

Equinet Executive Board Meeting II
15 June 2016
Brussels, Belgium

Venue: Equinet Offices / UNIA (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), 138 Rue Royale, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

ATTENDANCE	
<p><u>Board Members</u></p> <p>Anna Błaszczak (AB) Patrick Charlier (PC) Evelyn Collins (ECo) Sandra Konstatzky (SK) Elisabeth Lier Haugseth (ELH) Kalliopi Lykovardi (KL) Kosana Beker (KB)</p>	<p><u>Equinet Secretariat</u></p> <p>Anne Gaspard (AG), Executive Director Yannick Godin (YG), Administration & Finance Officer Tamás Kádár (TK), Head of Legal & Policy team Sarah Cooke O’Dowd (SOD), Communication Officer Jessica Machacova (JM), Membership & Policy Officer Katrine Steinfeld (KS), Policy Officer /Gender Equality Nicolas Oliveri Ibaldi (NOI), Events/Administration Assistant, Trainee</p>

Chair of the meeting: Evelyn Collins (ECo)

Apologies:

Board Member – Sarah Benichou (SB)

Minutes: Yannick Godin (YG)

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

OPENING OF THE EQUINET BOARD MEETING

ECo opened the Board meeting at 09:00. The proposed agenda for the meeting was reviewed and agreed upon by participants.

FOLLOW-UP LAST EQUINET MEETINGS

Minutes Board Meeting 4 March 2016

DECISION: The draft Minutes of the last Board meeting were reviewed and approved by the Board. Minutes will be made available to Members on the restricted Members' section of the Equinet website.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Standards for NEBs

A paper outlining possible next steps supporting the development of standards for NEBs following the Equinet Working Paper (to be launched at Equinet events 15-16 June) was discussed by the Board.

Ideas on next steps at European and international levels, and suggestions to encourage Equinet member NEBs to promote this work and topic at national level were shared and brought forward:

- Develop a concise note for Members (one pager) laying out suggestions on how NEBs could help follow-up, disseminate and use the paper at national level, including for example through sending the Working Paper to relevant Ministries in their country, inviting Members to use their relevant contacts for dissemination, consider translation of the document as relevant, and encouraging use of the Working Paper on Standards to support their own work at national level.
- Share this draft Members Note alongside the Equinet Working Paper on Standards with NEBs at the Equinet AGM (discussion groups), subsequently send the Equinet Working Paper on Standards and Members Note on suggested steps for follow up, dissemination and use addressed to the Heads of equality bodies, as well as include in Members Bulletin.
- Investigate the possibility of the academic world / experts building on and producing further material and resources supporting the potential of and need for standards for equality bodies. Aspect to be added to the Internal Board Note on next steps.

- Have a clear focus on our communications with FRA about the need for standards.
- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: note possible side event in Geneva with Belgium in the autumn.
- Highlight and communicate on any developments and data illustrating ongoing challenges faced by equality bodies in relation to their resources, staff capacity, mandate or independence.

DECISION: Internal note on next steps to be updated for further consideration and discussion at next Board meeting, prior to Equinet AGM and communication within the membership on this occasion and subsequently to encourage NEBs' support and follow-up on this topic at national level.

EQUINET WORK PROGRAMME 2016

The Board was presented with updates and commented on the range of work and activities pursued by Equinet under its work programme implementation for 2016. This included reporting progress on Equinet Working Groups, the preparation of the study paper on the use of positive duties in promoting equality, Equinet Training on Equality Bodies and Social Media, the Strategic Litigation Cluster and the Cooperation platforms FRA-CoE-Equinet-ENNHRI.

Equinet AGM 2016

AG updated the Board on important considerations for confirming dates of the Equinet AGM in view of limited availabilities from external speakers representing key stakeholders.

The Board also discussed and provided input for the further development of a relevant draft programme for the AGM, including possible topics discussion groups with Members (including follow-up and next steps to work on Standards for NEBs).

DECISION: the Equinet AGM will take place in Brussels on 29th September (afternoon) and 30th September (morning). Invitations with a draft AGM Programme and registration to be opened for Members accordingly.

Members' survey on integration of migrants

In view of the interest on this topic, the Board agreed it would be valuable to seek to compile and present the outcomes of the Members' survey on integration of Migrants in a suitable concise format. In view of interest expressed on this topic, Equinet will consider ways to share these outcomes externally (e.g. with the EC, FRA) in addition to internally within the membership.

DECISION: Compilation document of outcomes of the survey on integration of migrants to be considered at the September Board Meeting, prior to potential dissemination within Equinet Members and among a wider audience.

PREPARATION OF EQUINET DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2017

Board Members shared views and contributed ideas as part of a brainstorming and discussion session aiming to support the preparation of a relevant Equinet draft Work Programme to be proposed to Members and for the purposes of EC funding for 2017.

This session resulted in a range of priorities and possible themes for potential inclusion as part of Equinet's work and activities for the coming year, within the scope of the EC grant available and in line with Members' needs and European priorities.

Further consultation on proposed topics and ideas will be conducted inviting feedback from the Equinet Working Groups. Consultation meetings and discussions to exchange on future priority topics will be organised with key stakeholders and partners (e.g. European Commission, European civil society networks and social partners) prior to finalisation of a Draft Equinet Work Programme 2017 to be endorsed by the Board and presented to the membership.

DECISION: proposal of first draft Work Programme to be circulated to the Board for comments over the summer. Equinet Draft Work Programme 2017 will be presented to the Board for final review and endorsement at September Board Meeting, prior to immediate circulation to Equinet Members as a proposed voting item (open to written amendments) for AGM ratification.

EQUINET MEMBERSHIP

Italy: A request was considered from the Office of *Consigliera Nazionale di Parita* to waive its membership fee.

DECISION: following this specific request and in view of no engagement in the network this year, the Board agreed to waive the membership fee of this member organization on an exceptional basis for 2016. The secretariat will contact the Office of *Consigliera Nazionale di Parita* with a view to assess and clarify whether they may wish to withdraw completely their membership in future or remain as a member, in which case they would need to ensure that they can engage and comply with Equinet membership commitments in the future.

Finland: plans to merge the two equality bodies (non-discrimination Ombudsman and Equality Ombudsman) are under discussion and consideration in Finland; this is relevant in the context of the planned visit to these members attached to the next Board meeting in September in Helsinki.

Poland: given the situation of the NEB in Poland, a formal letter from Equinet to the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights would be welcome and helpful, expressing solidarity, concern about the budget cuts jeopardizing the efficiency of the body and support for the independence, resources and standards for NEBs.

EQUINET GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FINANDE

Board elections procedure

Considerations for the review of Equinet Board Elections procedures in the future were discussed. The Board agreed the following:

- (i) Keep the geographical clusters while updating them to remove inconsistencies (point A of Annex 7.1)
- (ii) Maintain the right for each Member to nominate a candidate (point B of Annex 7.1)
- (iii) Clarify that the requirements to become a Board Member remain valid for the full length of the Board mandate (point C of Annex 7.1)
- (iv) Insert a new chapter in the procedure detailing how a Board mandate is expected to be carried out (point D of Annex 7.1)
- (v) Keep the length of a Board mandate to two years.

DECISION: a proposal of revised Board Elections procedures will be drafted accordingly, and reviewed for endorsement by the Board at its next September meeting, prior to immediate circulation to Equinet Members as a proposed voting item (open to written amendments) for AGM ratification.

Equinet Annual EC Grant - Management Financial Report

AG reported that the final report on the Equinet operating Grant 2015 was successfully approved by the EC, triggering payment of the final grant installment.

YG presented to the Board the current situation of Equinet accounts 2016 which remains within forecasted budget under the approved EC Grant.

RELEVANT EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS INITIATIVES

Relevant initiatives and engagement for Equality Bodies at European level were brought to the attention of the Equinet Board. These included updates on recent meetings of the EU High-Level Groups on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity (7-8 June 2016) and on Combating Racism and Xenophobia (14 June 2016) in which Equinet participated, the forthcoming FRA Fundamental Rights Forum (20-23 June), EC initiatives to launch a Journalism Award and an awareness campaign on LGBT.

NEXT MEETINGS

DECISION: the next Board meetings will take place on **8 September 2016 in Helsinki, Finland** and **8 December 2016 in Brussels, Belgium**.

ECo thanked Board Members for their contribution and Equinet staff for all preparations and hard work.

== The Chair closed the Board Meeting at 15:30 ==