

Equinet Executive Board Meeting III 18 & 19 June 2014 Stockholm, Sweden

Venue: Office of Equality Ombusman (Diskriminerings Ombudsmannen), Torsgatan 10, Stockholm, Sweden

ATTENDANCE

<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Equinet Secretariat</u>
Anna Błaszczak (AB) Michel Bonte (MB) Evelyn Collins (ECo) István Haller (IH) Sandra Ribeiro (SR) Tena Simonovic-Einwalter (TSE) <i>over phone day 1</i> Nepheli Yatropoulos (NY)	Anne Gaspard (AG), Executive Director Yannick Godin (YG), Administration & Finance Officer Tamás Kádár (TK), Senior Policy Officer Cosmin Popa (CP), Communications Officer Ilaria Volpe (IV), Policy Officer - Gender Equality Jessica Machacova (JM), Policy and Communications Assistant (trainee)

Chair of the meeting: Evelyn Collins (ECo)

Apologies: Mari-Liis Sepper (MLS), Therese Spiteri (TS), *day 2* – Tena Šimonovic-Einwalter

Minutes: Yannick Godin (YG), Cosmin Popa (CP), Jessica Machacova (JM)

MINUTES

OPENING OF THE EQUINET BOARD MEETING

ECo opened the Board Meeting on Wednesday 18 June at 2 p.m. and welcomed all Board Members and the Equinet Secretariat team. The proposed agenda and the order of the agenda for the meeting was reviewed and agreed on by all Board Members present.

AG and ECo conveyed the recent communication from Therese Spiteri (TS) informing the board about the change in her professional situation in Malta. TS has assured AG that she will abide by any decision taken by the Board in this context.

Based on the information received from TS, the Board concluded that she is no longer in a position to continue as a member of the Board in view of the procedures in place (i.e. no longer fulfilling the requirement to be a staff member with a senior level of responsibility within a member NEB). However, given the fact that the requirements for the role of Equinet Treasurer are much broader (treasurer nominated by the Board, no requirement to be a Member of the Board), it was proposed that TS could be invited to pursue this role and position of Treasurer – allowing her unique experience with management of EC funding action grants to continue supporting and benefitting Equinet network and secretariat.

The Board also noted that it would be advisable for the Equinet Board Elections procedures to be even clearer in future as to the requirements to candidate, become *and remain* an Equinet Board Member.

DECISION: TS to be informed of the need to resign from the Board as her professional position prevents her from continuing to serve as a Member on the Board, and to be invited to pursue her role as Equinet Treasurer for the remaining of the Board mandate (until 2015). In this context, she will be invited to some meetings of the Board where possible and appropriate (e.g. when important financial matters are addressed).

DECISION: The Board also decided to invite Kosana Beker from the Serbian Commission for the Protection of Equality (member NEB) to join in as Board Member and replacement of TS for the remaining of the mandate (until 2015). She was the first non-elected candidate in the same geographical cluster as TS at the last Equinet Board elections.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NY: the nomination of a new Defender of the Rights at the helm of the equality body in France is expected to be announced in the next days or weeks. M. Jacques Toubon, a former Minister of Justice, has been proposed by the French President.

AG: Equinet should expect to receive a potential new membership application (for Board review at a next meeting) from the Tribunal for Equal Treatment of Finland, interested to join the Equinet Network.

MINUTES OF LAST EQUINET MEETINGS

The Board reviewed the draft Minutes of the last Equinet Board Meeting (held on 25 April 2014).

AG informed that TS proposed the following amendment which the Board endorsed.

DECISION: Minutes Board Meeting II 25 April 2014 approved with the amendment below

Page 2 (Announcements) - last point raised by TS should read:

“TS announced that a civil union act has recently been passed in Malta which includes possibility of adoption by same-sex couples. There will also be a public consultation on transforming the National Commission for the Protection of Equality (NCPE) into a broader National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) in Malta. TS also mentioned that due to the fact that the position of Director was vacant, the Commissioner was also currently the acting director.”

PROCESSES AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING THE IMPACT OF EQUALITY BODIES

NC presented the report and the main findings of this Equinet paper produced at the end of 2013 and the Board engaged in a discussion in the context of the follow-up of this report. This area – where there is room for significant expansion and development of monitoring and evaluation among NEBs - was clearly identified by the Board as a potential area of exploration for a future training event for instance.

It was also mentioned that indicators should be used carefully as they could be used to undermine equality bodies, especially in the context of possible comparison between countries.

Potential follow up to this project could be the launching a peer review pilot project that would focus on management oriented activities. This possibility will be explored and further developed by the Board and the Secretariat in the context of future work programmes.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

- Cooperation with European Parliament – Equinet MEP Toolkit

The Board reviewed and shared comments and important editing on the draft Equinet MEP toolkit, currently under final stages of preparation. An information and call was sent to Equinet Members inviting equality bodies to share contacts with MEPs they might have in the new EP and various useful contacts are in the process of being received and collected by the Equinet Secretariat as a result.

DECISION: The final Equinet MEP Toolkit will be disseminated widely to all MEPs in the European Parliament (EP), as well as to Equinet Members for their further use and dissemination. The invitation to Equinet Launch event foreseen in the EP will be targeted to relevant MEPs/Committees and MEPs contacts shared by Members NEBs.

- Draft procedure for Equinet third-party interventions before the ECtHR

The Board was supportive of the overall idea and proposal of exploring third party interventions whilst underlining that issues relating to the legitimacy of the action will need to be reviewed carefully, as well as specific issues relating to veto rights for each Member or to opting in or out depending on sensitivities and cases.

DECISION: The proposal and procedure will be further discussed by the Board at its September meeting, with a view to presenting a proposal to Members to discuss and ratify at the AGM this year. The project will also be included in general terms in the Strategic Plan and will need to be endorsed by Members at the AGM.

- Future membership perspectives and related funding

It appears essential that a clear definition of what constitutes an equality body be reached and shared within Equinet to help the Board determine clearer criteria for future membership in the context of potential wider geographic scope for membership applications. Related funding issues also need to be explored.

DECISION: Proposal of a clear and common definition of an equality body in the context of future membership to be developed and proposed to the Board for further discussion.

EQUINET WORK PROGRAMME 2014

The Board discussed and provided valuable inputs into the various Work Programme items proposed under Board agenda, including the draft programmes for the forthcoming Equinet Training events, the preparation of a Good Practice Guide on equality bodies making recommendations to policy-makers, the ad-hoc initiative on Violence against Women, and progress being made on projects by the various Equinet Working Groups.

=== End of DAY 1 at 6 p.m. ===

Day 2 of the Board Meeting focused principally on the preparations of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

PROCESS TOWARDS EQUINET STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2018

- o Discussion on draft Synthesis Note on Outcomes of Membership Consultation

The Board shared views and reviewed the draft Synthesis Note of the members' consultation on the next strategic plan, prepared by Equinet Secretariat. The high level of responses and contributions received from Equinet Members was underlined and highly appreciated, providing a very rich input from the membership into the consultation process for the preparation of the next Strategic Plan.

The Board welcomed and agreed with the overall direction and strategic objectives proposed as part of the draft Synthesis Note as a good reflection and analysis of outcomes of the consultation.

A number of specific points, suggestions and amendments to the note were discussed and agreed. The Board supported and agreed that specific activities and working methods, including the names of the specific thematic Equinet Working Groups and definition of topics, should be mentioned and developed under each annual work plan and not in the multi-annual Strategic Plan, so as to allow flexibility for evolution and development of specific working methods as appropriate over the next strategic plan 4-years period.

On the issue of being the expert voice of NEBs at European level, the Board agreed that Equinet could develop a stronger position and take a stand in its publications, propose recommendations on different issues and play its role as a strong authoritative expert voice in the field of equality and anti-discrimination in Europe, as well as being seen to play such a role. This role should be developed appropriately, in a way that continues to support Equinet's positive reputation.

DECISION: Synthesis Note on Outcomes of Consultation on Equinet Strategic Plan to integrate Board comments and amendments agreed, and finalised by Equinet Secretariat accordingly. The Synthesis note will be shared and circulated to Equinet Members for information and comments, and used as the basis for further elaboration of the Draft Equinet Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

- Update and progress in consultation and planning process

AG updated the Board on progress achieved and steps ahead in the overall consultation and process according to the planning note. Consultation with external stakeholders is still ongoing, including discussions planned in early July with European civil society platforms and social partners' representatives, as well as European Commission and EU Agencies (FRA and EIGE).

On foot of circulating the draft Synthesis Note of the consultation process on the Strategic Plan with Equinet Members, individual Board Members will be encouraged and agreed to establish contacts with few (heads of) equality bodies with a view to engage them and seek views in the important process.

DECISION: The Secretariat will propose and circulate a list of members that could be contacted by each Board members as a proactive measure to engage on the Strategic Plan development process.

=== The Chair declared the Board Meeting (day 2) closed at 12.00 ===