



# 2018 EQUINET WORK PLAN

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

National Equality bodies are public institutions established by law to promote equality and combat discrimination, on grounds including gender and gender identity, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and other grounds.

The Equinet 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.

## EQUINET, THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

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# Introduction

**A year of reflection.** 2018 will be the last year of the Equinet's current strategic plan. Thus, it will be a year for us to reflect on our work, and develop a new strategy to bring us forward for the coming years. Following on from reflections made during our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2017, we will consult with all members of the Network, as well as external stakeholders, in order to identify how to put the Network's best foot forward to deal with current and future challenges and developments affecting equality bodies and the broader field of equality in Europe. These include the need for standards for the work of equality bodies, greater linking of EU non-discrimination work with the follow-up of the EU2020 agenda, the upcoming new funding regime at EU level, the 2019 EU parliamentary elections, as well as cooperation and links with national human rights institutions and Ombud institutions.

**Building capacity and ensuring peer support for equality bodies' staff.** We will organise seminars for our members to explore ideas and share their work on how to tackle discrimination against young people, on how to deal with work-life balance and dismissal protection and how to combat hate speech, based on racism, sexism, or any other grounds of discrimination. There will be a training session on the UNCPRD and article 33(2), in cooperation with our partners. Equinet Clusters will focus on how equality bodies carry out research and data collection and how they can best contribute to facilitating freedom of movement as Article 4 bodies under the 2014 EC Directive. We will continue with our project on combating violence against women. Our Working Groups will offer members the opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices, as well as learning from external experts.

**Contributing to the European Equality Agenda.** 2018 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the implementation of the 2000 EU Directives, as well as 10 years since the Horizontal Directive was first proposed. These will be important markers, guiding our work throughout the year. Our conferences will bring together members, experts and stakeholders on key developments in the field of equal treatment at national and European levels. One conference will consider the achievements of the legislation and the remaining challenges. It will also present and build on the findings of the research recently contracted by Equinet on 'Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies', which looks at the developments of equality bodies' budgets and mandates. Another conference will look at the links between discrimination and poverty, exploring links to the European Pillar of Social Rights. Equinet will continue to engage with European stakeholders on a regular basis and provide significant input to developments on the European equality agenda on all grounds, paying particular attention to intersecting inequalities.

**Standards for Equality Bodies.** Making use of materials published in recent years, Equinet will continue discussions with equality bodies on this issue as well as engaging with external stakeholders to support the development of European standards for equality bodies.

# Development of the new Equinet Strategic Plan 2019-2022

## Guiding principles for the content of the new strategic plan:

- The strategic plan will build on progress made under the current Strategic Plan 2015-2018 and on achievements of Equinet in its first decade, with a view to further developing these, whilst also addressing new areas of interest and employing new working methods as required.
- The strategic plan will ensure that Equinet meets the needs of its members in terms of their diversity, their operations at Member State level, their commitment to networking with their peers and their ambitions at European level.
- The Strategic Plan will ensure that the work of Equinet is relevant to a context for equality bodies at European and Member State levels that is changing and challenging in many instances.

## Guiding principles for the *process of preparing* the new strategic plan:

- The planning process will be participative and inclusive, involving member equality bodies and their staff from across Europe. The planning process will be led by the Executive Board of Equinet with the support of the Equinet Secretariat;
- The planning process will secure and take into consideration the perspective of EU institutions and key stakeholders at European level;
- The development of the Strategic Plan will involve a brief analysis of the context for the next four years and will make use of the end-of-year external evaluation reports of Equinet's activities from previous years;
- The process will continue with wide ranging consultation with members and key external stakeholders in order to collect their views on Equinet's future direction and objectives;
- The material from this consultation will be gathered and synthesised by the secretariat for consideration by the Board; and further dissemination to Members for comments and reaction;
- The Board will work with the Secretariat to prepare a draft Strategic Plan to be sent to Equinet Members for comments;

**The final draft Strategic Plan will be considered, finalized and ratified by Equinet members at their Annual General Meeting in late 2018.**

# Equinet's Strategic Goals 2015 - 2018

## A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

- A1** Develop knowledge and skills of staff members of equality bodies
- A2** Develop strategic and organisational capacity of bodies
- A3** Foster and promote innovative approaches in the work of equality bodies

## B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

- B1** Contribute to equality policy and law at European level
- B2** Convey an expert voice of equality bodies by sharing their expertise, experience and recommendations
- B3** Inform and engage with policy makers and partners

## C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

- C1** Inform and engage equality bodies on relevant European developments
- C2** Provide information on equality bodies to external audiences
- C3** Facilitate exchange of information and networking among members
- C4** Generate, collect and communicate knowledge on equal treatment

## D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

- D1** Support the development of standards for and in the work of equality bodies
- D2** Strengthen the standing of equality bodies in a changing context
- D3** Enhance cooperation with stakeholders
- D4** Ensure the sustainable development of the network and its capacity to respond to the diverse needs of members

# Overview of Activities and Outputs 2018

TOOLS FOR ACTION		OUTPUTS
A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES		
SEMINARS	<b>Work-Life Balance and Dismissal Protection</b>	1 seminar 1 summary
	<b>How to combat hate speech as an equality body</b>	1 seminar 1 summary
	<b>Age Discrimination – focus on young people</b>	1 seminar 1 summary
TRAINING SESSION	<b>UNCRPD and article 33(2)</b>	1 training event 1 summary
CLUSTER	<b>Research &amp; Data Collection</b>	2 Cluster meetings
	<b>Freedom of Movement: Article 4 bodies under the 2014 Directive</b>	2 Cluster meetings
PROJECT	<b>Violence against Women and Gender based violence</b>	2 meetings 1 position paper
WORKING GROUPS	<b>Gender Equality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work-Life Balance</li> <li>• Pregnancy and maternity discrimination</li> <li>• Rights of Trans* people</li> </ul>	2 meetings <i>In Focus</i> Brief (Rights of Trans* people)
	<b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hate speech</li> <li>• Positive narratives and values-based communication</li> </ul>	2 meetings 1 set of recommendations
	<b>Equality Law</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age discrimination</li> <li>• Continuation of ECtHR monitoring</li> </ul>	2 meetings 1 report

## B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

CONFERENCES	<b>Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies</b>	1 event 1 summary
	<b>Conference: Links between discrimination &amp; poverty</b>	1 event 1 summary
WORKING GROUP	<b>Policy Formation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perspective on hate speech</li> <li>• Open item/topic – depending on policy priorities</li> </ul>	2 meetings 1 perspective
ENGAGEMENT	Ongoing engagement with European and international organisations and stakeholders	Regular meetings and exchange Reaction to developments in policy and legislation

## C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

RESEARCH	Making visible the work and experiences of equality bodies	Preparatory phase of the research
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New website (external and internal)</li> <li>• Annual report</li> <li>• Newsbook</li> <li>• Members' Bulletins</li> </ul>	

## D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

HORIZONTAL ENGAGEMENT	Standards for Equality Bodies Engagement with European policy makers and stakeholders Engagement on Equality and Human Rights
MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT	Equinet membership engagement Explore options to support equality bodies under pressure

## A. BUILDING CAPACITY AND PEER SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BODIES

### **SEMINAR (1): Work-Life Balance and Dismissal Protection**

In its Communication dated 26 April 2017 to the European Parliament, Council, Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions, the European Commission launched its initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers. Among the non-legislative measures proposed, the Communication lists “a seminar, in cooperation with the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET), on capacity building activities for equality bodies and other respective labour market supervisory bodies (Network of Labour Inspectorates, SLIC) in Member States, with a focus on dismissal protection.”

Following consultation of Equinet members in 2016, the European Commission seeks to address pregnancy and motherhood related discrimination on the labour market with a specific focus on dismissal protection, including the periods surrounding pregnancy and maternity leave. The seminar will therefore be organized in close cooperation with the European Commission, and draw on the needs and experiences of national equality bodies in order to better support persons experiencing discriminatory dismissal in cooperation with stakeholders such as labour inspectorates. The seminar would be an opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices among equality bodies and other stakeholders on the labour market. The seminar would seek to consider intersectionality in the lived experience of discrimination.

Equinet will support the preparation and delivery of the seminar in terms of content, as well as facilitating the participation of Equinet members. Equinet will cooperate closely with the European Commission and other partners in delivering these outcomes.

#### Expected outputs:

1. 45 staff members of equality bodies will participate at this seminar from more than 20 countries.
2. A summary of the seminar will be uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: B1 B2 B3 C1 C3 C4

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### **SEMINAR (2): Tackling age discrimination – focus on young people**

As a follow up of the 2016 Perspective *Equality Bodies combating discrimination against young people*, Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day capacity-building seminar in cooperation with the European Youth Forum for staff members of equality bodies and representatives of youth organisations. The seminar will focus on equality for and age discrimination against young

people. It will gather participants and speakers from equality bodies and youth organisations, as well as external experts.

The seminar will address different themes, such as:

- International and EU legislative and policy frameworks,
- Challenges related to inequality of and discrimination against young people, and
- Issues connected to the day-to-day work of equality bodies, such as awareness raising, litigation and promotion work.

The seminar also aims to identify ways forward for a strengthened cooperation between equality bodies and youth organisations, as recommended by the 2016 Equinet Perspective.

#### Expected outputs:

1. 45 staff members of equality bodies will participate at this seminar from more than 20 countries.
2. A summary of the seminar will be uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: **C1 C3 C4 D3**

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### **SEMINAR (3): How to combat hate speech as an equality body**

Equinet will organise a 1 ½ day capacity-building seminar for staff members of equality bodies on the different ways of handling hate speech that they have at their disposal. The seminar will inter alia analyse sexist and racist hate speech and will seek to consider the role of intersectionality in vulnerability and its implications for combating hate speech.

Hate speech is a growing phenomenon, and while some equality bodies have a legal mandate to take on cases against hate speech, others use different methods to try to tackle the problem and prevent hate speech from developing. This seminar will aim to understand what the issues are for equality bodies and provide practical solutions from a legal, policy and communication perspective.

The seminar will explore how to deal with hate speech in the following ways:

- Understanding: Research and data collection help us to better identify the main issues on hate speech in our context, including who carries it out and on what grounds;
- Prevention: Embedding the practice of equality inside organisations via their systems, communication and policies, including training and recommendations for educators, media and policy makers;
- Management: Legal, policy and communication approaches on how to handle hate speech.



The seminar will also take into account the European Commission's work on hate speech, notably with the Code of conduct for IT companies, the ECRI GPR No. 15 and the learnings from the Equinet communication toolkit developed by PIRC in 2017 on creating positive narratives through values-based communication.

Expected outputs:

1. 45 staff members of equality bodies will participate at this seminar from more than 20 countries.
2. A summary of the seminar will be uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: **C3 C4**

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**TRAINING: Engagement of the article 33(2) Independent Monitoring Mechanisms with the UNCRPD Committee – Joint training event for Equality Bodies and National Human Rights Institutions**

Article 33(2) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities foresees the designation of *“a framework, including one or more independent mechanisms (...) to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the (...) Convention”*. It also highlights that *“States Parties shall take into account the principles relating to the status and functioning of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights”*.

The unique mandate of equality bodies makes them a logical choice when designating independent mechanisms at national level. In 2017, 15 equality bodies (among which 7 are also National Human Rights Institutions) were designated independent mechanism to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the CRPD under the article 33(2). Overall, 32 equality bodies and NHRIs were designated independent mechanism to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the CRPD under the article 33(2) in 29 countries.

In practice, independent mechanisms raise awareness about the Convention, monitor it, handle complaints and produce recommendations to improve its implementation. They have therefore a strategic role in engaging with the Committee when their State Party is being examined.

In order to ensure effective engagement with the CRPD Committee as a key for better implementation of the Convention at national level, Equinet will partner with ENNHRI (European Network of Human Rights Institutions) to organise a joint training event for equality bodies and NHRIs on engaging with the UNCRPD Committee.

The training event will aim to increase the strategic capacity of equality bodies and NHRIs to engage with the UNCRPD Committee, as well as to:

- Identify concrete avenues for strengthened cooperation with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in the monitoring process
- Strengthening links and peer support among equality bodies and NHRIs and complement the work of the ENNHRI UNCRPD Working Group

The European Disability Forum (EDF) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) will be proposed to partner with Equinet and ENNHRI in order to provide expertise and feedback on the agenda of the training event and facilitate contacts with potential speakers from DPOs and the CRPD Committee.

Expected outputs:

1. 15 members of equality bodies will participate at this training session

Further objectives met: **B3 C1 C3 D3**

**CLUSTER (1): Research and Data Collection**

Equality bodies carry out or commission research to develop knowledge of and highlight the situation of victims of discrimination. Research establishes the context for the work of the equality body on a given issue. It communicates the commitment of the equality body to those issues and to those who are discriminated against. Furthermore, it enables an authoritative equality body contribution to policy making on discrimination concerns.

Many equality bodies identify data deficits with regard to different groups. These are found to hamper research and survey work by equality bodies. Equality bodies also communicate a concern to improve these data deficits by working on new methodologies, including with national bodies responsible for data collection. The Cluster will also seek to consider the difficulties in collecting data on intersecting inequalities due to the level of precision required to capture the experience of overlapping forms of discrimination.

In order to identify good practices on how to run successful research and overcome data deficits, in 2017, Equinet initiated a members-led Cluster bringing together equality bodies' staff members responsible for research and data collection.

This thematic Cluster provides a space for interested equality bodies to:

- Discuss the challenges of research and data collection and try to find ways forward;
- Share and discuss criteria for successful research and data collection;
- Identify good examples of research and data collection across Europe;
- Identify steps to be taken to address data deficits with limited resources.

This two-year Cluster will produce a final report in 2018, summarising its learnings and experience. Exchange of experience with the U.S in relation to this specific area of data collection could also be foreseen during one of the meetings of the Cluster.

Expected outputs:

1. The Cluster will meet twice during 2018.
2. 15 staff members of equality bodies will participate in this Cluster.
3. 1 summary report of the learnings of the Cluster.

Further objectives met: B2 C2 C3 C4

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**CLUSTER (2): Freedom of Movement for Article 4 bodies under the 2014 Directive**

Directive 2014/54/EU was adopted in order to facilitate the free movement of EU workers and members of their family. When transposing the Directive, over half of the Member States have decided to designate Equinet member equality bodies as bodies to promote equal treatment and to support Union workers and members of their family as required by Article 4 of the Directive.

Given that freedom of movement has traditionally not been part of the mandate of most equality bodies, the new function under this Directive raises the need for capacity-building. Therefore, Equinet will set up a Cluster bringing together equality bodies vested with this new function in order to:

- Build the capacity of equality bodies to fulfil these functions,
- Analyse the main challenges inherent in the new functions,
- Explore the links between the equality and non-discrimination and the new freedom of movement functions,
- Provide a space for peer exchanges.

Expected outputs:

1. The Cluster will meet twice during 2018.
2. 12 staff members of equality bodies will participate in this Cluster.

Further objectives met: B3 C1 C3 C4

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**PROJECT: Combating Violence against Women and Gender Based Violence**

In 2017, project participants exchanged experiences and discussed challenges to working in the field of violence against women and gender based violence as national equality bodies. The important supporting role of equality bodies vis-à-vis international organizations such as the

monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention, GREVIO, was highlighted. Yet several participants expressed the need for further capacity building in this field. The project will aim to address these capacity building needs in 2018, building on the partnerships set up with the Council of Europe, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) in the previous year, as well as drawing in new partners as appropriate.

Capacity building needs focused on communicating about violence against women and gender based violence to drive change; being sensitive to issues of intersectionality while avoiding stigmatization; working with the judiciary; and how to address issues of discrimination arising in the context of violence against women. Institutional challenges related to working on the topic as a national equality body were also raised.

The project will continue to follow the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention by the EU, as well as at national levels. Further capacity building needs may be identified in light of new developments.

In 2018, the project will aim to:

- Address the outstanding capacity building needs of project participants through peer learning and strengthening ties with relevant international organizations working in the field of violence against women and gender based violence;
- Strengthen cooperation between national equality bodies and national human rights institutions working in the field of violence against women and gender based violence, exploring different approaches provided by different mandates in equality and human rights;
- Explore useful tools for addressing violence against women and gender based violence at the institutional level(s).

The final aim of the project will be to:

- Build capacity and explore tools for national equality bodies to work effectively with violence against women;
- Strengthen cooperation between national equality bodies and other international actors active in the field;
- Share the lessons learned with the broader Equinet membership.

#### Expected outputs:

1. The members of the project will participate in two meetings in 2018, focused on capacity building and on drafting the position paper (please see point 2 below).

2. Produce a position paper on how equality bodies can work on violence against women (even without an explicit mandate to do so), addressing the cause-and-effect relationship between violence and inequality

[Further objectives met:](#) B1 B2 B3 C2 C3 C4 D2

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### **WORKING GROUP (1): Gender Equality**

In 2018 the Working Group will:

- Discuss the proposed Work-Life Balance Directive and its implications for equality bodies
- Support the preparation of the seminar on dismissal protection for parents and carers, including pregnancy and motherhood related discrimination in the field of employment.
- Discuss recent development in the field of trans\* rights, which is characterized by a changing legal landscape. Working group members will map challenges and share good practices on how to address these in cooperation with external partners for the purposes of capacity building during one of the working group meetings in 2018. The bridging function of trans\* rights, straddling both gender equality and LGBTI rights, will be addressed.
- Support the discussions of the Policy Formation Working Group on hate speech by addressing sexist hate speech as a specific form of hate speech, mapping its characteristics and prevalence and considering intersecting forms of vulnerability to hate speech.
- Ensure gender mainstreaming in the regular work and activities of Equinet.
- Support dissemination, follow-up and use of previously published outputs of the Working Group, including the *Handbook on Equal Pay* and the report on *Gender Equality in Education*.

#### [Expected outputs:](#)

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2018 with around 20 members present.
2. Preparation of the content for the *In Focus* Brief on combatting discrimination against Trans\* people.

[Further objectives met:](#) B1 B2 C1 C2 C3 C4 D2 D3

## **WORKING GROUP (2): Communication Strategies and Practices**

In 2018 the Working Group will:

- Organise thematic meetings on topical communication challenges that are presented by an expert (internal or external depending on the topic). The group will get to ask questions, identify the values-based messages and work together to develop responses to the challenges.
- Following on from work that we did in 2017 on values and combating online negativity, the Working Group will have a practical session on how to combat hate through positive narratives.
- Develop recommendations on how to set the agenda on equality and non-discrimination during campaigning periods in the run up to elections.

### Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2018 with around 20 members present.
2. Prepare a set of recommendations on agenda setting during election periods.
3. Support the organisation of the Seminar on Hate Speech from the point of view of Equality Bodies

Further objectives met: B2C3 C4 D4

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## **WORKING GROUP (3): Equality Law**

In 2018 the Working Group will:

- Discuss recent national and international case law on age discrimination, including the legal work of equality bodies on this ground. The discussions will have a specific focus on the question of retirement age and the related CJEU jurisprudence, but will also address other fields of life, such as goods and services, social protection and healthcare. Discussions will touch upon the role of other grounds intersecting with age as appropriate. Based on these discussions the Working Group will produce a report on age discrimination that will also inform the Equinet seminar on age discrimination.
- Monitor cases communicated by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to identify those that are directly relevant for equality and non-discrimination and the work of equality bodies. The Working Group will also contribute to preparing any third party interventions to the ECtHR on cases of high relevance relating to equality and non-discrimination.
- Contribute to the preparation and organization of Equinet conferences and seminars with a legal focus.

- Provide a platform for case workers of equality bodies to request information and advice from each other relating to specific cases.
- Support dissemination, follow-up and use of previously published outputs of the Working Group, including the *Discussion paper on Fighting Discrimination on the Ground of Race and Ethnic Origin* and the report on freedom of religion and belief and religious discrimination.

Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2018 with around 20 members present.
2. The Working Group will prepare a report on age discrimination.
3. Monitor relevant cases communicated by the ECtHR and contribution to the drafting of any third-party interventions to the ECtHR.

Further objectives met: **B1 B2 C1 C3 C4**

## B. CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN EQUALITY AGENDA

### **CONFERENCE (1): Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies**

Equinet will organise a one-day conference on Investing in Equality.

Equality is a founding principle and fundamental value of the European Union. Yet it is a value that has to be constantly nurtured and mainstreamed to resist attempts that seek to undermine it. The European Union in the 1990s and early 2000s invested great amounts of political and financial capital to ensure equality for all by amending the Treaties and adopting new EU Directives on equality. In 2018, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deadline for implementing the Racial Equality and Employment Framework Directives, and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Commission's proposal of the so-called Horizontal Directive provide a good opportunity to review the achievements, the current progress and the remaining gaps and challenges.

Importantly, these Directives also introduced the requirement for all EU Member States and candidate countries to set up equality bodies. As they are part and parcel of the national equality infrastructure, their condition is a good indicator of the situation of and commitment to equality. In 2017 Equinet marked its tenth anniversary by commissioning a study on the evolution of the mandates and resources of equality bodies over the past decade. The findings of this study will inform the conference discussions, together with the Equinet Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies and perspectives on links between equality bodies, NHRIs and ombud institutions.

#### Expected outputs:

1. 45 members of equality bodies will participate in this conference from more than 20 countries
2. At least 30 representatives from other stakeholders will participate in this conference.
3. A summary of the conference will be produced and uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: **A2** **C1 C2 C3 C4** **D1 D2 D3 D4**

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### **CONFERENCE (2): Discrimination and Poverty: two sides of the (Euro) coin**

Equinet will organise a one-day conference on the links between discrimination and poverty as a contribution to the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Combating poverty is a key undertaking of the European Union in the field of economic and social rights. This is reflected not only in the European Pillar of Social Rights, but also in fighting poverty and social exclusion being one of the five targets of Europe 2020, the EU's ten-year jobs



and growth strategy. Further to this, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Equinet's earlier work on '[Addressing Poverty and Discrimination: Two Sides of the One Coin](#)' and '[Equality Bodies Contributing to the Protection, Respect and Fulfilment of Economic and Social Rights](#)' demonstrates, based on the experiences of equality bodies, the inextricable link between discrimination and poverty. Poverty leads to discrimination and discrimination exacerbates the experience of poverty. The conference will analyse these links and explore the experiences with socio-economic status as a discrimination ground, introduced by a growing number of countries. The programme will focus on the specific vulnerability of women and societal groups based on for example their ethnic origin or disability.

#### Expected outputs:

1. 45 members of equality bodies will participate in this conference from more than 20 countries.
2. At least 30 representatives from other relevant stakeholders will participate in the conference.
3. A summary of the conference will be produced and uploaded on the Equinet website.

Further objectives met: **A3** **C1 C2 C3** **D1 D2 D3**

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### **WORKING GROUP (4): Policy Formation**

In 2018, the Working Group will:

- Discuss and produce a **Perspective on equality bodies addressing hate speech**, including racist and sexist hate speech. The Perspective will build on the work and experience of equality bodies in this area.
- Discuss and produce an output on a European topic and priority of relevance to be agreed with the Executive Board and Working Group members.
- Support dissemination, follow-up and use of previously published outputs of the Working Group, including the *Factsheet on equality bodies contributing to the List of Actions by the European Commission to advance LGBTI equality* and the *Perspective on the links between equality bodies and ombudspersons*.

#### Expected outputs:

1. The Working Group will meet twice during 2018 with around 15 members present.

2. 1 Perspective on equality bodies addressing hate speech.
3. An output relating to relevant European developments to be agreed with the Board and Working Group.

Further objectives met: **A1** **C1 C2 C3 C4 D2**

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## **ENGAGEMENT** with European and international organisations and stakeholders

In order to contribute to the European equality agenda from the perspective of equality bodies, Equinet will strive to engage all relevant European and international organisations and stakeholders and will continue to support key initiatives taken by the European Institutions.

Beyond the Equinet initiatives and activities planned for 2018, this engagement will cover all equality grounds and fields and their intersections with a focus on topical policy and legislative issues such as, but not limited to:

- The EU's actions to tackle the Gender Pay Gap
- Developments to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies
- The proposed Work-Life Balance Directive
- The European Pillar of Social Rights
- The proposed EU Accessibility Act
- The implementation of the UNCPRD by the EU and State Parties and activities of the UNCPRD Committee
- The implementation of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention and the EU's accession
- The proposed EU Horizontal Directive

Equinet will continue to engage directly with the **European Commission**, specifically the Equality Directorate in DG Justice as well as other Directorates and DGs responsible for relevant equality and fundamental rights issues. Equinet will also engage with relevant expert groups and networks of the European Commission. In particular, Equinet will sustain an engagement in its role as Observer to the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Equinet will engage with the **European Parliament** (EP), in particular with the EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as well as relevant EP thematic Intergroups and Members of the European Parliament interested in the work of equality bodies and in topics relating to equality, non-discrimination and gender equality.

Equinet will pursue and further strengthen its engagement and cooperation with relevant **European Union agencies**, in particular the **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)** and the **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)**.

Equinet will continue to support initiatives within the thematic **Cooperation Platforms** established with the FRA, the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions. These currently cover cooperation in the field of: advancing social and economic rights and socio-economic equality; Roma equality; hate crime and hate speech; and the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Equinet will pursue its ongoing engagement with the **European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)** through continued close cooperation with its Members and Secretariat. This will include linking with ENNHRI's working group focusing on the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** as appropriate.

Equinet will also strengthen its engagement with other relevant organisations at European level such as the Council of Europe and its bodies, OSCE-ODIHR, UN OHCHR, European Ombudsman, as well as civil society and social partners.

Equinet will:

- Participate in European level events on equality, representing equality bodies and the network's activities.
- Continue to develop strong, supportive and mutually beneficial relationships with the European Commission, the European Institutions and agencies, relevant international organisations, and European level stakeholders.
- Promote understanding of and appreciation for the potential, the situation and the learning from the experience of equality bodies among these institutions and organisations.
- Strengthen engagement with and commitment to shared issues and concerns across these institutions and organisations.
- Provide support for initiatives that coincide with the aims and objectives of Equinet (*e.g. progress on ensuring comprehensive equality legislation at EU level, EC Package on Work-Life Balance, the implementation of and the EU's accession to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, etc.*).
- Pursue close cooperation with the European Network of NHRIs (ENNRHI) as well as participating in the various relevant cooperation platforms established between FRA-ENNHRI-Council of Europe-Equinet.
- Participate in joint ventures that coincide with the aims and objectives of Equinet.

[Further objectives met:](#) C2 C3 C4 D2 D3

## C. SERVING AS A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION HUB ON EQUAL TREATMENT

### **RESEARCH:** Making visible the work and experiences of equality bodies (preparatory phase)

Since its establishment, Equinet has provided information about, and conveyed the experiences of, equality bodies to various stakeholders on a wide range of grounds and areas of discrimination. Equality bodies also produce every year essential information and data about their work and the situation of victims of discrimination at national level.

Equinet will prepare a report making visible the work and experiences of equality bodies, in order to:

- Make the experience of equality bodies on the ground visible and easily accessible to European and international policy makers,
- Underline the role of equality bodies as indispensable actors in the area of equality and non-discrimination at European and international levels, and
- Strengthen the visibility of discrimination and equality issues at European and international levels.

The report will draw together selected data and information from equality bodies' work and experience across all grounds and areas of discrimination. It will synthesise the information, analyse trends in order to promote the experience of equality bodies to EU and international stakeholders.

The Cluster on Research and Data Collection will be used as an essential platform for providing feedback on the methodology and progress of the report.

2018 will be dedicated to conceptualising the research to be contracted and developing the methodology, with a view to taking the research report into the following year.

#### Expected output:

1. Conceptualising the research and developing the methodology

Further objectives met: B1 B2 B3 D1 D2

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### **COMMUNICATION**

Equinet's communication is guided by a Communication Strategy revised in 2016 in line with Equinet's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. Equinet aims to provide information on national and EU developments on equality in an accessible manner, thus building the capacity of equality bodies

and contributing to the European equality agenda. We commit to using a values-based approach in our communication.

The following tools will be used as part of Equinet internal and external communication work:

- *Website*: A key source of information about Equinet and European equality bodies, as well as developments in equality and non-discrimination more generally. This will be redeveloped and updated this year in order for it to be accessible and compatible with technological developments.
- *European Directory of Equality Bodies*: Provides up-to-date profiles of each of our members and allows for comparative searches across different areas amongst all the equality bodies.
- *Members-only Forum*: Develop a well-functioning members-only forum on the website to support communication among member equality bodies.
- *Social media channels*: Predominantly Facebook and Twitter, but also Linked In are used to complement the website, raising awareness about the work of Equinet and its members. This way we aim to build a broader pool of followers, who are not the stakeholders with whom we usually meet.
- *Newsbooks*: External newsletters publicise relevant developments in the field of equality in Europe and highlight the latest news from Equinet, its members, European Institutions and other European stakeholders.
- *Members' Bulletin*: Inform Equinet members about EU and international developments and internal network updates through bi-monthly newsletters.
- *Email alerts*: Circulate email alerts on an ad-hoc basis to notify member equality bodies of important and topical issues and requests originating from members and external stakeholders.
- *Publications*: Our publications for 2018 will include a perspective, a report, a position paper and recommendations, resulting from the work of the Network. Each publication will be developed together with a dissemination plan. Further to the 2018 publications, we will continue to disseminate and promote Equinet publications from previous years.
- *Equinet Brief - In Focus*: In 2018, the Working Group on Gender Equality will prepare an In Focus Brief focusing on Trans\* rights.
- *Equinet Promotional Brochure*: 'Equality bodies and Equinet – Promoting Equality in Europe' was released in 2015 and updated in 2016. This is one of our main promotional tools, and will be updated during 2018 if necessary (due to numerous changes in the content) or if they run out.

- *Equinet Annual Report*: Equinet Highlights 2018 will provide a succinct overview of our work, linked to Equinet’s strategic goals. This short summary of our work will be presented in an attractive, accessible and easy to read manner, with values-based messages throughout the document.

Expected outputs:

1. A new, user-friendly, accessible and up-to-date Equinet website, with an aim to reach an average of at least 2000 users<sup>1</sup>/month. Includes a well-developed and up-to-date European Directory of Equality Bodies.
2. Use of an effective and accessible Members-only section on the Equinet website, which will include internal documents relating to the governance of Equinet as well as meeting minutes, working groups’ updates, internal and external newsletters and other Equinet news and requests.
3. Regularly updated Social media accounts
4. Regular issue of the following newsletters: *Newsbook*<sup>2</sup> – monthly; *Members’ Bulletin*<sup>3</sup> – bi-monthly.
5. Equinet Highlights 2018 – Annual Report

Further objectives met: A1 B2 B3 D3 D4

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<sup>1</sup> As per Google Analytics: “users that have had at least one session within the selected date range (this includes both new and returning users)”.

<sup>2</sup> External-oriented newsletter with information on Equinet’s and its members work and relevant European developments.

<sup>3</sup> Newsletters sent only to members. One is on relevant developments at EU and international level, while the other highlights important internal deadlines or requests related to the life of the network.

## D. CONSOLIDATING THE NETWORK AND THE POSITION OF ITS MEMBERS

### **ENGAGEMENT** on Standards for equality bodies

Equinet has for some years advanced the need for up-to-date European standards specifically on the establishment and operation of equality bodies. The absence of such standards leaves equality bodies in various instances vulnerable to having their potential inappropriately limited or restricts the ambition of equality bodies in realising their full potential. As pointed out in recent documents and reports from the European Commission, this potential also includes contributing to the better implementation of EU legislation and equality bodies acting as watchdogs for equal treatment.

In recent years Equinet has developed a body of published work that could assist the development of such standards, including the *Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies* published in 2016 seeking to establish positions that equality bodies could promote, negotiate and advance vis-à-vis European and national administrations in the establishment of standards for equality bodies at European level and their implementation at national level.

Equinet will continue discussions with equality bodies on this issue as well as engaging with key external stakeholders supporting the development of standards for equality bodies, making use of all existing resources produced by Equinet and other stakeholders, such as the outcome of the review of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 2.

#### Expected outputs:

1. Wide dissemination of the *Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies* and the issues that such standards need to address.
2. Bringing up the issue of standards as part of meetings and dialogues with relevant stakeholders, encouraging further action in the field.
3. Identify and work with key partners to advance the work on standards.

#### Further objectives met: **B3**

## **ENGAGEMENT** Meetings with stakeholders from European Institutions, Permanent Representations to the EU, civil society and social partners

In order to represent the specific experience and expertise of equality bodies, Equinet will cooperate with all relevant stakeholders working in the field of equality and non-discrimination, including European Institutions and agencies, other international organisations, member states, civil society and social partners.

Equinet will convene an annual meeting with stakeholders from civil society and the social partner organisations at European level, with a view to share priorities and information on ongoing or planned activities, and explore areas for potential useful linkages and cooperation. Equinet will also seek to increase the engagement of Member States through cooperation with Permanent Representations to the European Union.

### Expected outputs:

1. One meeting with at least five stakeholders from European civil society and social partners

Further objectives met: **B3 C2 C4**

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## **ENGAGEMENT** on Equality and Human Rights

Equinet will sustain discussions with relevant stakeholders and institutions at European level to explore the potential of equality bodies that combine an equality, human rights and/or an ombudsperson mandate. The Equinet perspectives on the links between equality bodies and ombudspersons (2017) and on the links between equality bodies and NHRIs (2011) will be used as a basis for these discussions.

### Expected outputs:

1. Sustained debate to explore the relationship between equality and human rights and the best means of addressing this relationship in the mandates of equality bodies.
2. Use the strong and supportive relationships between relevant platforms and institutions in the fields of equality and human rights as opportunities for furthering the debate.
3. Deepen the understanding and appreciation of the potential and challenges of equality bodies that also hold other mandates, and their approach on how best to realise this potential and address challenges.

Further objectives met: **B3 C2 C3**

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## **MEMBERSHIP** Equinet membership engagement

Equinet will strive to support continued active membership engagement in and contribution to the activities of the network, as well as explore potential further developments of the scope of Equinet membership in the future.

Equinet will also pursue the exchange within the membership on equality bodies under pressure and how the network and Equinet members can support them.

# Management and Administration

Three different entities are involved in managing the Equinet Network.

The **General Assembly of Equinet Members** is composed of all the current Members of Equinet. It is the main decision-making body of the network and it decides on matters pertaining to the strategic direction and the general management of the network. For instance, it approves annual Work Plans and multi-year Strategic Plans. It also votes on new Equinet membership applications received during the year.

The General Assembly of Equinet Members will gather once in 2018 for an **Annual General Meeting** (AGM), to discuss priority work topics of relevance to equality bodies at European level. Members will also vote on internal matters relating to the network (including the audited accounts of the previous year, minutes of AGM 2017, the new Strategic Plan 2019-2022, the Work Plan for 2019 and possible membership applications).

The **Equinet Executive Board** is the managerial body of the network. It is composed of a maximum of nine representatives of Equinet Members elected for a mandate of two years by the general Assembly of Members and is presided by a Chair. It works to best support the work of Equinet members and their positioning at European level and is responsible for the development and implementation of Work Plans. It also works on the development of strategic visions aimed at ensuring the strength, growth and sustainability of the network. To that end, it develops proposals for multi-annual Strategic Plans that are submitted in due course to the General Assembly of Equinet Members for approval. It also supervises the work of the Equinet Secretariat. At least four **Board meetings** will be held at key points during the year when the Equinet Secretariat will report on the state of affairs. Board Members will take decisions in order to ensure the optimal implementation of the work plan and provide guidance on emerging strategic priorities for Equality Bodies.

The Brussels-based **Equinet Secretariat** is the structure responsible for the delivery and effective implementation of the Work Plans proposed by the Board and endorsed by the Members of the network. Under the direct supervision of the Board, it is responsible for the organisation and the successful delivery of all the activities planned for the year. It also works towards ensuring the best possible representation, positioning and sustainability of the network. It acts as a point of contact for external stakeholders, funders and other parties working with or interested in cooperating with Equinet and Equality Bodies.

## Evaluating the impact of our work

As a professional European network, the credibility of Equinet's work rests both on (i) the effective implementation of the planned activities as well as (ii) its ability, as an organisation, to show the meaningful impact of its activities.

Equinet will review how it carries out the evaluation of its impact in order to give a more precise and tangible picture of the efficiency of its work. It will refine the indicators it uses and improve the information system in place to gather the most precise data possible.

To that end, Equinet will commission in the first half of 2018 an organisational management consultancy who will assist in assessing the implementation, and evaluating the impact, of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018. This should deliver valuable learning and insights in identifying predominantly successful areas of work and other areas where investing more focused efforts should be envisaged in the coming years, in the context of the new Strategic Plan 2019-2022. The consultancy will also be expected to provide guidance for the development of tools for quantitatively and qualitatively measurable objectives and progress indicators for the strategic planning process.

# Indicative Equinet Calendar of activities 2018

*Note: Under development*

KEY ACTIVITY	DATE	PLACE
<b>Board meeting 1</b>	Q1	
First meeting of all 4 Working Groups	Q1/Q2	
<b>Conference: Investing in equality</b>	Q1/Q2	
<b>Conference: Links between discrimination and poverty</b>	Q1/Q2	
<b>Board meeting 2</b>	Q2	
<b>Seminar: Age discrimination</b>	Q2	
Cluster on research and data collection I	Q1/Q2	
Cluster on freedom of movement I	Q1/Q2	
Combating Violence Against Women project I	Q1/Q2	
<b>Seminar: How to combat hate speech as an equality body</b>	Q3	
<b>Board meeting 3</b>	Q3	
Second meeting of all 4 Working Groups	Q3/Q4	
Cluster on research and data collection II	Q3/Q4	
Cluster on freedom of movement II	Q3/Q4	
Combating Violence against Women project II	Q3/Q4	
<b>Training: UNCRPD and Article 33(2)</b>	Q3/Q4	
<b>Seminar: Work-Life Balance and Dismissal Protection</b>	Q3/Q4	
<b>Annual General Meeting</b>	Q3/Q4	
<b>Board Meeting 4</b>	Q4	

Q1 (January-March)

Q2 (April-June)

Q3 (July-September)

Q4 (October-December)

## DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2018\*

INCOME 2018		
Sources of funding	Amount (€)	% budget
EC Grant	1.000.000	94,34%
Equinet Membership fees (at least)	60.000	5,66%
<b>Total Funding for 2018</b>	<b>1.060.000</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

EXPENSES 2018		
Costs of Activities	Costs (€)	% budget
Seminar on "Work-Life Balance" (flights + accommodation + venue and other costs)	37.850	3,57%
Seminar on "Hate Speech" (flights + accommodation + venue and other related costs)	37.850	3,57%
Seminar on "Age Discrimination" (flights + accommodation + venue and others)	37.850	3,57%
Conference on "investing in equality" (flights + accommodation + venue and others)	28.750	2,71%
Conference on "Links between poverty and discrimination"	28.750	2,71%
8 working group meetings (flights + accommodation+venue and other related costs)	80.100	7,56%
Cluster on Freedom of Movement (flights + accommodation+venue+expert+others)	12.300	1,16%
Cluster on Research & Data collection (flights + accommodation+venue+expert+others)	12.300	1,16%
Research Making visible the work and experiences of equality bodies	7.465	0,70%
Equinet AGM in Brussels (flights + accommodation + venue and other related costs)	14.300	1,35%
Regular Board meetings (at least 4 with 9 members) (flights + accommodation+ others)	16.860	1,59%
Training on UNCRPD (flights + accommodation+venue+expert and other related costs)	16.450	1,55%
Project on Combatting Violence against Women (flights + accommodation+venue and other related costs)	17.050	1,61%
Expert Support for implementation of the Work Plan	8.700	0,82%
Publications (design and printing)	14.300	1,35%
Website enhancements + maintenance	25.000	2,36%
Secretariat/Board Travel and subsistence	20.000	1,89%
External evaluation	7.100	0,67%
Equinet promotional material	2.000	0,19%
Dissemination/mailings of Equinet productions	16.250	1,53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>441.225</b>	<b>41,62%</b>
<b>Running costs</b>	<b>Costs (€)</b>	<b>% budget</b>

Accounting + financial audit	15.300	1,44%
Depreciation	1.676	0,16%
Fixed costs (rent, phones, photocopies...)	88.122	8,31%
Total salary costs Secretariat 2018	513.677	48,46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>618.775</b>	<b>58,38%</b>
<b>Total Expenses 2018</b>	<b>1.060.000</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

\*This budget will be the basis of the Equinet grant application for 2018 under the European Commission Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.