an internal consultation within its membership, Equinet has developed a factsheet and compendium of good practices aimed at summarising the work of equality bodies on this topic. The factsheet outlines **challenges for equality bodies, such as prioritizing areas of work and limited financial and human resources, data collection and the difficulty of reaching out to migrants.** It recommends equality bodies to strengthen cooperation with relevant stakeholders and conduct research in this area.

EQUALITY BODIES AND INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS,  
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS  
AN EQUINET FACTSHEET

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION** Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, brings together **46 equality bodies** from **34 European 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. They play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of the EU. As a first point of contact for victims of discrimination, equality bodies have an extensive understanding of how discrimination affects people in Europe.

The work of equality bodies on integration of  
migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

## Equality bodies' mandate

According to EU legislation, each EU Member State is required to set up an equality body covering the grounds of race and ethnicity and gender. However, many EU Member States went beyond these requirements and have the power to address discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, origin, language, age, etc. Even if an equality body does not explicitly cover migration as a discrimination ground, it has the **power to assist any victim of discrimination irrespective of their nationality or migration status.**

In some cases, equality bodies also have **other specific functions** related to migration and asylum, such as National Human Rights Institutions or National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Human Beings under Directive 2011/36/EU.

## Areas of work

Almost all respondents reported work in relation to the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Specific examples are compiled in the appendix "Compilation of good practices".



## CONTEXT OF THE SURVEY

In May 2016, the Equinet Secretariat launched an internal consultation within its membership in order to get an overview of equality bodies' work on equality, integration and inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. 20 equality bodies out of 45 replied to the survey (see list of contributors at the end of the factsheet).

The factsheet aims to summarise the contributions received, with a specific focus on the area of integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

## CASEWORK

Equality bodies address cases of discrimination in integration on the grounds of **nationality, religion and belief and race and ethnicity**. Disability and gender were also mentioned. Cases concerned issues such as **access to education, housing and social protection, and wearing of headscarf at the workplace**. However, several equality bodies do not compile data based on the nationality of the complainants.

## AWARENESS RAISING

Raising awareness is part of the **core mandate** of national equality bodies. Most of the activities reported were organised in connection to the **ground of race and ethnicity**, such as creating pedagogical tools for schools, running campaigns against racism and organising Anti-Racism thematic days.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

Several equality bodies made **public statements or recommendations to decision makers** on integration issues. They concerned, for instance, the provision of information on anti-discrimination legislation by local authorities, the access of children to education and the reform of national anti-discrimination and labour legislation to take the situation of migrants into account.



## II. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND PREGNANCY RELATED DISCRIMINATION

### ROUNDTABLE: THE PARENTHOOD PENALTY? WORK-LIFE BALANCE, PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD RELATED DISCRIMINATION: EQUALITY BODIES AND MEPS CONTRIBUTING TO NEW EU AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES

20 April 2016, co-organised with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Great Britain), hosted in the European Parliament by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (Belgium)

This roundtable event aimed to exchange current priorities between Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and equality bodies on the issues of work-life balance and pregnancy- and parenthood-related discrimination, as well as further informing MEPs on the work of equality bodies.

**Equality bodies report high levels of pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination,** including:

- discrimination in connection with taking up leave arrangements,
- denial of rights in access to statutory leave arrangements, and
- in the access to flexible working arrangements in accordance with the specific provisions in equal treatment legislation in the different EU Member States.

Combatting discrimination and promoting equal treatment continue to be great challenges in implementing successful models of work-life balance. In August 2015, the Commission published a roadmap for the initiative *'A new start to address the challenges of work-life*



*balance faced by working families'* to replace the 2008 Commission proposal to revise the Maternity Leave Directive. Equinet contributed to the public consultation and suggested for example to:

- enhance policies to promote work-life balance by combatting stereotypes and stimulating equal sharing of care responsibilities,
- introduce legal duties on employers to make accommodation for the reconciliation of work and family life,
- improve the existing EU legislative framework in order to address the challenges of work-life balance, for example in relation to maternity leave, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, carers' leave and/or paternity leave, and
- strengthen monitoring at EU-level on measures to address work-life balance challenges and to include equality bodies in national monitoring committees.

### III. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION, RESPECT AND FULFILLMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

#### PERSPECTIVE: EQUALITY BODIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROTECTION, RESPECT AND FULFILLMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The 2016 Perspective on 'Equality bodies contributing to the Protection, Respect and Fulfilment of Economic and Social Rights' identified that **equality bodies are making an important contribution in providing a non-discrimination and diversity foundation to work on economic and social rights**. Equality bodies aim to achieve equality in practice for all members of and groups in society and this ambition is translated into their work on economic and social rights. Equality bodies recommend a focus on specific groups in respecting, protecting and fulfilling social and economic rights, such as the rights of Roma to access housing or education, or the rights of women not to be (indirectly) discriminated against when public sector spending cuts are implemented. In order to achieve this, equality bodies place an

emphasis on drawing in a wide range of partner organisations, including by supporting new practices by employers, service providers and policy makers.

Based on this work, Equinet prepared a *response to the European Commission's public consultation* of the first preliminary outline of a European Pillar of Social Rights in December 2016. Equinet highlighted the need for attention to be paid to equality and non-discrimination concerns in all the Pillar's proposed policy domains, and to consider the need for progressive, and not retrogressive, realization of social and economic rights throughout the policy design.



### IV. IMPLEMENTING THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT DIRECTIVE



#### CONFERENCE: EQUALITY BODIES AND THE NEW FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT DIRECTIVE – CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY?

8 December 2015, hosted by the Defender of Rights (France)

#### DISCUSSION PAPER: EQUALITY BODIES AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Directive 2014/54/EU on Freedom of Movement for Union Workers was adopted in April 2014. It stipulates that "each Member State shall designate one or more structures or bodies (...) for the promotion, analysis, monitoring and support of equal treatment of Union workers and members of their family without discrimination on grounds of nationality (...) and shall make the necessary arrangements for the proper functioning of such bodies". The competences of these bodies are similar to competences of equality bodies. **If equality bodies are given this mandate, important questions arise**, including:

- equality bodies' need for additional resources, powers and expertise to fulfill this new mandate;

- the necessity to define adequately the assistance they are expected to provide;
- the potential of the Directive to deprive equality bodies of the opportunity to strategically select cases in this domain; or
- the conflict of interest if an equality body is expected to provide advice and later decide on the same case.

Equinet organised a conference to discuss the role of equality bodies in combating nationality-based discrimination, the implications of the new Directive and the key findings of the Discussion Paper Equality Bodies and Freedom of Movement.

## V. COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION ON MULTIPLE GROUNDS

### **CONFERENCE: DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUAL: INNOVATING AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY**

7 December 2016, hosted by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (Belgium)

### **PERSPECTIVE: INNOVATING AT THE INTERSECTIONS. EQUALITY BODIES TACKLING INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION**

This 2016 Perspective shows that equality bodies are valuable actors in developing the issue of intersectionality. Equality bodies use strategic approaches to bring the topic of intersectionality into their own work and into the work of other stakeholders, conduct research on intersectionality and groups at intersections, work on cases with intersecting grounds and establish cooperation between civil society organisations to stimulate intersectional perspectives, as well as support a focus on intersectionality in policy and practice. Equality bodies report challenges in dealing with intersectional discrimination, such as the complexity of the concept itself, underreporting of cases, and a lack of data on intersections.

At the conference, which was supported by the US Mission to the European Union, these and other challenges, as well as ways forward, were discussed. Highlights included the participation of Professor Suzanne B. Goldberg from Columbia Law School, who delivered a speech on the problem of using a comparator for cases of intersectional discrimination; Peggy Mastroianni from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, who introduced the perspective of the American federal equality body on the topic of intersectional discrimination and Professor Dagmar Schiek who focused on the topic of intersectionality in European anti-discrimination laws.





## VI. COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA AND TRAVELLERS

### JOINT STATEMENT: *STOP EVICTIONS OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS*

Equinet continues to support initiatives within the cooperative framework established with the European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI). Since 2014, **four cooperation platforms** have been set up between these organisations to deal with asylum and migration, Roma equality, economic and social rights as well as hate speech and hate crime. In June 2016, the operational platform on Roma Equality (OPRE) issued a joint statement calling to '*Stop Evictions of Roma and Travellers*'. The joint statement contains 23 policy recommendations for governments and regional and local authorities, such as:

- ensuring that everyone subject to eviction is adequately informed of their rights and proposed adequate alternative accommodation,
- finding sustainable solutions to the occupation of Roma and Traveller sites or dwellings built in breach of planning regulations as guided by ECRI General Policy Recommendation no. 13, and
- addressing the systemic factors that prevent Roma and Travellers from legalising their housing status and put them at risk of eviction.



## VII. EUROPEAN JOURNALIST AWARD ON DIVERSITY

In 2016, Equinet worked closely with the European Commission on an initiative entitled the **European Journalist Award on Diversity**. This Award aimed to reward journalism that promotes social acceptance and diversity of all faiths and beliefs, in other words, writing that fights discrimination based on religion or faith. This was, in part, a response to the Annual Colloquium of Fundamental Rights in 2015 and was identified as a follow-up action to help combat the rise of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in the EU, and to promote a society more tolerant of others' beliefs. Equinet

members were asked to identify suitable articles to put forward from the national level, while the Equinet Secretariat (Sarah Cooke O'Dowd, Communication Officer) participated in the European jury and was present at the prize giving ceremony in Dublin, together with Equinet Chair (Evelyn Collins) and Executive Director (Anne Gaspard). The winning journalists came from Croatia, Germany and Spain.



OBJECTIVE

3

SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

Areas for action:

- Inform and engage equality bodies on relevant European developments
- Provide information on equality bodies to external audiences
- Facilitate exchange of information and networking among members
- Generate, collect and communicate knowledge on equal treatment

Highlights in 2015 and 2016 include:

I. EUROPEAN DIRECTORY OF EQUALITY BODIES

DATABASE: EUROPEAN DIRECTORY OF EQUALITY BODIES

The European Directory of Equality Bodies is a new database which brings together the profiles of our member equality bodies with **comparable search options** regarding their mandates, functions, structures, systems of accountability and other statistics. The European Directory of Equality Bodies aims to showcase the work

of Equinet members, gather comparable, up-to-date information on equality bodies across Europe and facilitate interest and research in the work and set-up of equality bodies. It also includes background history on all Equinet members.

European Directory of Equality Bodies



## II. THE SANCTIONS REGIME IN DISCRIMINATION CASES AND ITS EFFECTS

**PAPER:** *THE SANCTIONS REGIME IN DISCRIMINATION CASES AND ITS EFFECTS*

Sanctions and remedies play a crucial role in ensuring the proper implementation of equal treatment legislation. While EU Equal Treatment Directives require sanctions to be effective, dissuasive and proportionate, they do not provide any guidance as to the nature of such sanctions, nor do they set a minimum standard or even lay down who should be the body in charge of issuing such sanctions. As a result, sanctions in discrimination cases do not appear to be effective and dissuasive in many Member States and the concrete regimes of sanctions and remedies are very diverse throughout Europe. This study, carried out on behalf of Equinet by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, aimed at **identifying**

**different types of sanctions, their objectives and analyse their effectiveness.** A specific focus is given to the (potential) role of equality bodies in strengthening the effectiveness, proportionality and dissuasiveness of sanctions. While sanctions can have a predominantly compensative, punitive, preventive, and/or socio-preventive character, the research found that administrative fines and publication of the decision are the most effective sanctions from a societal and preventive perspective, but it underlined that it is essential to take into account all elements of the case and in particular the perspective and aims of the complainant.



## III. EQUALITY BODIES AND EQUINET – PROMOTING EQUALITY IN EUROPE

**BROCHURE:** *EQUALITY BODIES AND EQUINET – PROMOTING EQUALITY IN EUROPE*

What are the functions of and why do we need equality bodies? What challenges do equality bodies face? This tool aims to **raise awareness about the role of and challenges faced by equality bodies** at national and EU level, but also, on the way they can cooperate and bring added value to the work of stakeholders in their daily work. A useful list of Equinet members and the grounds of discrimination covered by their mandate can also be found in the Brochure.





OBJECTIVE

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CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

Areas for action:

- Support the development of standards for and in the work of equality bodies
- Strengthen the standing of equality bodies in a changing context
- Enhance cooperation with stakeholders
- Ensure the sustainable development of the Network and its capacity to respond to the diverse needs of members

Highlights in 2015 and 2016 include:

I. STANDARDS FOR EQUALITY BODIES

CONFERENCE: STRENGTHENING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EUROPEAN EQUAL TREATMENT LEGISLATION

16 June, hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee

WORKING PAPER: DEVELOPING STANDARDS FOR EQUALITY BODIES

The need to develop standards for equality bodies in order to protect and ensure their independence and the effectiveness of their work was a central topic at the Equinet Conference on *'Strengthening the Effectiveness of European Equal Treatment Legislation'*, which took place at the European Economic and Social Committee on 16 June 2016 in Brussels. Factors hindering the effective implementation of EU equal treatment legislation and a vision for comprehensive and effective equal treatment legislation in Europe were also discussed. In her

keynote speech, the European Ombudswoman Emily O'Reilly underlined the crucial role strong and independent equality bodies can play in the enforcement of legislation.

The conference was preceded by a networking event entitled 'Towards an equal Europe' on 15 June, where the working paper on developing standards for equality bodies was launched in the presence of Věra Jourová, Commissioner of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, and other special guests. More information on Standards for Equality Bodies can be found in the Spotlight section on page 5.



## II. ENGAGEMENT WITH INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Equinet continues to regularly engage with key European institutions, relevant international organisations and external stakeholders in the field of equality and non-discrimination and in other policy fields related to the mandates of equality bodies. Among other important engagements, Equinet sustains its role as Observer to the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Equinet and equality bodies are also

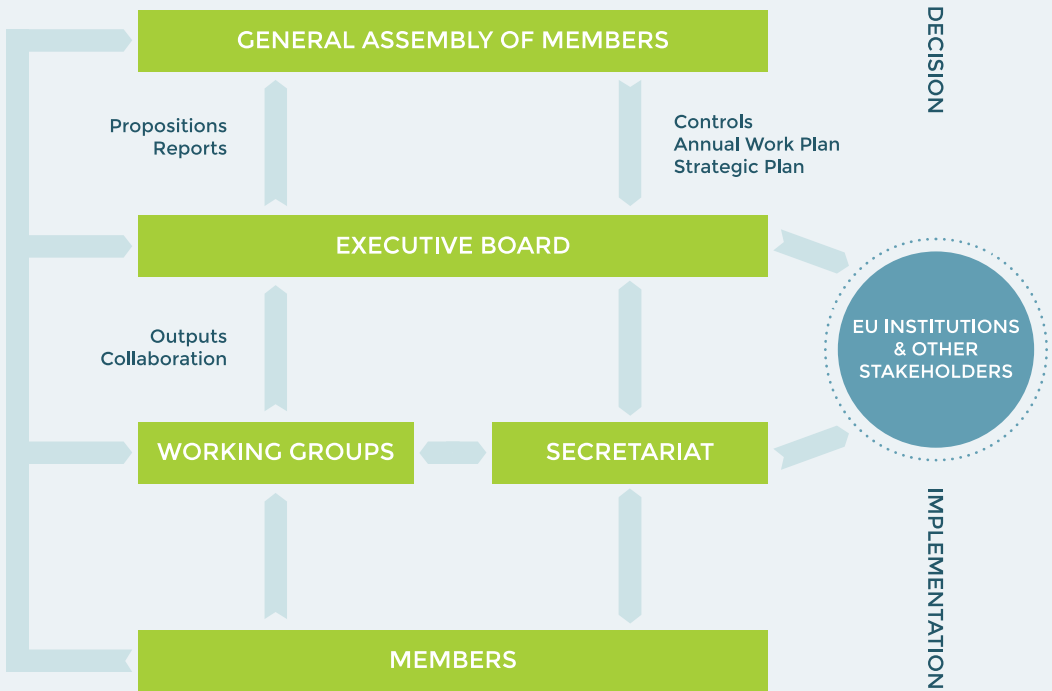
regularly invited to attend and contribute to the European Commission's High-level Groups on non-discrimination, equality and diversity and on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. Furthermore, Equinet, is an observer within the *European Coalition to End Violence against Women*, and will be focusing on the work that equality bodies carry out to tackle violence against women throughout 2017.



Equinet Chair Evelyn Collins at the 2015 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights

# EQUINET GOVERNANCE

## Governance Structure



The main decisions concerning the general steering of Equinet are taken by the General Assembly of Members (GA) that is made up of all the current members of the Network, and is convened at least once a year for an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The GA:

- ratifies new members into the Network
- elects representatives on the Executive Board every two years
- takes decisions on the strategic direction of the Network by participating in the development, reviewing and voting on the annual Work Plan for the next year prepared and proposed by the Executive Board

- is entitled to amend the statutes of the organisation and to approve budgets and accounts

During the course of the year, the GA delegates the management and the administration of the Network to the Executive Board. The latter devises the strategy for implementing the work plan for the year, ensures that the means are in place to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of the Network and acts in the best interest of the Network and its members throughout the year. All of the Executive Board members, the Expert Advisor and the Equinet Treasurer execute their tasks pro bono.

## Executive Board 2015 – 2017

- **Evelyn Collins (Chair)**, Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
  - **Kosana Beker**, Assistant to the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Serbia (until December 2016)
  - **Sarah Benichou**, Head of Access to Rights and Discriminations Unit, Defender of Rights, France
  - **Anna Błaszczak**, Deputy Director of the Constitutional and International Law Department, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland
  - **Patrick Charlier**, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium
  - **Sandra Konstatzky**, Deputy Director, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
  - **Elisabeth Lier Haugseth**, Head of Law Enforcement Department, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway (until October 2016)
  - **Kalliopi Lykovardi**, Deputy Ombudsman, Greek Ombudsman, Greece
  - **Petr Polak**, Head of Division Equal Treatment, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic
- Equinet Advisor:** Niall Crowley, Independent Expert
- Equinet Treasurer:** Patrick Charlier, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium

**Kirsi Pimiä**, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland and **Tena Šimonović Einwalter**, Deputy Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia, will replace Ms. Beker and Ms. Lier Haugseth from January 2017 until the end of this Board's mandate.



*From left to right: K. Beker, P. Charlier, E. Collins, E. Lier Hausgeth, S. Konstatzky, K. Lykovardi, P. Polak, A. Błaszczak*



## Working Groups

The Equinet **Working Groups** are essential parts of the inner functioning of the Network. Composed solely of experts from member organisations, they are the central platforms for effective cooperation and sharing of expertise amongst member equality bodies and their staff, alongside the Equinet training events and seminars. Each group is headed by a Moderator from a national equality body who, assisted by the Equinet Secretariat, is responsible for the organisation and the implementation of the work as planned in the annual Work Plans.

The Working Groups focused on the following main themes:

- Gender Equality – Supporting Equality Bodies in their work on gender issues**  
*Moderator: Theresa Hammer, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria*
- Communication Strategies and Practices – Supporting Equality Bodies in their communication work**  
*Moderator: Katrine Gaustad Pettersen, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway*
- Policy Formation – Supporting a dialogue on the learning from the work of Equality Bodies**  
*Moderator: Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia*
- Equality Law in Practice – Supporting Equality Bodies in their legal work**  
*Moderator: Jayne Hardwick, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain*



## Secretariat

The Secretariat assists the Executive Board in implementing the annual work plan of the organisation. It is responsible for organising and managing the daily activities of the Network and assists individual members and stakeholders with their requests. It supports and coordinates the work of the Equinet Working Groups. The Secretariat regularly reports on the status of its activities to the Executive Board throughout the year.

In 2015-6 the Secretariat team included:

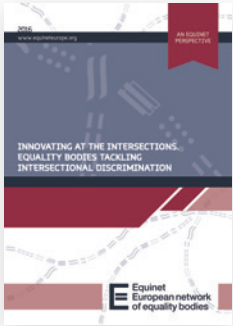
- **Anne Gaspard** - Executive Director
- **Sarah Cooke O'Dowd** - Communication Officer
- **Yannick Godin** - Administration & Finance Officer
- **Tamás Kádár** - Head of Legal and Policy Team
- **Jessica Machacova** - Membership and Policy Officer
- **Katrine Steinfeld** - Policy officer (Gender Equality)
- **Moana Genevey** - Assistant Trainee (August 2015 - February 2016)
- **Stanislas Roisin** - Administrative Assistant (November - December 2015)
- **Laura Marchetti** - Assistant Trainee (March 2016 - May 2016)
- **Nicolas Oliveri Ibaldi** - Assistant Trainee (May-December 2016)
- **Silvana Röbbstorf** - Assistant Trainee (August 2016 - March 2017)



*From left to right: S.Cooke O'Dowd, Y.Godin, J.Machacova, A.Gaspard, K.Steinfeld, T.Kádár, N.Oliveri, taken at Equinet Annual General Meeting, October 2016*

# EQUINET PUBLICATIONS AUGUST 2015 – DECEMBER 2016

## Equinet Perspectives



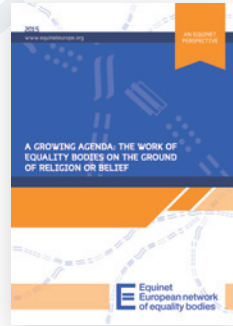
*Innovating at the Intersections. Equality Bodies tackling intersectional discrimination (2016)*



*Opening up the issue. Equality Bodies combating discrimination against and promoting equality for young people (2016)*

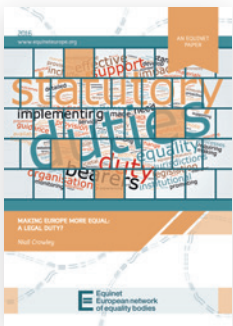


*Equality Bodies contributing to the protection, respect and fulfilment of economic and social rights (2015)*



*A growing agenda: the work of equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief (2015)*

## Equinet Research Papers



*Making Europe more equal: A legal duty? (2016)*



*The sanctions regime in discrimination cases and its effects (2015)*



*How to build a case on equal pay (2016)*

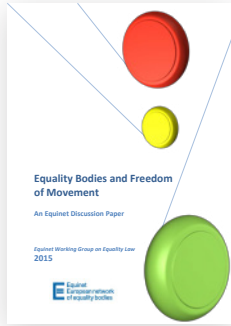
## Equinet Handbooks



## Equinet Discussion Papers

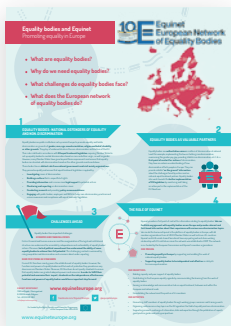


*Fighting Discrimination on Grounds of Race and Ethnic Origin (2016)*

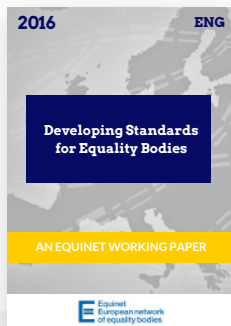


*Equality Bodies and Freedom of Movement (2015)*

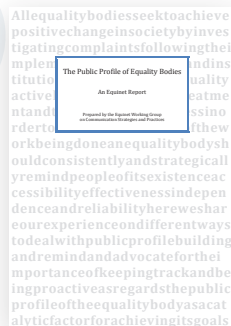
## Other publications



*Equinet Brochure (2016)*



*Equinet Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies (2016)*



*The Public Profile of Equality Bodies: An Equinet Report (2015)*



*Equinet Evaluation Lab Booklet (2016)*



*Factsheet and compendium of good practices on integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (2016)*



## EQUINET MEMBER EQUALITY BODIES

### ALBANIA

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination  
[www.kmd.al](http://www.kmd.al)

### AUSTRIA

Austrian Disability Ombudsman  
[www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at](http://www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at)

### AUSTRIA

Ombud for Equal Treatment  
[www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at](http://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at)

### BELGIUM

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men  
[www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be](http://www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be)

### BELGIUM

Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities)  
[www.unia.be](http://www.unia.be)

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
[www.ombudsmen.gov.ba](http://www.ombudsmen.gov.ba)

### BULGARIA

Commission for Protection against Discrimination  
[www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com](http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com)

### CROATIA

Office of the Ombudsman  
[www.ombudsman.hr](http://www.ombudsman.hr)

### CROATIA

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality  
[www.prs.hr](http://www.prs.hr)

### CROATIA

Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities  
[www.posi.hr](http://www.posi.hr)

### CYPRUS

Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)  
[www.ombudsman.gov.cy](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy)

### CZECH REPUBLIC

Public Defender of Rights  
[www.ochrance.cz](http://www.ochrance.cz)

### DENMARK

Board of Equal Treatment  
[www.ast.dk](http://www.ast.dk)

### DENMARK

Danish Institute for Human Rights  
[www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk)

### ESTONIA

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner  
[www.svv.ee](http://www.svv.ee)

### FINLAND

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman  
[www.syrjinta.fi](http://www.syrjinta.fi)

### FINLAND

Ombudsman for Equality  
[www.tasa-arvo.fi](http://www.tasa-arvo.fi)

### FRANCE

Defender of Rights  
[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)

### GERMANY

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency  
[www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de](http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de)

### GREECE

Greek Ombudsman  
[www.synigoros.gr](http://www.synigoros.gr)

### HUNGARY

Equal Treatment Authority  
[www.egyenlobanasmod.hu](http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu)

### HUNGARY

Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights  
[www.ajbh.hu](http://www.ajbh.hu)

### IRELAND

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission  
[www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie)

### ITALY

National Equality Councillor  
[www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale](http://www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale)

### ITALY

National Office against Racial Discrimination - UNAR  
[www.unar.it](http://www.unar.it)

### LATVIA

Office of the Ombudsman  
[www.tiesibsargs.lv](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv)

### LITHUANIA

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson  
[www.lygybe.lt](http://www.lygybe.lt)

### LUXEMBURG

Centre for Equal Treatment  
[www.cet.lu](http://www.cet.lu)

### (FYRO) MACEDONIA

Commission for the Protection against Discrimination  
[www.kzd.mk](http://www.kzd.mk)

### MALTA

National Commission for Persons with Disability  
[www.knpd.org](http://www.knpd.org)

### MALTA

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality  
[www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)

### MONTENEGRO

Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)  
[www.ombudsman.co.me](http://www.ombudsman.co.me)

### NETHERLANDS

Netherlands Institute for Human Rights  
[www.mensenrechten.nl](http://www.mensenrechten.nl)

### NORWAY

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud  
[www.ldo.no](http://www.ldo.no)

### POLAND

Commissioner for Human Rights  
[www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)

### PORTUGAL

Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality  
[www.cig.gov.pt](http://www.cig.gov.pt)

### PORTUGAL

Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment  
[www.cite.gov.pt](http://www.cite.gov.pt)

### PORTUGAL

High Commission for Migration  
[www.acm.gov.pt](http://www.acm.gov.pt)

### ROMANIA

National Council for Combating Discrimination  
[www.cncd.org.ro](http://www.cncd.org.ro)

### SERBIA

Commissioner for Protection of Equality  
[www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs](http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs)

### SLOVAKIA

National Centre for Human Rights  
[www.snsfp.sk](http://www.snsfp.sk)

### SLOVENIA

Advocate of the Principle of Equality  
[www.zagovornik.net](http://www.zagovornik.net)

### SPAIN

Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination  
[www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es](http://www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es)

### SWEDEN

Equality Ombudsman  
[www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

### UNITED KINGDOM - GREAT BRITAIN

Equality and Human Rights Commission  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### UNITED KINGDOM - NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)





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[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)

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