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Equinet– European Network of Equality Bodies

External Technical Evaluation of 2015 Activities

Report



Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction	3
3. Data and Findings.....	10
4. Analysis.....	40
5. Appendix 1	52
6. Appendix 2: Evaluating the impact of Equinet’s work 2015.....	55

March 2016



1. Executive Summary

Equinet chooses to carry out an external evaluation each year to help organisational learning.

- The funding regime from DG Justice has changed and external evaluations are no longer required
- Previous evaluations have found Equinet to be working very successfully
- Equinet feels that an evaluation can help it learn from its experience by having external oversight

While the approach taken in this evaluation was similar to previous years,

- Members and selected external stakeholders were invited to complete a short online survey
- Certain members, board members, staff and other stakeholders were interviewed in person or by phone
- The topics under consideration touched on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, Equinet's impact, the quality of delivery and how well it is run
- We observed two events – the AGM and a meeting of the evaluation lab and we reviewed a range of internal performance information

Equinet is at the same time developing its in-house approach to monitoring and evaluating performance itself.

- Following the agreement of its second Strategic Plan a year ago, it has developed an initial set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess outputs and impact
- These KPIs can also be used to assess performance against the Strategic Plan
- However, this is the first year of this approach and more may be learnt about the approach than what the data shows
- Thus, how Equinet evaluates itself is a key part of the present external evaluation

This evaluation shows Equinet to have had another very successful year, so it...

- It is on track to deliver its Strategic Plan so far
- The volume of its activities stable, arguably slightly reduced on last year
- Satisfaction levels amongst members and external stakeholders remains very high
- Most members use Equinet's knowledge and work in their own organisations

- Equinet continues to enjoy high levels of credibility and is seen to be ‘part of the conversation’ at senior levels, especially within the EU system

...needs in the year ahead to maintain this level of performance...

- It should continue to set the very positive tone it has established in all of its undertakings
- It should continue with the high level of professionalism of the past, focusing on strong preparation which has been a source of success so far
- And it should seek to do both the last two things to the same standard consistently

...while considering two areas which may help it move to the next level of excellence.

- Reengineer its approach to publications and research focussing more closely on how its target audiences’ needs may be segmented and thinking of different ways of meeting their various needs
- Reviewing certain elements of the internal workings of Equinet, not least:
 - considering adopting a theory of change
 - providing greater continuity of leadership at board level
 - continue to ensure financial sustainability
 - considering adopting a risk register
 - improving its data capture systems

Thus, overall, Equinet continues to be the right organisation, doing the right things, in the right way, as all attest. While its journey continues and there is another level of performance it can reach, this evaluation finds that Equinet – Board, Secretariat and Membership – may take satisfaction from a year well lived!

2. Introduction

This report

This report represents the findings and conclusions of an external evaluation consultancy, commissioned by Equinet, of its activities during 2015.

Evaluation Objective

During the planning process for the evaluation, Equinet made clear that the proposed technical evaluation was not to fulfil the requirements for evaluation under the terms of its funding from DG Justice, under its Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020.



Indeed, this funding scheme places no specific requirement to carry out an external evaluation. However, it is the view of the board of Equinet that they value the feedback and potential for learning that an evaluation can bring and so wish to deploy the findings to help reflect on strategic direction, achievements and pointers for the future. Thus, by seeking the views of members and other stakeholders on a confidential basis, one may ascertain, it is hoped, the key issues for them that Equinet should address during the year ahead.

Equinet

Equinet was established legally as an international not-for-profit association (Aisbl) in 2007. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels. Equinet has been funded through the European Commission's PROGRESS programme until the end of 2014, and is now funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme programme as mentioned above, the objective of which is to 'contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected'.

Equinet's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan proposes four key objectives:

- 1) Building capacity and peer support of equality bodies.
- 2) Contributing to the European equality agenda
- 3) Serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment
- 4) Consolidating the network and the position of members

There is continuity between this strategic plan and the previous one, Equinet's first. The themes of capacity building and support for members, being a centre of expertise and acting as a policy interlocutor between the sector and European Union institutions were amongst the ideas of the previous plan. At the point of this evaluation, Equinet was one year in to its Plan.

Factors informing our Approach

Organisations of a similar nature and working in a similar way to Equinet share certain characteristics that inform our approach to this technical evaluation. Membership organisations, interlocutory organisations and supra-national organisations are all inherently complex to manage – and Equinet is all three!

Typically for **membership organisations**, there is a tension on the one hand, between representation and using democratic approaches to decision making and, on the other hand, arriving at efficient means by which to direct and control the organisation's actions. Dysfunction can occur either when the need for full consultation slows effective executive action, or when overly hasty management action undermines proper accountability by the governing bodies. In our experience, membership organisations have to arrive at their own unique

approach to managing this tension in order to develop more appropriate decision-making processes.

Interlocutory organisations are also complex to manage. Simultaneously meeting the needs of member bodies for information, support, etc, while also meeting the needs of the major funders, such as the European Commission, for a high level of credible political insight can be challenging to combine successfully. Given limited resources, it is easy for both parties to feel dissatisfied without careful stakeholder management.

A further challenge arises from this. It is inherently difficult for organisations such as Equinet to demonstrate the impact that its work has. Attributing a change (for example in policy) to Equinet's efforts is not easy unless those affected by Equinet's work admit to its influence. This problem impinges directly upon the thinking behind the methodology deployed in this and its predecessor evaluations: Equinet's reputation amongst key stakeholders can be used as proxy indicators for impact¹.

Supranational organisations are complex to manage because their 'reach' is so broad. The reality of geography, national and managerial culture differences, as well as language, make the basic running of the organisation and all its interactions more complex. The wide range of political interests of each of its members will also create an essential tension, in the sense that pleasing one member or group of members may lead to the displeasure of others.

Finally, the previous paragraphs have used the term 'organisation' to describe Equinet. Yet, in reality, Equinet is a **Network** with a small secretariat to support it. The nature of authority and control within a network is fundamentally different from authority in a more conventional organisational structure. The decision making style in a network needs to be lighter of touch, geared to coalition and consensus building and patient with the notion that things can take their time in such an environment.

The ability of such an 'organisation' to really appreciate the nature of these complexities and work within them, will to a large measure, we assert, determine its success.

Method

The agreed method for the evaluation again comprised three stages (Table 1).

In slightly more detail, this process involved the following **key activities**:

Stage 1: Engagement

- a. Review all documentation provided by Equinet, including relevant planning, funding, internal and external reports, etc

¹ Burns, S (2000) *Outcome monitoring* Charities Evaluation Services, UK

- b. Agreement of an interview protocol and the content of a short online survey

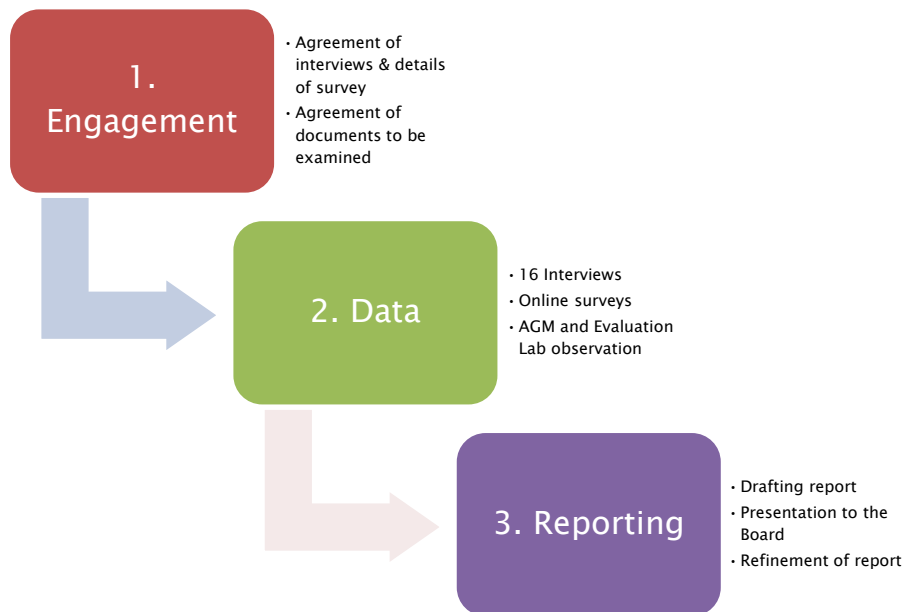
Stage 2: Data Collection

- a. Observation of the 2015 Annual General Meeting and participation in the innovative project the evaluation ‘lab’
- b. Administration of a short online survey on the perceptions of effectiveness and impact to each of Equinet members and other key stakeholders
- c. Interviews with a small sample of Members’ representatives and staff members by telephone and in person (7 carried out (of whom 5 were also members of the Executive Board), 4 external stakeholders and 5 members of staff) totalling **16 interviews**.

Stage 3: Reporting

- a. Analysis of data and preparation of a narrative report for discussion with the Executive Director and dissemination for consultation with the Executive Board
- b. Presentation of the draft report to the Executive Board meeting on 4 March 2016, followed by final revisions and sign-off

Table 1: Outline Method – Three Stages



The data collection process started in October 2015, with the evaluator’s attendance at the Annual General Meeting, and continued, with interviews and an online survey throughout December and January, while the draft report was completed in early February 2016. The final report of the external evaluation was completed for submission by early March 2016.

Changing the focus of the Questions asked this year

The questions in 2015's survey are similar in many respects to the questions posed in previous years, but there are some changes. For example, where last year we considered members' views on the new strategic plan, this year, we are looking at implementation. However, many of the topics are the same and findings from previous evaluations will be compared with this year where helpful.

The reason for making a change in the details of the questions follows a finding from last year's report. Last year we noted:

“Now a new strategic plan is in place, the question emerges how will the board be continuously assured that delivery is on track? Reporting against the strategic plan is a typical response to this question, but with the innovation in the new strategic plan of certain impact measures – for which this report provides baseline scores, it is possible for the board to adopt a simple scorecard to track performance of the organisation over time, against strategic plan objectives and using data that are now all available.”

Picking up this idea, Equinet has worked hard to produce an annual assessment of its outputs and impact, drawing on the indicators previously proposed. The draft report from this work is attached as Appendix 2. We will consider its findings in this report, but at this point it is worth noting that it is the job of this evaluation to provide the data for a number of the indicators, particularly outcome or impact indicators.

Questions asked in the Surveys and Interviews

The online **members' survey** had the following structure of 10 question topics:

After background questions, the topics were:

1. The extent to which Equinet is so far on track to deliver its Strategic Plan
2. The perceptions of Equinet's performance from a work delivery or quality standpoint
3. An assessment of how well Equinet supports capacity building and peer support amongst members
4. How Equinet's presence and work may support member engagement at the EU level
5. The extent of Equinet's influence amongst EU institutions and other stakeholders
6. Equinet's effectiveness as a knowledge and communication hub
7. Member engagement via internal existing communication methods or other means

8. The effectiveness of the Governance of Equinet
9. The effectiveness of Equinet's secretariat
10. Network decision making

External stakeholders had a subset of the seven most relevant questions (i.e. excluding the management questions), while the **interviews** also took a subset of these questions to try to use the scarce interview time to the best effect by getting under the surface of the survey data.

Online Survey

There were 68 responses to the online questionnaire (compared with 66 responses last year and 67 the year in 2012) which was sent to Equinet’s members (43 completed returns) and a sample of other stakeholders (25 completed returns). Most EU and accession states were represented in the responses from members (Figure 2), along with a number of voices from EU level institutions and some NGOs (Figure 3). Note that the figure for Belgium is high because it is the site of so many EU-level institutions.

Figure 1: Number of responses from each Member country

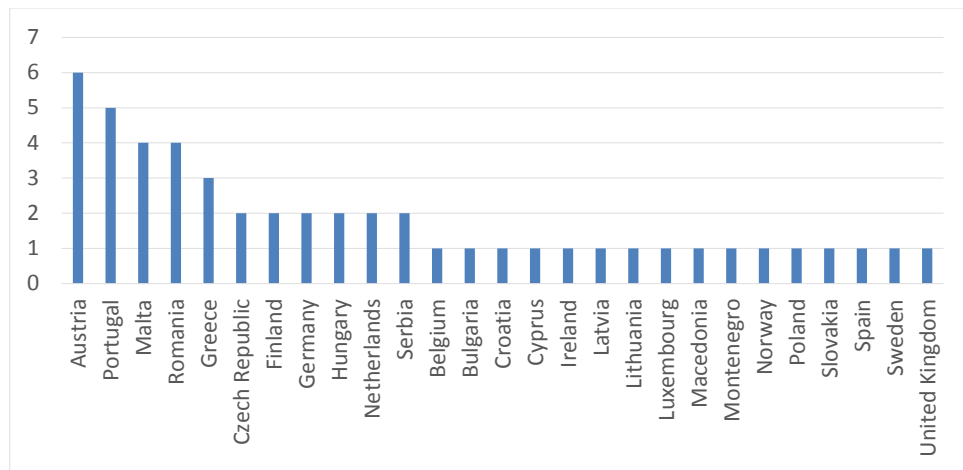
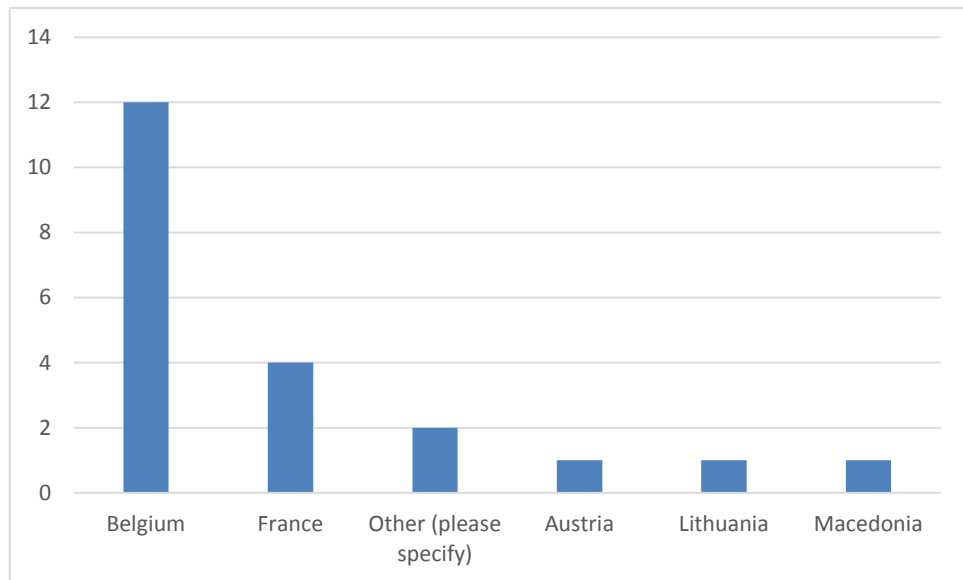


Figure 2: Number of Responses from External Stakeholders by Country



The respondents from Belgium are generally staff working in European organisations based in Brussels. The two ‘Other’ responses were from international organisations.

Interviews

Fifteen interviews were carried out (12 in 2014, 13 in 2013, 10 in 2012), following a pre-agreed interview protocol, with a selection of seven members (including five board members), four members of Equinet staff team, four voices from the Commission and other stakeholders.

Report

This report provides a fairly lengthy exposition of the data from the survey and interviews in order that Equinet can use the data for its own analysis. However the core of this report is quite short comprising the Executive Summary (at the beginning of the report) and the Final Reflections sections (at the end of the report). The conclusions from each of the ten question topics, follows the data.

3. Data and Findings

Introduction

The presentation of the data follows the structure of the survey (and interview protocol) in terms of topics and questions within each topic. Conclusions are drawn later at the end of each section.

Q1 Strategic Plan

Delivery of New Strategic Plan

Equinet has a four-year planning cycle and a new Strategic Plan was agreed for 2015-2018. The new plan is therefore one-year-old. Equinet also produces an annual Work Plan and budget for approval by the AGM each year. The annual Work Plan mirrors the Strategic Plan in that it takes each of the strategic planning objectives and considers how they will be operationalised in the year ahead. The annual Work Plan specifies exactly what learning and other events, publications, etc will take place in the year ahead.

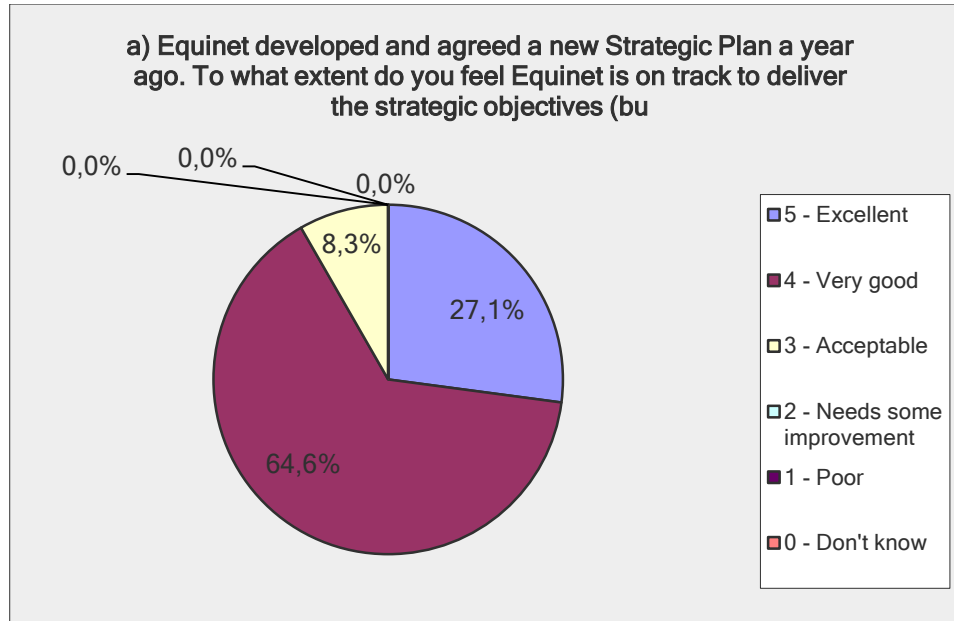
These processes are all signs of good practice and a well-run organisation.

Member Survey Scores

QUESTION 1: Equinet developed and agreed and new Strategic Plan a year ago. To what extent do you feel Equinet is on track to deliver the strategic objectives (building capacity and peer support of equality bodies; contributing to the European equality agenda, serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment; and consolidating the network and the position of its members) over the period 2015–2018?

There were 48 responses from members.





Survey remarks – Members

- We feel that Equinet and its new strategic plan are on track to promote equality in Europe, respecting and recognising the diversity among individuals, organisations and the whole society.
- Focus on issues such as mandate/status of equality bodies, multi-dimensional discrimination and 5 Directive is very important.
- I would like to focus on serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment. It helps to increase knowledge in the field of non-discrimination issues.
- We value the development of clusters with its focused way of working with clear mandates and time limits.
- The increased focus on intersectionality also is in line with more Equality Bodies (EBs) having a broader mandate.
- The Network through the experience gained all these years of its function is in the position to meet effectively the strategic objectives set in its Strategic Plan (SP).

Interview comments – Members

- All our strategic objectives are on track at the moment and it was a good first year of the Strategic Plan
- The seminar on Religion and Belief in London was very good, as was the seminar on Freedom of Movement in Paris.
- The question of positive standards for EBs is a challenge at the moment but it's important for our credibility

- We're still working out how to monitor our impact, but we seem to be on track so far. We may wish to have a mid-point review at the end of this year.
- I would say that all four areas are on track at the moment.
- At first I felt that the SP didn't cover all the areas, but it's naïve to expect that we can cover all the needs out there. The SP is good to help guide us – and we each need to be inventive locally in how we apply things.
- I'd say they over-fulfil the requirements and perhaps it's too much. The economic and social rights report is behind schedule.
- Extending our role following the new Freedom of Movement Directive is an important topic which the Working Group (WG) is on to and ahead of the curve vis-à-vis member states, so we need to be ready to negotiate when our governments come knocking on our doors for help. This is a good example of Equinet being ahead of the game.
- My sense is that Equinet may need to focus a little more to get more impact
- I wonder if it would be useful for Equinet to reflect on its strategic goals and whether it could work more closely with other organisations to achieve them? eg European Commission/FRA/ENNHRI.

Conclusion

Almost 92% of participants felt that Equinet is on track so far in respect of rolling out its Strategic Plan. Indeed, there is almost a sense of members feeling 'super-pleased' with the current state of things. Particular mention was made of certain events during the year as highlights (the focus on Standards and the work on Religion and Belief) and the consequences for Equality Bodies of a broader mandate.

Things to watch for include how impact is assessed, the need perhaps for a midterm review of the Plan's implementation and also the thought about being more 'joined up' strategically with other players in the same sector.

Q2 Performance

Equinet's Year in 2014 at a Glance Compared

Here is a selection of some simple statistics to give a hint of Equinet's production and the cost at which it was delivered during 2015, with a comparison with 2014 and 2013 (Figure 4). These are drawn from Equinet's new output Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other sources. More will be said on the subject of the KPIs in the Analysis section of this report.

Figure 3: Overview of Equinet's Activities over Three Years

Item	Quantity (2015)	Quantity 2014	Quantity 2013
Reports published	5	8	8
Promotional materials issued ²	5	7	14
Unique website hits per month ³	2382	1578	1398
Training and other learning events	14	5	13
Average attendance at the training and learning events ⁴	32	73	27
Communications events ⁵	2	2	3
Participation in the Communications events	41	49	79
Gender balance at learning and communication events (women: men) ⁶	Not available	46:21	83:17
Meetings of the five Working Groups (reduced to four Working Groups in 2015)	8	10	10
Average number of participants at each WG ⁷	18	40	20
Steering Committee meetings planned and held	5	5	5
Size of Secretariat (permanent employees, excluding interns)	6	5	5

² In the 2015 calculation, the following are included: Equinet Highlights, Brochure, key rings, notepads, roll-up stands, but if we should include all publications, this should increase by 5 to 9.

³ Users that have had at least one session within the selected date range. Includes both new and returning users.

⁴ Excluding conferences this year

⁵ Considering this the conferences that Equinet organize (Gender Equality & Freedom of Movement Directive)

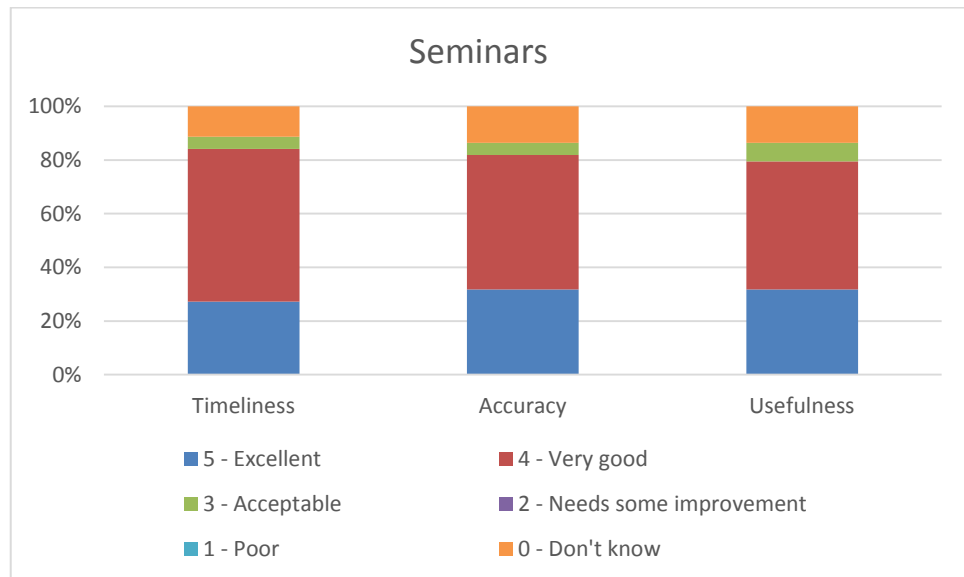
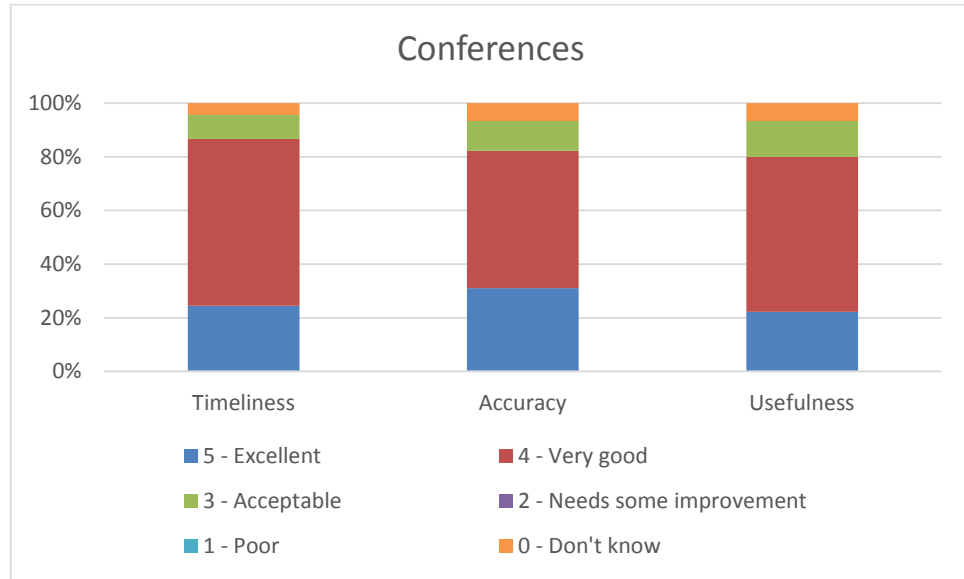
⁶ No information was gathered on gender balance this year, as it is no longer requested by the EC, and it removed from our lists as not being sensitive to other genders.

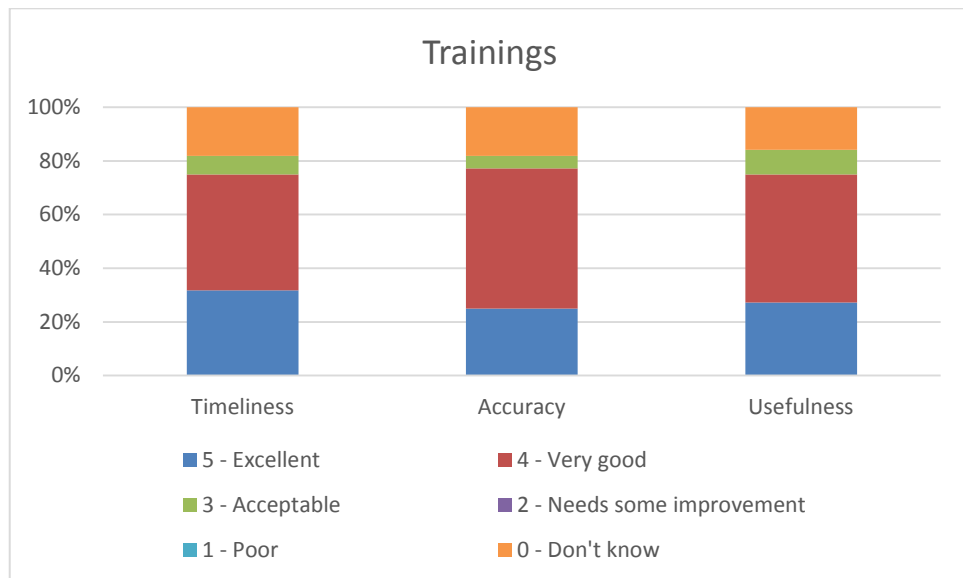
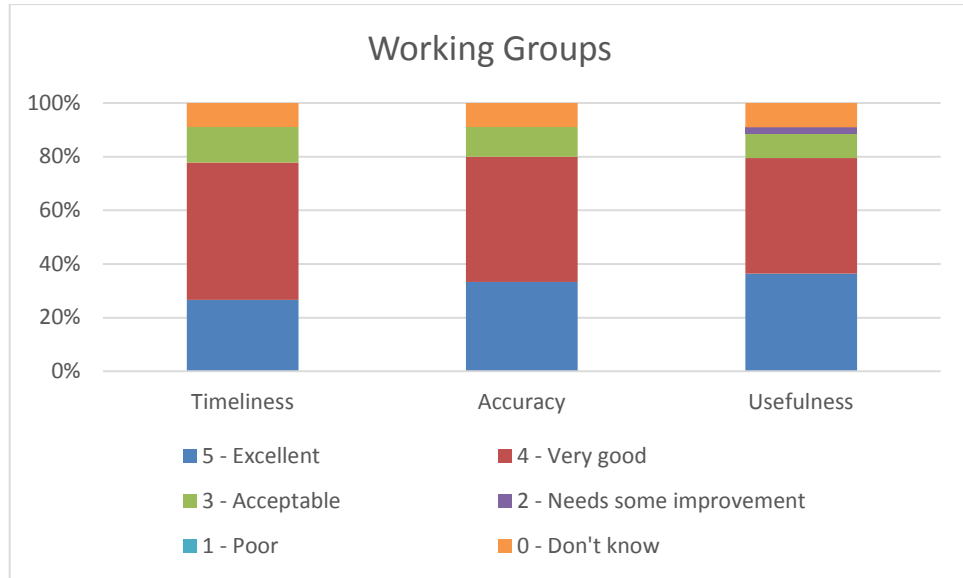
⁷ Suspicion that like may not being compared with like here

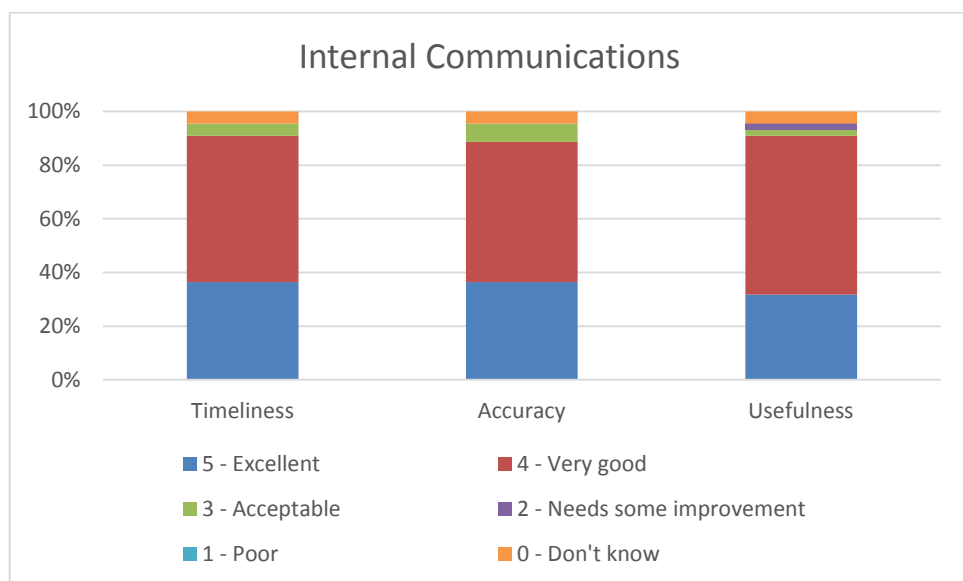
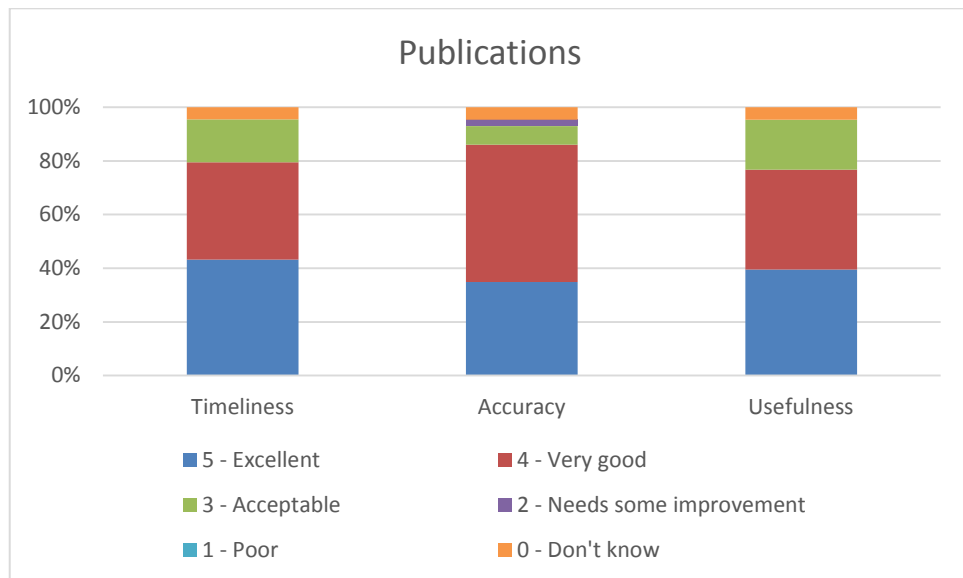
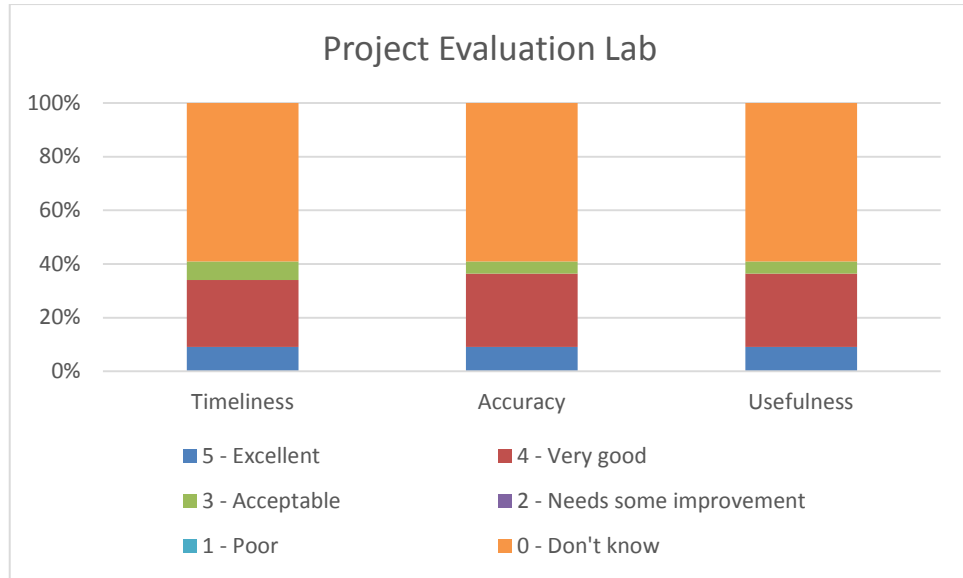
Expenditure	€919,805	€943,144	€944,000
Daily cost of running Equinet	€ 2,520.01	€ 2,583.96	€2,586

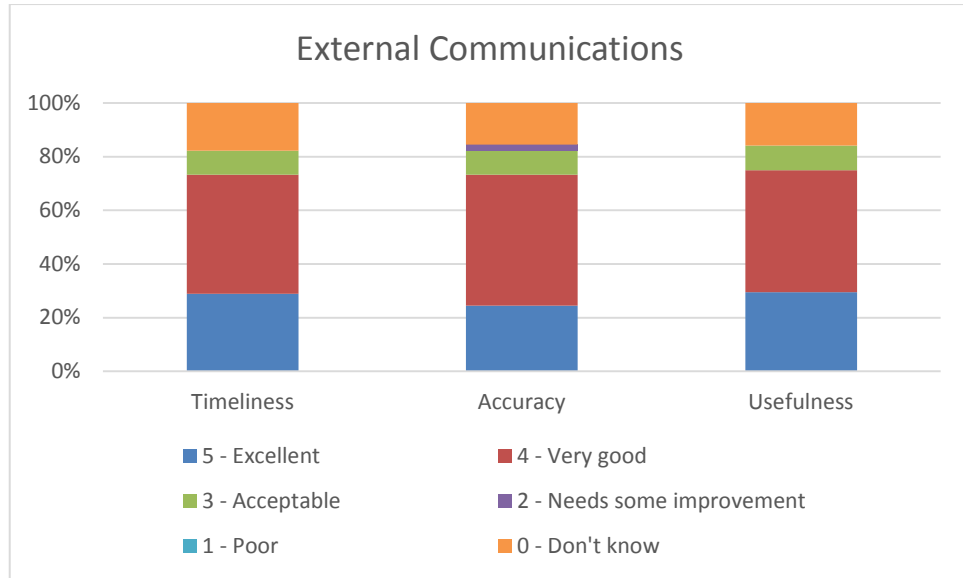
Member Survey Scores

QUESTION 2a) (Members): Taking each of the work areas in turn, what is your view of their timeliness, accuracy and usefulness, i.e. their quality and impact?

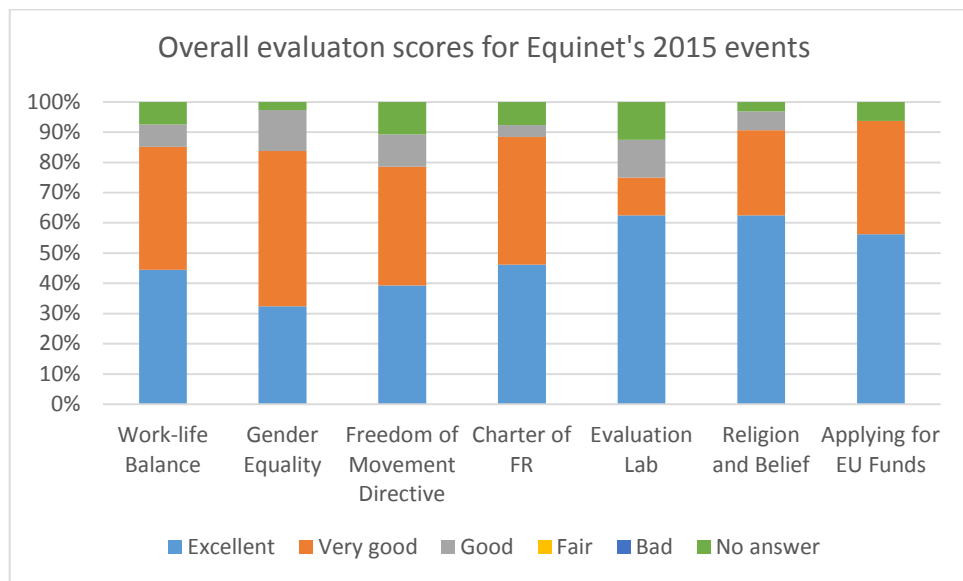








These scores broadly accord with Equinet’s own post-event evaluation data. Taking three of the questions from the participants’ evaluation sheets for the training and evaluations, a positive picture emerges:



Narrative comments – Members

QUESTION 2b) (Members): How could the needs of Equinet’s diverse membership be met better in the future?

- Consolidating the network and the several positions of Equinet's members and enhancing cooperation and the capacity to respond to the diverse needs of members.
- It is fine how Equinet manages this, no need for improvement currently.
- By trying to select in a more accurate way which contributions, surveys, etc, are asked to



each member, taking into account their own competences and mission

- Arrange also for smaller meetings, e.g. bringing together only a handful of Equinet members interested in similar topics to get to know each other better.
- By better analysis of the needs and plans of our members.
- Ask the members
- More Staff for Equinet
- Continue to further tailor subjects, meeting forms and working methods to the needs of different members.
- I think Equinet is one of the rare organisations that meets the needs of a diverse Membership very well
- EQUINET can continue organising seminars/training on topics that are of general interest inviting all the member equality bodies, and organising other seminars/training on specific subject matters that are relevant to particular equality bodies inviting these respective entities. EQUINET will thus address the needs of the diverse members.
- The diversity of Equinet mirrors the diversity in EU member states and its part of its structural design. Institutional knowledge and micromanagement on behalf of Equinet's staff and group coordinators is the best remedy i can think of.
- Keeping up the high level of quality in trainings and seminars.
- Regarding Q2.a and b.): Unfortunately, as the [name] only recently became an Equinet member, I feel, due to lack of experience yet, not competent enough to give appropriate answers.
- Keep the cooperation between the members, continue organising events (trainings and seminars) and share experiences and best practices from members
- Since posing the questions to other members happens only within the Equinet Bulletin the response rate has been very low. The previous way (sending emails directly to EB contact persons) was more efficient.
- From our point of view the creation of additional working groups could be useful.
- Organizing training and seminars, approaching to the wider expert community, raising awareness among European citizens, cooperating with international and national organizations
- Equinet should be inventive in order to further meet the diverse needs of EBs, but the same applies for each National Equality Body
- We should ask members about their needs, and based on their needs maybe create some specific activities/events.

Interview comments – Members

<p>In the year ahead we need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More meetings and trainings than publications. Not sure we are using the publications to the best effect, although some are very good, eg the report on Standards which has been very influential on our organisation and will continue to be. • The Bulletin is very important and better than the website • Information about what's happening and time to process that. Peer learning is not so important, I think. • We are changing and we will need support to help us do that from those who have had similar experiences in the past • Moving the issues of Freedom of Movement and Standards along will really help us in the year ahead. Indeed, impact on these two questions would really raise our profile as a sector. • Keep on doing it. The website is good, but use social media, webinars, etc more • Beware of applying solutions that may work in one country but not in another, eg the question of sanctions. • There is a continued role for those members whose countries have a long tradition of HR and equalities work to support other members who may be new to the story. • We are quite happy, so more of the same, please – seminars, reports, etc. Keep it up!
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Conclusion

The scores for each of Equinet's activities remain very high, hovering +/- 80% of respondents give an Excellent or Very Good score. Conferences, Seminars and Trainings score very highly, with Working Groups nearly as high. Meanwhile, Publications are generally high, particularly for Accuracy, but perhaps a little lower for their perceived usefulness. Newer activities, Clusters and the Evaluation labs are much less well known and respondents are generally unsure, but for those who give a score, it is usually a high one. While internal Communications score very highly, external communications score much lower (although still not bad).

The scores for Equinet's events correlate quite well with the internal post-event evaluation scores, which are also very high overall. Of particular note were the training to help equality bodies apply for and use EU funds, the seminar on Religion and Belief and the seminar on equality bodies and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

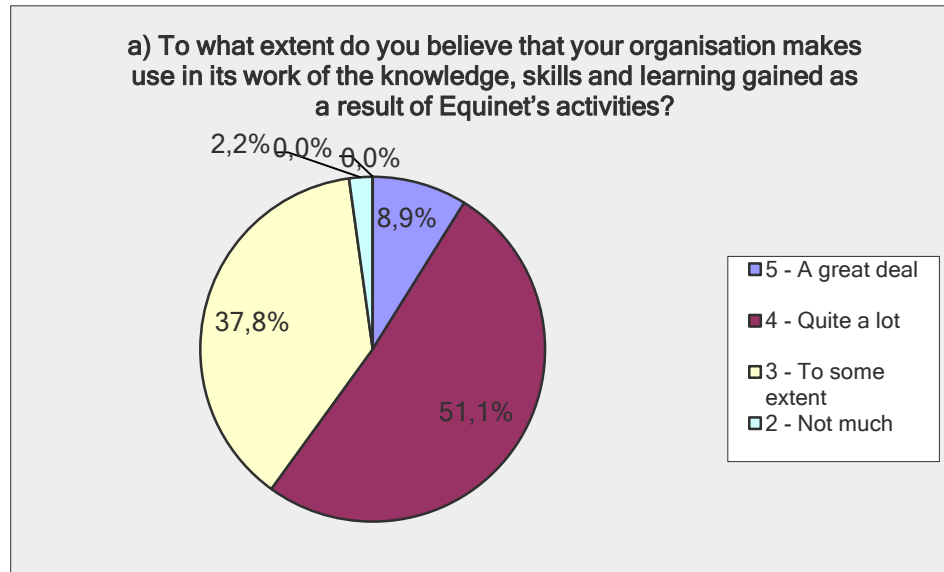
Narrative comments and the interviews repeat the message – it's great and please keep doing it. And there are some hints of potential areas for development, including privileging events over publications, a larger number of smaller meetings and events, more focussed events, more consultation with members

about the events which are planned, involving more external experts and more sophisticated use of social media and other means to get the messages across to a broader audience.

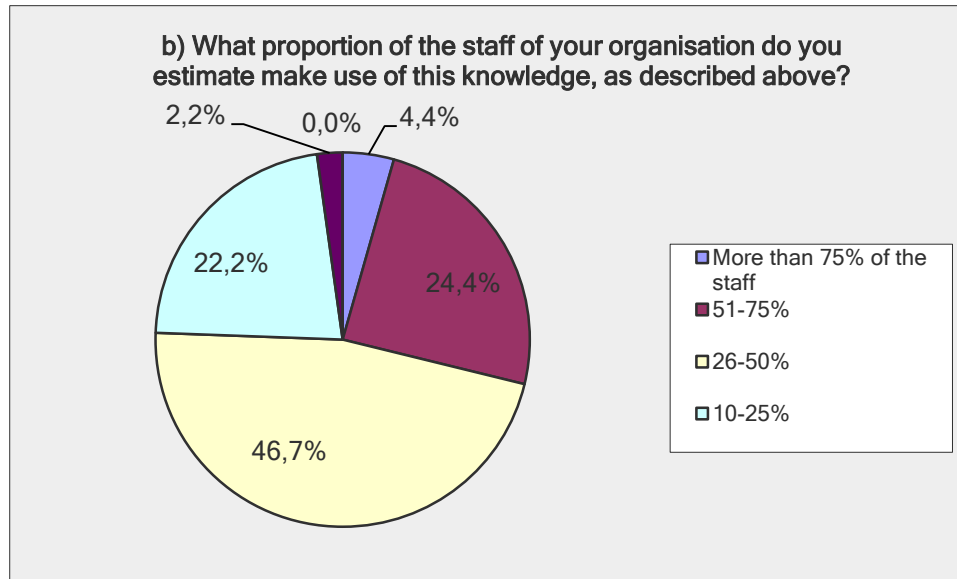
Q3 Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies

Statistical scores – Members

QUESTION 3a (Members): To what extent do you believe that your organisation makes use in its work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of Equinet's activities?



QUESTION 3b) What proportion of the staff of your organisation do you estimate make use of this knowledge, as described above?



Member Survey remarks

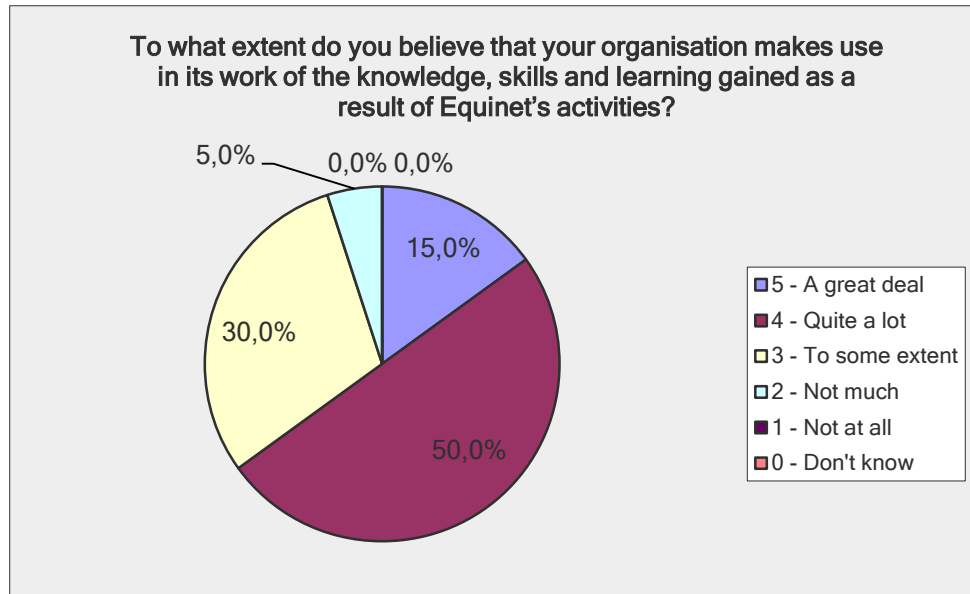
- Mostly the projects and training area is using this knowledge and we are a very small organisation
- Sometimes shorter publications would be helpful. Equinet training are seen as very useful and should be if possible extended.
- Still a big problem in relation to Equinet is the language barrier. Not every member of our staff speaks English fluently.
- With more diversity in meeting forms Equinet will contribute even more to capacity building.
- The knowledge acquired from EQUINET is relevant to most of the work and functions of [name], thus beneficial for all staff members.
- Discrimination issues are only one of several mandates of an Ombudsman institution. In the [name] there is an interdepartmental group of staff, of about 15 members, cooperating on equality issues, all of which use the Equinet knowledge as a point of reference.
- Even though everyone in our institution writes a review after arriving back from workshop/conference/meeting, it is never used again or read by the colleagues. Only spread of the information is when the person who gained knowledge from the event sends / tells to the others (sometimes happens, sometimes not). But maybe it is more our internal problem.
- Again, as we only recently became an Equinet member, we're only starting to implement Equinet's activities in our work schedule
- Apart from the traditional tools (participation in working groups, conferences, seminars, clusters etc) Equinet's bulletins and Newsbook have broadened the audience that can

make use of its activities.

- A good deal of the responsibility lies on the organisation itself – we, who participate in the various activities in Equinet, must better communicate to our colleagues

Statistical scores – External

QUESTION: To what extent do you believe that your organisation makes use in its work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of Equinet’s activities?



Interview comments – Members

- What has been the impact of the work of Equinet on our organisation over this year?
- While we are also involved with other organisations too, Equinet is the most important partner for us because it relates to our core business. Historically, we’ve been close to Equinet and we will remain so, in working groups and all the organs of the network. Particularly impactful for us is where there are cases of strategic litigation
 - It helps to develop bi-lateral relationships, especially with countries whose systems are similar to our own
 - In our case, greater than ever. We have colleagues on some of the WGs and we share bulletins across the organisation. There is active briefing by colleagues of their interaction with Equinet. A specific example would be the Religion and Belief meeting
 - Those who are involved in the WGs are learning a lot from each other and about the topics in hand. This is inspirational for our organisation. We are also implementing the thinking on evaluations into our organisation’s strategic planning, which we can in turn use to influence our own government.
 - Following a quiet period in terms of our active involvement with Equinet, we are now back and participating in the WGs, clusters and evaluation lab. In this way, it’s making a difference for

us and impacting on how we deal with cases. But we have to adapt things to our context as well.

- We take the issue of Equinet into our management team. So, for example, strategic planning is new for us, but we are doing it. We are involved too in the WGs and clusters. We hope by doing these things it will help strengthen our mandate with our government.
- Equinet helps us build up our expertise because we have lots to learn as well as quite a bit to give
- Equinet has given us access at the top level and so we feel it's important to participate but not just on principle, we feel it's of practical value too. These encounters are professional and congenial.

Conclusion

60% of member respondents are using the knowledge and work of Equinet back in their organisations either a great deal or to some extent. This is a lower proportion compared with earlier scores in this survey, but it is still high. It suggests both good performance and, relative to other areas, the potential for further work.

The next, rather complex question echoes this point, when attempting to understand the degree of penetration within equality bodies of Equinet's knowledge, work and ideas. 29% of respondents felt that Equinet reaches half or more of its staff, while another 47% feel that Equinet's work touches about a half of their staff. There is a debate to be had about whether these scores as good as one might expect, but it is likely nonetheless that Equinet would prefer its messages to reach more deeply into each of its member equality bodies.

So, what are the obstacles? Comments and interview evidence points to the length of key reports, the language limitations of many staff, the relevance of Equinet's work for some but by no means all staff, the weak communications internal to equality bodies and perhaps too the need for Equinet to be a little smarter in how it communicates its ideas to reach more people.

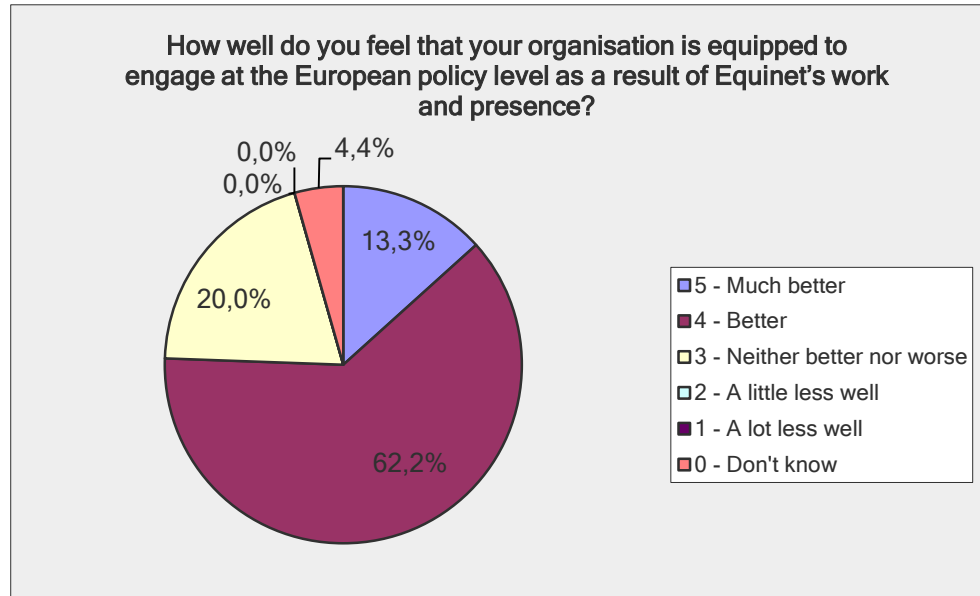
Interestingly and somewhat in contrast, external stakeholders – or at least those who responded – were more positive in the 65% of them feel that they use Equinet's work and ideas a great deal or quite a lot.

So, a positive picture, but with some hints of development potential.

Q4 The European Dimension of your work

Statistical scores – Members

QUESTION 4: How well do you feel that your organisation is equipped to engage at the European policy level as a result of Equinet’s work and presence?

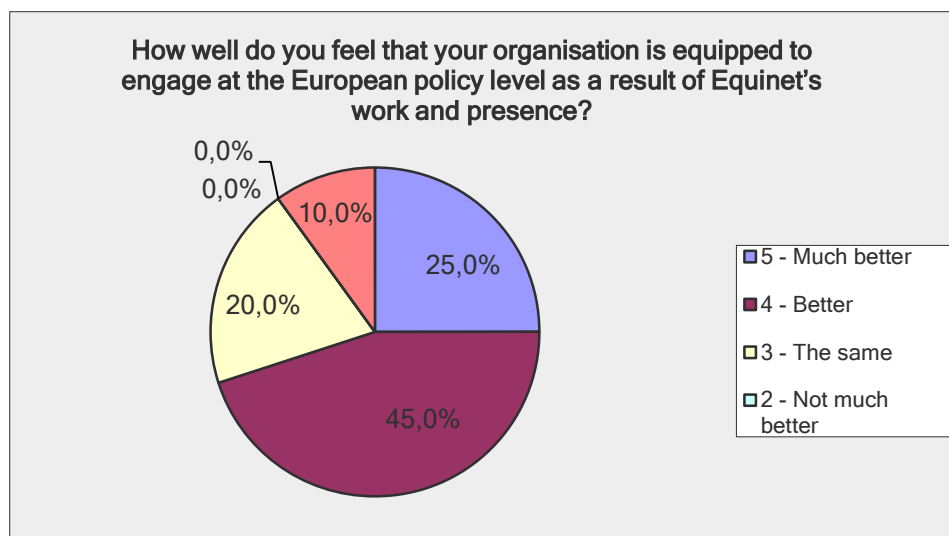


Member Survey Remarks

- We believe that Equinet’s work contributes to equality policy and law at European level.
- Our institution has little ability to engage in activities at European Union level.
- Equinet is an important link to the European level, both by forwarding information from the EU, Council of Europe and other actors to members but also by representing the Equality Bodies at meetings which has led to a greater openness for EB contributions in different fora.
- [Name] is able to acquire knowledge and information on matters related to equality across Europe and on the European agenda through seminars, training and publications by EQUINET.
- Equinet is a hub of information and inspiration for our institutional and field work
- This question is not very practical for [country], as we are not a member of the EU – and do not engage at the European policy level

Statistical scores – External

QUESTION: How well do you feel that your organisation is equipped to engage at the European policy level as a result of Equinet’s work and presence?



External Survey Remarks

- Not applicable for [name] as an EU agency.
- Equinet reports are of high quality.
- An example of an area in which Equinet's work has contributed to our capacity in engaging at the policy level is the information on case work from Ombudsman offices across Europe that fall within the scope of the proposed Horizontal Directive. Furthermore, reports covering ground-specific areas (e.g. LGBTI, people with disabilities, women, implementation of existing Directives) provide a useful reference point.

Interview comments – Members

- EBs have a number of institutional ways of engaging at EU level, but with Equinet it’s all about networking amongst EBs to strengthen them and their collective voice.
- Our engagement links us with issues that are taken up by the EU structures. While our government may not really want to deal with it, the EU’s engagement means that it is more obliged to and that helps us engage with our government over the particular issue concerned.
- For us Equinet is the main point of contact to monitor progress on the European instruments and we find the Newsletter very helpful in this respect. I think the Newsbook could be refined to help us exchange stories with other EBs
- We are not well known at the EU level and collectively Equinet offers us the possibility of being better known. So, we engage at the EU level via Equinet
- We are involved with ENNHRI and FRA as well as Equinet and we feel that ENNHRI is becoming more important. So, we engage across these organisations and Equinet is an important player in this respect. But I do wonder if at least there may not be more coordination between the three bodies. There certainly seems to be quite some overlap between them. This could

start with consideration of the various bodies' strategic goals to see where the potential for great synergy may lie.

- My sense is that there is overlap between the various agencies at the EU level and that this impedes progress on our areas of concern. We may be well advised to cooperate more closely and present more aligned proposals to the EU bodies if we are to maximise our impact.

Interview Comments – External

To what extent is Equinet well positioned at the European and International levels?

- Very well positioned – it has the right kind of dialogue with the right bodies, conducted in a most positive way. Because of this, it is able to access the top levels
- Equinet is very well known amongst us here and highly regarded. We listen to them seriously. We find that Equinet is invited to all the key discussions.
- We think we could work more closely with Equinet and that we're not as aligned as we need to be. Indeed, I'm not sure of their focus. We feel their presence, but not sure of their policy impact.
- Equinet is very well positioned in the EU generally and with the Commission in particular. Perhaps not so well positioned amongst the international bodies. Important they cooperate very closely with other agencies here, forming coalitions of interest where helpful. I wonder if all bodies should share an online platform and calendar to ensure strong coordination on events. Certainly it should feel more joined up and less, dare I say it, competitive.

Conclusion

Equinet's presence and work helps equality bodies engage at the EU level in a better way or a much better way, at least for 76% of respondents. Comments point to Equinet's key role of being an interlocutor between members and the EU institutions. Indeed, it's Equinet's positioning that is critical here, it seems. For many members, but not all, Equinet fulfils the role of external ambassador, while others would consider Equinet as one of a number of key players to help them engage at the EU level.

70% of external stakeholder respondents feel that Equinet's work and presence support them engage at the EU level too. Considering that some respondents were of the EU system, this is also a very high score, again pointing to the perceived value of Equinet, its positioning and the smart way it fulfils that function.

But the high quality of Equinet's work and its published reports in particular are said to be one of the reasons for its credibility in this area.

Also critical to Equinet's success is its ability to support the network gain a clear voice, so over time the network becomes more credible and coherent.

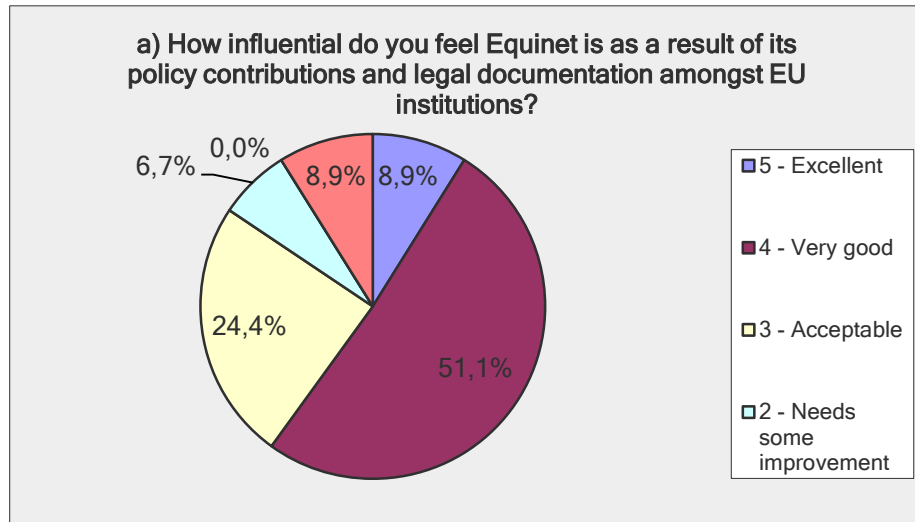
Indeed, when Equinet takes up issues at the EU level, and the EU system picks those issues up resulting in a little pressure felt by some member state

governments to act can help some equality bodies to fulfil their mandates, when previously they felt their efforts were somewhat stalled.

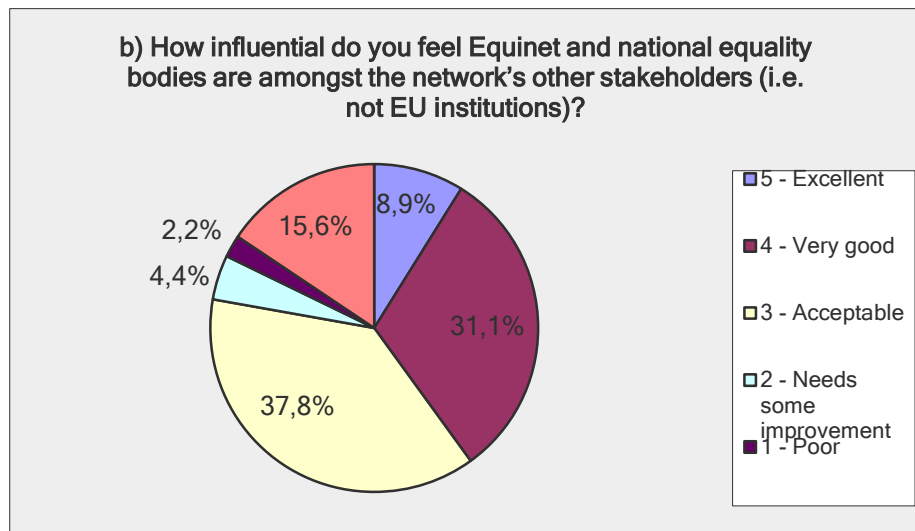
Q5 Influence

Member Statistical scores

QUESTION 5a) How influential do you feel Equinet is as a result of its policy contributions and legal documentation amongst EU institutions?

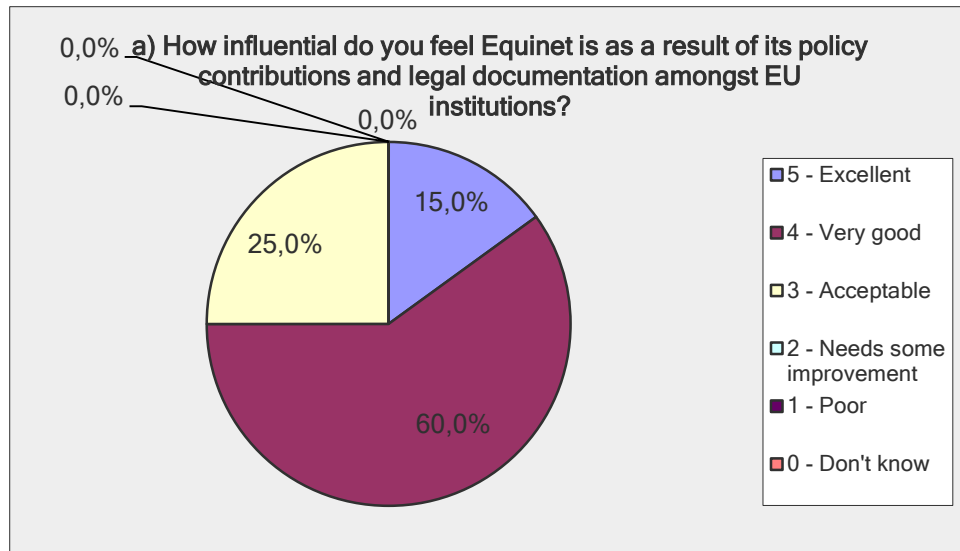


QUESTION 5b) How influential do you feel Equinet and national equality bodies are amongst the network's other stakeholders (i.e. not EU institutions)?

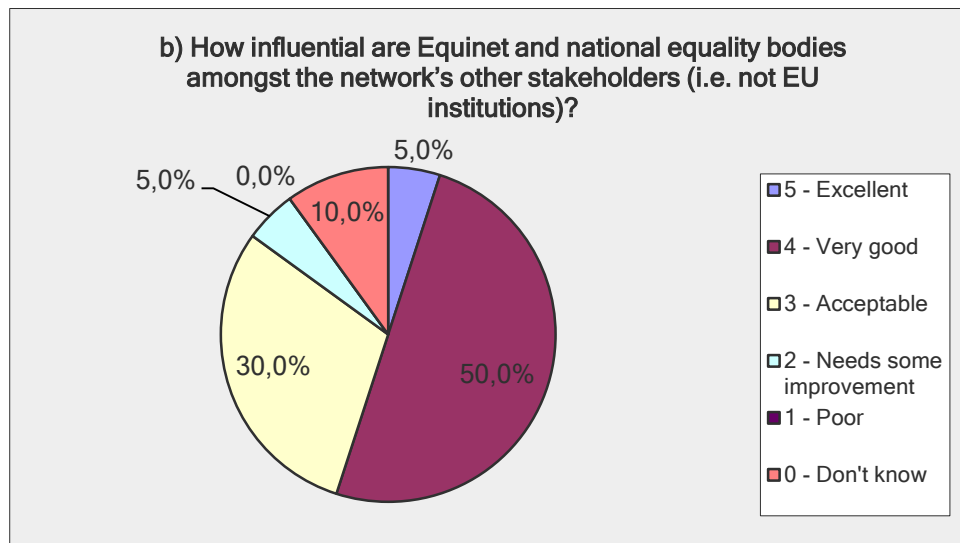


External Statistical scores

QUESTION a) How influential do you feel Equinet is as a result of its policy contributions and legal documentation amongst EU institutions?



QUESTION b) How influential are Equinet and national equality bodies amongst the network's other stakeholders (i.e. not EU institutions)?



Member Survey Comments

- The relation to the European Commission could be improved. It seems sometimes that the Commission as well as the Council of Europe are not fully aware of the activities of Equinet.
- To be even more effective Equinet should continue to develop an even stronger focus on what Equinet and its members themselves want to accomplish and formulate common positions regarding these issues.
- [Name] utilises the knowledge acquired from EQUINET to influence other stakeholders at a



national level to further safeguard equal treatment.

External Survey Comments

- I feel that because of the political situation in Member States' equality and diversity has moved down the agenda of Governments. This makes it increasingly difficult for equality bodies or indeed Equinet to assert the influence they could have.
- Difficult to assess from the [name] perspective. I believe that Equality Bodies themselves can answer this better. However, my impression based on my own work with Equality Bodies is that they are well respected institutions in their own countries and at the European level.
- I choose 'very good' as I think that Equinet is doing its best to be influential, although I believe its concrete result is limited as the EU institutions is not as ambitious as Equinet and civil society would wish (neither is the political climate among EU28 favourable to advance on equality issues)
- I expect Equinet to support the national equality bodies for their advocacy work to promote the EU values and laws at the national level.
- I'm looking here only from the perspective of the impact of Equinet on issues related to the field of work of our organisation. it does not mean that Equinet is not successful in other areas, such as reinforcing the work/protection/status of Equality bodies for example.
- In my opinion, due to their particular knowledge and innovative approach, Equinet is well placed to advocate and lobby the EU Institutions on behalf of the equality bodies for improvement of the legislation as well as the practice.

Interview Comments – External

How influential do you feel Equinet is as a result of its policy contributions?

- Equinet plays an important role here and that is to provide solid data on the incidence of issues. We need this more and more to make our case and any input Equinet can make on this is very important. It's already an important area, but it needs also to be strengthened.
- All of us try to be influential, along with Equinet, who are part of the scene. But what impact this has, I'm not so sure.
- Not sure there's real policy influence.
- As a body with good relationships with the Commission, it might be that Equinet is influential in quite a subtle way, but it need to cascade its messages better. We receive too many copies of the publications. It needs to be smarter at getting messages across with a range of electronic means.

To what extent do you feel that your organisation is better able to appreciate the contribution of equality bodies as a result of Equinet's work?

- Their work makes EBs part of the conversation

- We often look at what they do. We're in the same field but we don't really see that we are doing the same thing, so we influence each other, I think and, I hope, create synergies
- NEBs are very important to us and institutional mechanisms to ensure equality. So, Equinet is part of that scene, supporting MS make the changes they need to make. In this way, Equinet is very important strategically. In the future we should do some joint projects.
- There is some awareness raising but I'm not sure. It appears to be mainly a service provider for EBs and not an advocate of the common position of EBs, which may be an element that is missing, but needed

Conclusion

There is an interesting contrast between the internal and external picture to the same question. In answer to the question as to how influential the respondent feels Equinet is as a result of its work, firstly with EU institutions and secondly amongst other stakeholder actors, such as international organisations, members give a slightly lower score than external stakeholders to both questions:

% Excellent or Very good	Member's responses	External Stakeholders' responses
Influential amongst EU institutions	60%	75%
Influential internationally	40%	55%

How do we interpret these scores? While it may not be surprising that Equinet is seen to have more influence amongst EU institutions than it does amongst international actors, what's going on between member and non-member respondents? Does Equinet look more influential from the outside than it does from the inside?

Members say there is room for improvement in this area of work and the challenge is about working more closely to a coordinated voice from amongst the membership. The strength is in unity, in other words and, by implication, we don't yet have that unity.

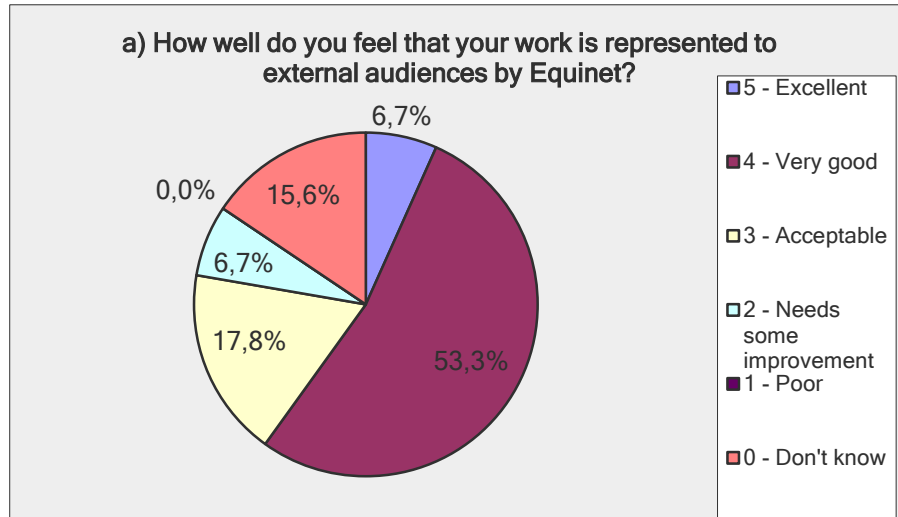
External partners also caution that Equinet's issues have slipped down the political agenda and it's all the harder now to have influence, to be heard, at the political levels. For others, both Equinet and the EU institutions anyway have low levels of ambition, compared, say, with NGOs and this is regrettable.

However, what comes out strongly is that Equinet is part of the conversation and while influence may (or may not) be illusive, they are at least in the right place to be influential. Few seem to be clear, finally, that genuine impact, in terms of policy change, has so far been achieved.

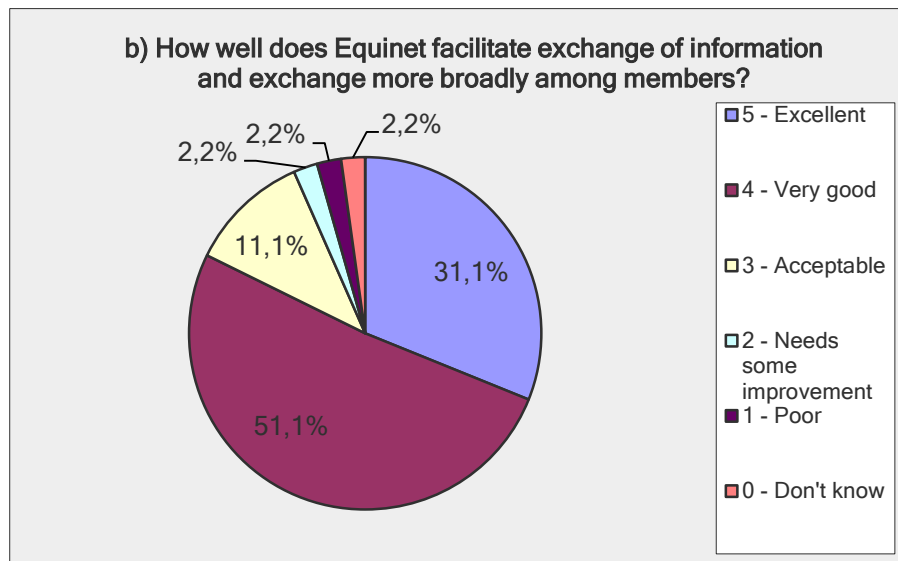
Q6 Equinet as a knowledge and communication hub

Member Survey Scores

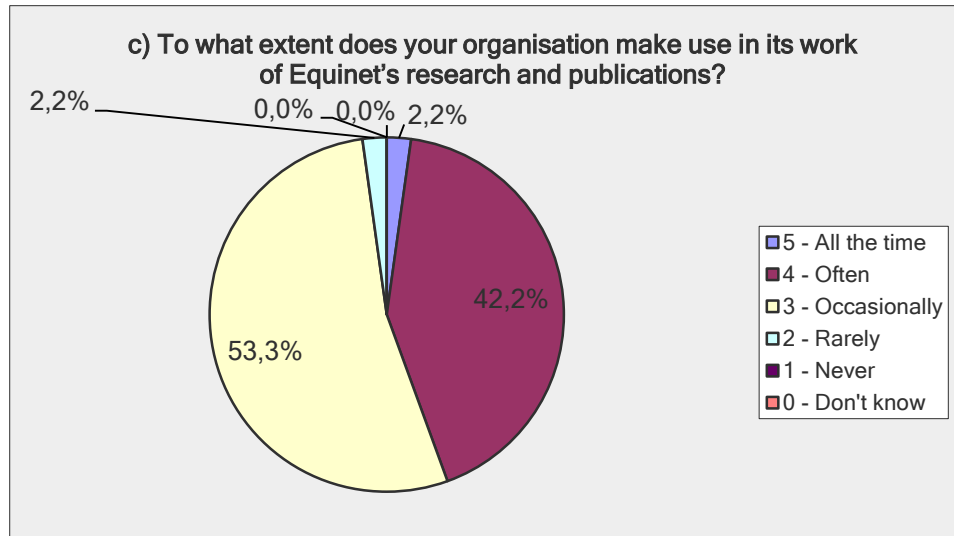
QUESTION 6a: How well do you feel that your work is represented to external audiences by Equinet?



QUESTION 6b: How well does Equinet facilitate exchange of information and exchange more broadly among members?

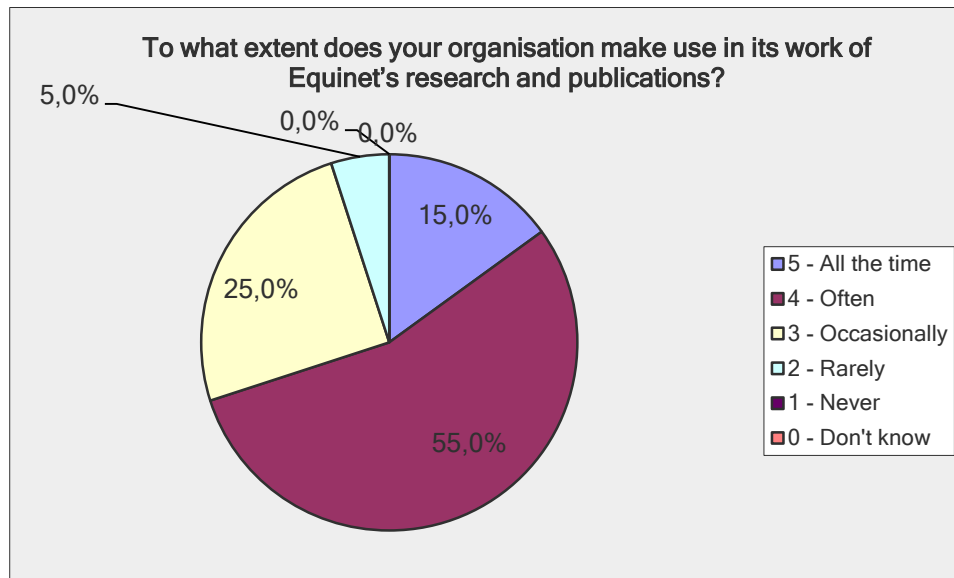


QUESTION 6c: To what extent does your organisation make use in its work of Equinet's research and publications?



External Survey Scores

QUESTION: To what extent does your organisation make use in its work of Equinet's research and publications?



Member Survey Comments

- Equinet serves as an important channel of equal treatment information on relevant European developments.
- The Equinet newsletter provides all members with a good possibility to report on each members activities.
- EQUINET facilitates [name's] exchanges of information on its work with other stakeholders across the Member States. Moreover, EQUINET also provides information that [name]

utilises to enhance the implementation of its functions.

- Too many publications. It is hard to be acquainted with all the publications. Less amount of publications or less often issuance would be better. I would appreciate one or two expert publications per year and once a month (or rather two, three months) Bulletin with the main news (Equinet's, members', on anti-discrimination law).

External Survey Comments

- I wish we would use Equinet's opinions more but as our resources are limited we do not always have the means to back up our work with reports, opinions etc. as we could/should. Equinet's work is also most relevant for us when it includes EU wide recommendations as we only work on a European level, country specific cases are mainly relevant and interesting if examples of trends/symptoms of EU law (or lack of it).
- [Name] in the anti-discrimination portfolio designs its resources taking into consideration the Equinet's perspectives by contextualising it to the national situation.

Interview Comments – Members

What impact do you feel your organisation has on Equinet?

- Considerable. Equinet has always been important for us and we feel this is a close alliance
- Some of our issues and concerns are expressed through the working groups and this has impact on Equinet mainly. Additionally, we may be invited to speak at conferences and seminars and, in that way, we impact on Equinet's thinking directly
- We influence by helping each other improve and by improving ourselves
- We can influence by case-work and especially on the question of equal pay, which we can impart to the WG. We find that Equinet is very receptive and really listens to what we have to say. So, because we put a lot in, we get a lot back and in this way, we have influence.
- We are very active players in the network

Interview Comments – External

To what extent do you/your organisation feel that Equinet serves as a knowledge and communication hub?

- The information is spread well. Perhaps we could be more useful to Equinet in helping that process? I have a feeling that Equinet's members don't really know us and what we can offer. There is a big gap to be filled with better use of social media to get messages across to bigger numbers of people. Equinet has very few Twitter followers, for example.
- Yes, very much. Equinet is a great partner. More could be done with access to better data on the issues at member state level.
- There is scope for more with joint projects, etc

Conclusion

60% of member respondents felt that Equinet represents their view well to external audiences. That is high, but it is not exceptionally high and perhaps points to a development area. However, when asked how well Equinet exchanges information among members, the score was very high indeed at over 82% feeling that it does this well or very well.

When asked about how much equality bodies use Equinet’s publications and research in their work, the score is lower, at under 45%. Indeed, this is the lowest score so far. Why is this? Publications not relevant to their concerns or they don’t engage well enough with them for some reason?

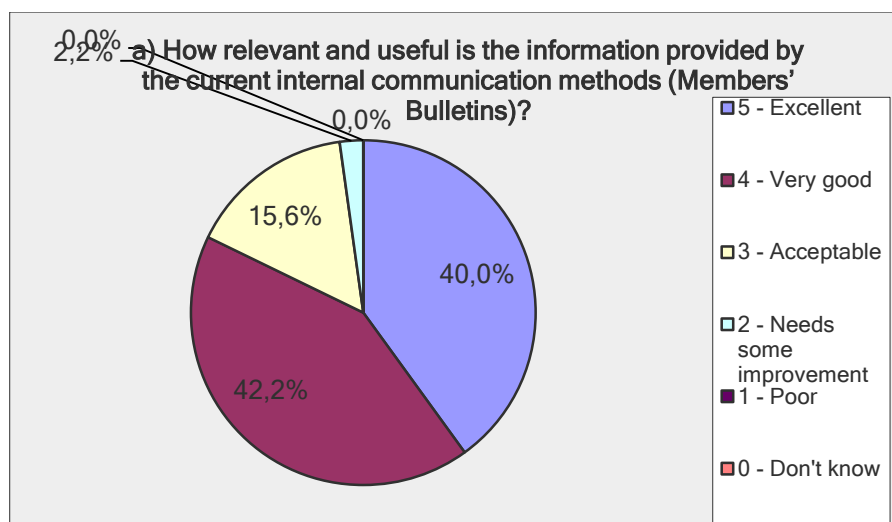
Externally, again the scores are higher, in that 70% of external stakeholder respondents say they make use of Equinet’s research and publications often or all of the time.

Comments and interview evidence points to the value that both internal and external parties place upon Equinet as playing an important role as a channel of information and ideas, citing the newsletter in particular for praise. While there is some comment about the need for Equinet to communicate in a more flexible and varied way, to reach more, capacity internal to equality bodies is also suggested as a limiting factor amongst members.

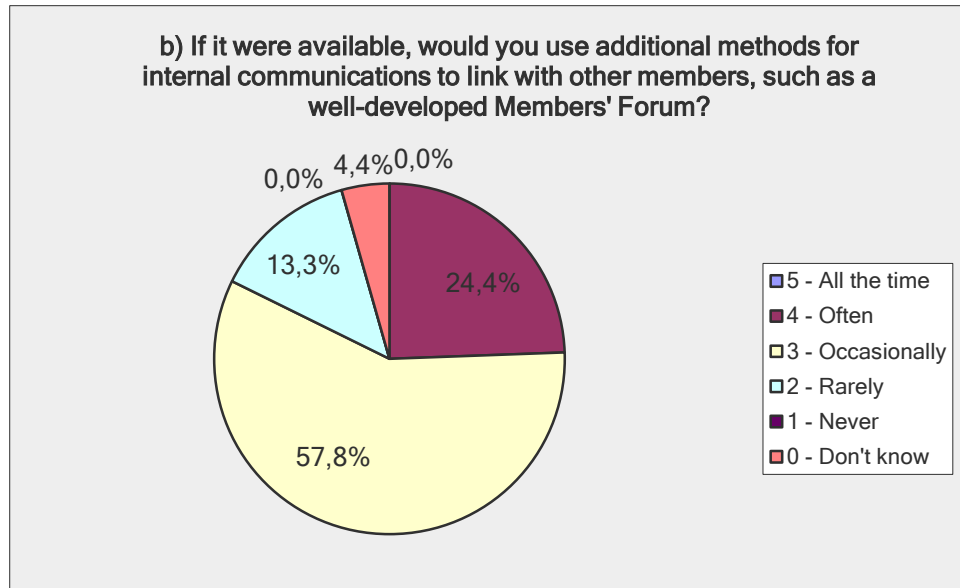
Q7 Member Engagement

Statistical scores

QUESTION 7a: How relevant and useful is the information provided by the current internal communication methods (Members’ Bulletins)?



QUESTION 7b: If it were available, would you use additional methods for internal communications to link with other members, such as a well-developed Members' Forum?



Member Survey Comments

- A members forum could be used for specific questions to other members.
- Communication, particularly through emails, between EQUINET members is effective. Yet, a well-developed members' forum would ensure that communication is widened throughout the network.
- I find the existing group's Facebook and e-mailing list as adequate communication means
- + occasional newsletters focusing on topics of working groups would be great (summary and highlights from the field of... - not all the topics are now covered in bulletins)
- I have doubts about the usefulness of the Members' Forum. I guess nobody would look at it and nobody would post responses to the questions of the other members. The emails directed to the EB contact persons seem to be the most efficient.
- It is very good idea to have Member's Forum.

Conclusion

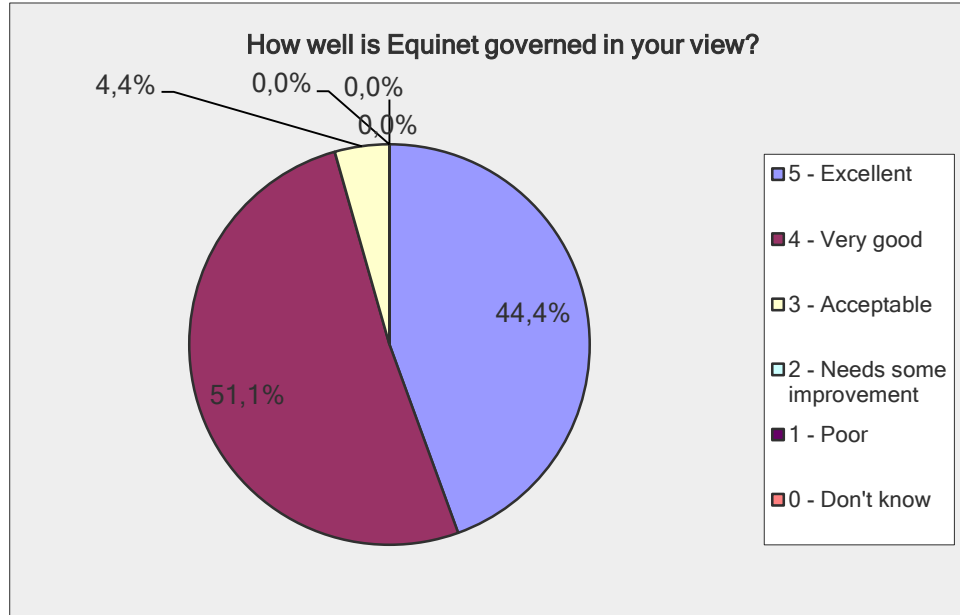
The member's newsletters are highly valued with over 82% of member respondents saying they are excellent or very good. By contrast, additional sources of internal communications are not universally seen as being of particular value – only just over 24% of member respondents see the merit in such an idea as a Member's Forum. Narrative comments contrasted with this view somewhat, but the general notion seems to be that internal communications (newsletters, emails, etc) work well and should carry on more or less as they are.



Q8 Governance

Statistical scores

QUESTION 8: How well is Equinet governed in your view?



Member Survey Comments

- The increased involvement of member organisations in planning is appreciated
- Too many board meetings linked to too much travelling. Online board meetings (e.g. through Skype) once in a while could be a sufficient compensation.

Interview Comments – Members

- We have good, open agendas for board meetings and GAs
- The position of the board advisor needs to be clarified as it is unusual and we need to be clear about its scope, role and relevance. There is the potential for conflicts of interest to exist
- The regional groupings are odd in make-up; asymmetrical, but not sure what answer is.
- There are two areas of governance which need to be considered – regional constituencies and the terms of board membership, so we have more continuity
- Governance is very good in my view. I feel the meetings are well prepared and productive
- It is a challenge to meet the needs of such a diverse group of members
- The board is impressive and the meetings are very well prepared, which is important, in

my view.

- The governance processes are very transparent and the agendas are good.
- I think it's really important to ensure that there is time for networking in working group meeting where possible. Equinet used to organise a dinner prior to each working group which meant that people generally arrived the afternoon before and there was time for informal networking. I think this worked well both to build personal links between equality bodies, which I think is important in itself to facilitate post meeting sharing of expertise/questions; but also important for new members of the group to be welcomed and feel included in the group. There is a reasonable turnover of attendees to the group so we always have people who are completely new. I think for financial reasons this practice was stopped (or maybe host bodies couldn't pay, I don't know), but I think it would be worth just organising dinners on the basis that we will each pay for our own food, so that the occasion can happen, without the financial burden on Equinet to cover it. otherwise, it can be quite gruelling travelling to a meeting in the morning, having an intense and full meeting, then travelling back home.

Interview Comments – External

- Great AGM. Some sessions could be longer. Levels of engagement (phone/IT behaviour) seem to vary
- The big issues to engage with are the LGBTBI campaign, the Migration and Refugee question and the question of Religion and Belief

Conclusion

At over 95%, the (excellent plus very good) score to the answer to the question of how well Equinet is governed, is the highest score in this survey, marking the confidence with which members feel their organisation is governed. This is praise indeed!

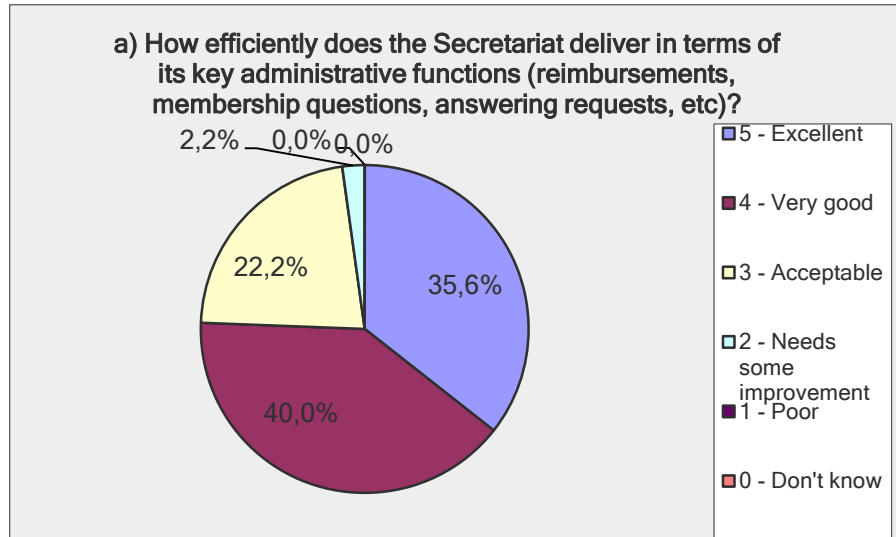
And there are pointers as to why this is good. Not only are the 'hygiene' factors right (well-prepared meetings, good agendas, good papers, well conducted meetings, etc), the values of transparency and inclusion are felt to be practiced as well.

Things to consider for the future include, according to this data, the number and style of meetings (in particular whether to have more time informally networking or, by contrast, more time using technological meeting media), the length of board member terms, the logic and composition of the regional constituencies, keeping an eye on how the diverse nature of the membership is heard at the governance level and last, but not least, keeping on top of the 'big ticket' agendas of issues like religion and belief, migration, LGBTBI concerns, etc.

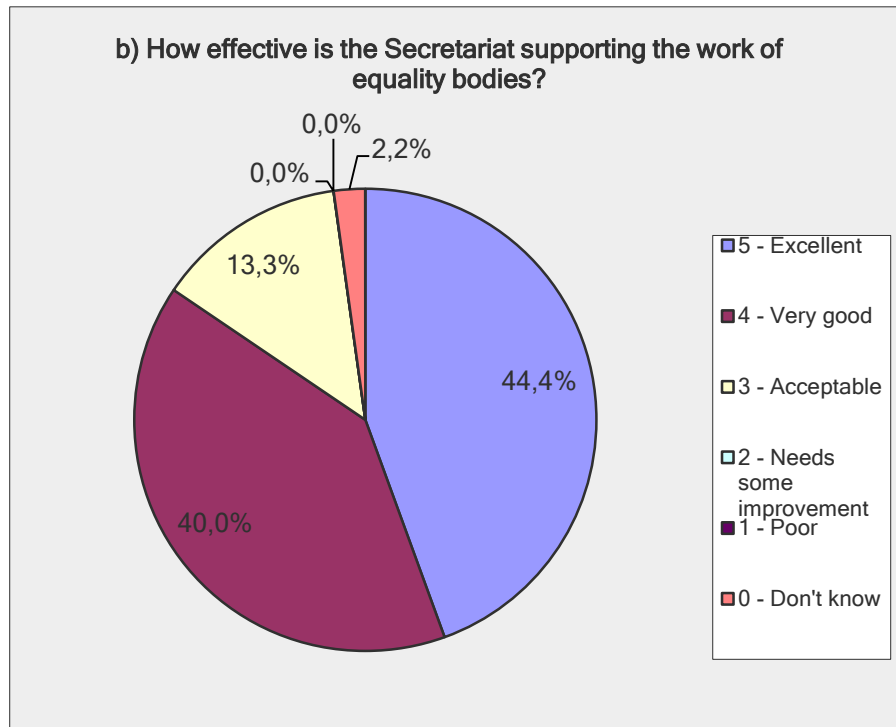
Q9 Equinet's Secretariat

Statistical scores

QUESTION 9a: How efficiently does the Secretariat deliver in terms of its key administrative functions (reimbursements, membership questions, answering requests, etc)?



QUESTION 9b: How effective is the Secretariat supporting the work of equality bodies?



Member Survey Comments

- I guess due to the heavy working lot of the Secretariat it takes sometimes time to answer

questions etc.

- Travel reimbursements need to be more timely.
- Improving the financial stability of Equinet in order to get rid of delay in reimbursement of travel expenses.

Interview Comments – Members

- I do want to emphasise how exceptionally adept everyone in the secretariat is at interpersonal skills, both in terms of clarity and direction, but also a very laid back and relaxed way of engaging people, which I think is fantastic for making people feel involved. There is no 'us and them', no clique; it's more we are all in this together, which is obviously very effective for growing a vibrant and active network, which is what equinet has/is. I can only imagine that Anne has a central role in all of the strengths that I have talked about in this interview, including picking her dream team, nurturing the team spirit, and setting the tone for engagement with members, setting direction and executing the project plans in a way which seems effortless – but can't be! I do also want to single out Tamas, for very special praise. He is so expert and the WG benefits hugely through his direction and expert input, but is also so inclusive he creates a very 'non-intimidatory' atmosphere for meetings, which means of course we get very strong participation from those who attend. Also, he is so efficient and clear in following up meetings he secures written input from everyone who has made commitments, but in a really nice way. And because everything is so well planned in advance, we get the final product done year on year.
- Such an effective team – highly professional – as demonstrated in the way meetings are set up.
- I think any turnover in staff could have a huge impact on us

Conclusion

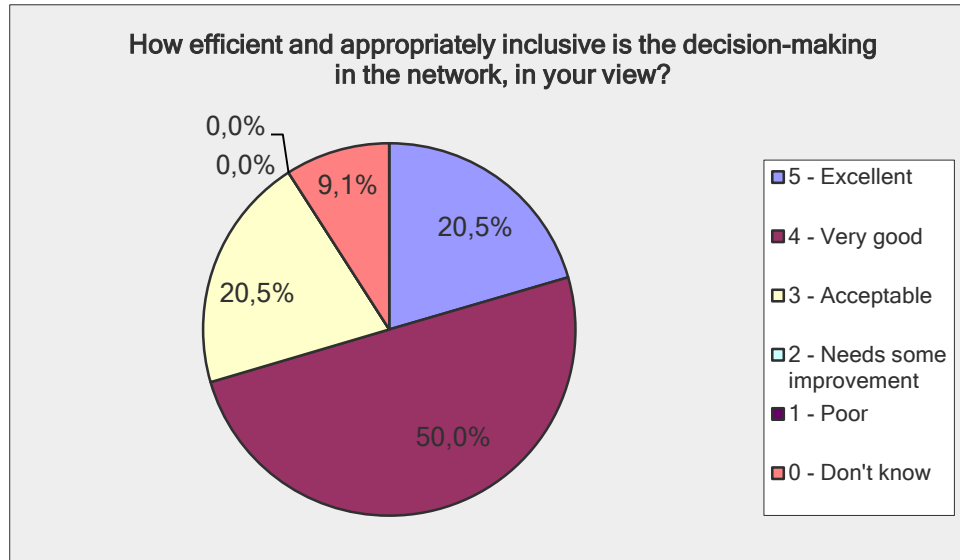
Again the excellent and very good scores for members' views on the Secretariat are very high: over 75% to the question about performing administrative functions well and over 84% to the question about the effectiveness of Equinet's support to equality body members. These scores are particularly attributed in comments to the high interpersonal skills of the staff providing both a professional and a relaxed environment which sets the tone for the network's conduct.

Points to watch include the speed of response and reimbursements and the important of financial stability in order to resource administrative support fully. And the longer term danger would be turnover of key staff.

Q10 Network Decision Making

Statistical scores

QUESTION 10: How efficient and appropriately inclusive is the decision-making in the network, in your view?



Member Survey Comments

- The increased involvement of member organisations in planning is appreciated
- No assessment possible yet

Conclusion

A final question about network decision making, in which over 70% of those surveyed feel that the level of efficiency and inclusion in decision making is excellent or very good. A good score with no particular narrative concerns or points in the comments to speak of, but it may also be worth touching upon comments made under other questions about the importance of inclusion, the need both for more time-efficient meeting practices and the need for others to ensure that there is 'soft' time for members of working groups, etc to get to know each other, talk, 'shop' and so on.

4. Analysis

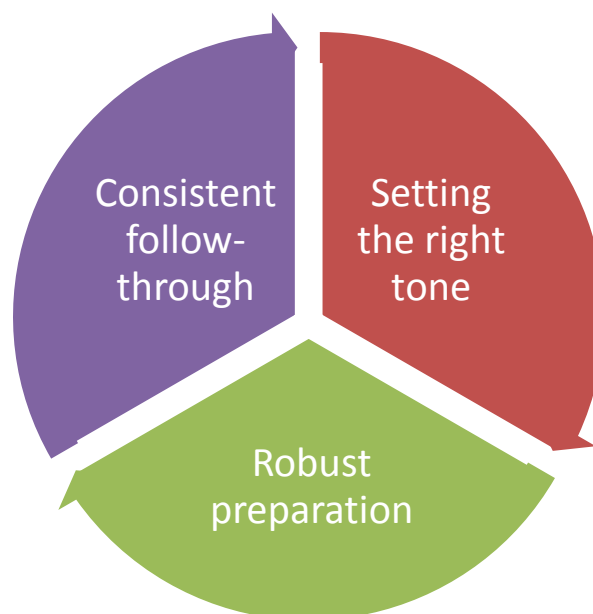
Another fine year

2015 was an excellent year for Equinet. Not only are the scores high in this evaluation – once again - but there were some significant external symbols of

recognition during the year too, be that in terms of high level access or highly praised events, not least the Religion and Belief and Standards work.

The general prescription for when things are going well is to keep on doing it. But doing what exactly? Can we discern from these data and from the evidence of previous year what the recipe is? Having reflected on the data in this evaluation, three simple, but powerful qualities come to mind: **tone, preparation and consistency** (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Ingredients of Success



Mention is made in this report of the effective way in which business is conducted – relational, friendly, open, professional, calm, light-hearted. This is said in relation to the staff, but it has been said too in relation to the board. Organisational culture is very powerful and people take their cues from the **tone** that is set, particularly by the organisation’s key players, about how they will behave. Somehow, Equinet sets a tone in which it communicates firstly that it understands what a network is and how decisions must be made in a network, but at the same time that is in a way that doesn’t lack boundaries. It’s saying ‘we’re open and we care, but we’re professional too and we have a clear shared purpose.’

While staff may feel that they are sometimes rushing to catch themselves up – each year, it is said, the staff were rushed off their feet – the comment that is often heard is how well prepared events are. This is so important in a network, where its members are very clear what they are doing, where they are doing it, how they are doing it and why. Such ‘hygiene factors’ are key to any event: get them wrong and people will remember, get them right and they don’t really notice too much. So, robust **preparation** is the second critical ingredient of the success of Equinet.

But while the right tone and robust preparation are important, they are not enough. You have to see things through. One of the comments last year, around

the strategy setting process, was that while the process was solid and inclusive and the resulting plan supported and clear, the plan was still a plan, and it's from the action that follows the plan that the judgment will be made. Equinet seems to get this and has the quality of **consistency** – keeping the wheel turning, keeping things going, taking things to the next level, and doing that each year.

If these three ingredients do capture the recipe of Equinet's success – and perhaps there's a discussion to develop this idea – future proofing the organisation will be to remember these ideas and to come back to them from time to time.

Embedding in tough times

It is a truth universally acknowledged across the sector that while the challenges for equalities and human rights work have gone up and certain aspects of them are at the highest levels of the political agenda (religion, migration, etc), this is a tough time for equality bodies, both to be heard and to gain political backing in terms of resources to fulfil their mandates. Austerity budgeting only adds to the challenge. So, the question arises, what then is to be their response in this context and, thus, the response of the network?

And the response must surely always be to attempt to cohere more around the key issues and to increase efforts to learn more for each other. Solidarity in other words. But a solidarity that doesn't come so much from adversity, but curiosity. How can we learn more from the best work of others to gain more traction for our organisation? How can our experience and data support clearer, more consistent messages that will help them develop appropriate policy response, based on evidence, at both national and EU levels? How, too, can we understand really well which of our activities have most impact on the policy environment?

This then is a question of becoming more embedded and of finding ways to drive performance continually. Thus, the appropriate response in such times is to penetrate more deeply into the sector and to become even more 'networked' as a network. But how, especially since things are already said to be working really well? The data from this evaluation seems to support two ways:

- Reengineer the process of generating and disseminating key messages to agree greater impact
- Increase the focus on measuring and managing performance and impact, on gaining data to do that and on investing in critical management functions

Together these things do not amount to any remedial action that Equinet needs to carry out to fix something that is broken. On the contrary, the agenda here is how to move to the next level – and at the same time drive up some of the lower (although still quite high!) ratings in the evaluation.

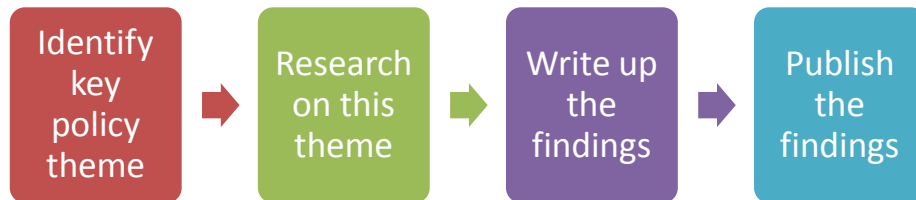
The process of generating and disseminating key messages

While muted, there have been comments about publications for some time, not so much about their thoroughness, but about their impact. The data from this evaluation picks out the cause of this residual concern, and adds to our understanding of an issue we've spoken about before in these evaluations.

Members value the fact that Equinet publishes its findings, but these findings are not consistently used back in member organisations. And the evidence that Equinet's reports impact meaningfully at the EU or international policy level is also faint. If this is the case, what can be done?

The traditional model of report production, deployed by many EU and national policy networks can crudely be summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 5: Traditional Policy Publication Model



What's wrong with such an approach? In principle two things need to be considered. First, it doesn't speak about what change is hoped for, who is expected to be influenced and how are they best reached. And second, there is no automatic loopback to see whether the policy theme's scope was indeed the right one.

Could we reinvent the process a little and suggest a different way of engineering projects that might result in published work (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Reengineering Publications for Greater Impact?



In other words, we begin to think target audience and media much earlier in the process, and we adapt our messaging to meet their needs specifically. This approach puts much more into the planning stages of a project and probably more into the communication, launch and follow through stages. It may imply that fewer research projects are undertaken, or that there are some which are long and in-depth, while others are much lighter in terms of researched content. Because the point, always the point, is impact rather than output.

There is no suggestion here that Equinet doesn't already understand this, but there is evidence that this approach or another version of it isn't practiced consistently and this impacts on perceptions (and probably the reality) of impact.

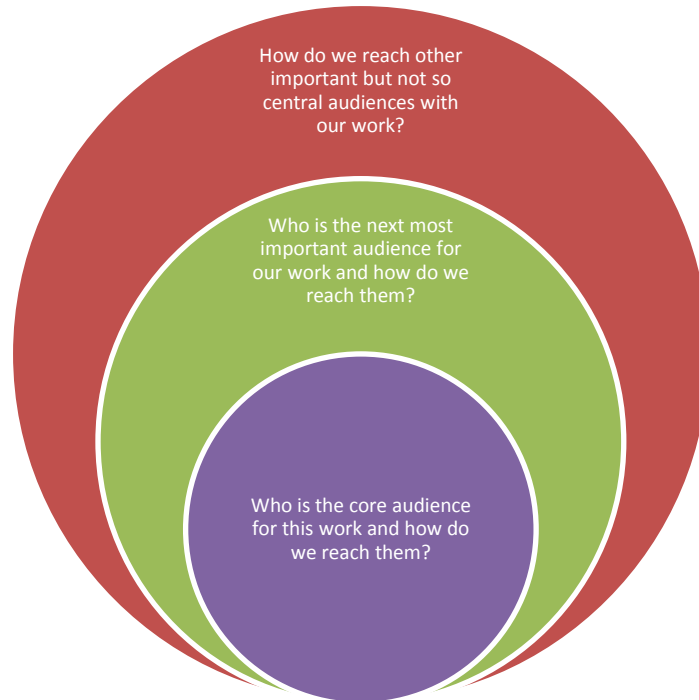
Data in the evaluation suggest that while good, external communications are not up to the high level of internal communications. Comments were also made about how little Equinet uses social media to reach deeper into the organisations of its target audiences, including members. Members themselves suggest that they don't always do their job in ensuring that the messages get cascaded across their organisations, but that many of their staff don't have the level of English, the language of the reports, to absorb the ideas presented in them.

Whether it's internal to the network or external to it, the point is the same: how to reach more deeply into target audiences and tailor communication outputs that meet more closely their needs and preferences.

So, this goes further than writing sharper executive summaries to reports. It's about a range of messaging outputs that work for different needs. It is the case that Equinet has very few Twitter followers (909), members of the Linked In group (93) and Facebook friends (1,590). And yet, while many of Equinet's key influencers may use any, or all, or indeed other such tools, it is fair to assume that such tools are highly effective ways of reaching those, for example, NEB staff members, staff members of external agencies, etc who are on the radar of Equinet

but not the focus of immediate attention. This means, developing the theme of the previous set of comments on reports, thinking a little more strategically about how to reach more deeply into new part of existing audiences bases with appropriate messaging (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Segmenting messages and communications media - Full report? Exec Summary? Briefing note? Press release? Social media post? Tweet?



Focus on measuring performance and impact

Introduction

As suggested above, Equinet needs to have in place management levers to drive performance and to maintain consistency. And to do that better, it may need a little more robustness in terms of its toolkit. We have in mind a number of points that emerged in the data on this overall topic:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – by far the longest item under this topic, but also...
- Other levers:
 - Considering adopting a Theory of Change
 - Governance continuity/quality
 - Financial sustainability

- Staff retention and risk register
- Data on the external issues

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

First, let's take the new KPIs and assess what the results tell us in a simple as way as possible. Appendix 2 provides Equinet's own document of this subject. What follows below is a simple table offering Equinet's own assessment and what we know from this evaluation, which attempts in particular to assess the outcome/impact indicators.

Output Indicators

Indicator	Result	Comment
Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies		
The number of staff members of different equality bodies engaged with in the capacity building activities	340	Since the same people may have attended more than one event, and this was not taken into account for the 2015 events, a new measuring system will give more accurate figures from 2016
The number of specific innovations promoted for the work of equality bodies	3	The Evaluation Lab, the Cluster on Standards and the Training session on EU funds
Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda		
The number of contributions made to European level policy-making and activity in the field of non-discrimination and equality	17 + 3	Equinet spoke at 17 different events, as well as producing three Equinet Perspectives one on Gender Equality another on Religion and Belief , and the third on Economic and Social Rights
The number of European level policy-makers and stakeholders engaged with on issues of equality and non-discrimination	Equinet met with 95 people in 67 external meeting	This figure does not include those people that we met through our own events or those external events which we attended or participated as speakers
Objective C: Serving as a knowledge and equal treatment hub on equal treatment		
Number of e-newsletters published	14	14 external e-Newsletters were produced throughout 2015, including 10 Newsbooks and four Spotlights on Equality Bodies
Number of research and reports published	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Equinet Perspective – The Persistence of Discrimination, Harassment and Inequality for Women • An Equinet Perspective – A Growing Agenda: The work of equality bodies on the ground of

Indicator	Result	Comment
		<p>religion or belief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Equinet Discussion Paper – Equality bodies and Freedom of Movement An Equinet Paper – The Sanctions Regime in Discrimination Cases and its Effects An Equinet Perspective – Equality bodies contributing to the protection, respect and fulfilment of Economic and Social Rights
Number of meetings and interactions with stakeholders	20	There were 20 occasions where Equinet got to speak with stakeholders through external meetings and events
Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members.		
Number of meetings with stakeholders that enable coherence and cooperation on shared concerns	3	Of the 20 meetings mentioned above, the two meetings organised with NGOs and social partners at the beginning of September 2015, as well as the meeting on the Horizontal Directive could be included here
Number of initiatives to explore and deepen understanding of links between equality, human rights and ombudsman mandates	7	<p>Equinet was represented in all of the events held within the Cooperation Platforms organised by Council of European, European Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA), ENNHRI and Equinet. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Hate crime and hate speech meeting in Riga in March 2015 ➔ Operational Platform on Roma Equality meetings in January and December 2015 in Strasbourg ➔ Economic and Social Rights meeting in October 2015 in Strasbourg ➔ Communication meeting in Vienna in May 2015 <p>Furthermore, Equinet attended the ENNHRI Working Group on UNCPRD twice during the year.</p>

Impact Indicators

Indicator	Result	Comment
Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies		
The number of staff members of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of their participation in Equinet activities	?	<p>29% of member respondents believe 50% or more of their staff make use of the Equinet knowledge base, while a further 69% believe that at least 10% of their staff do so.</p> <p>The way we assess this KPI doesn't quite answer the question, but comparison in subsequent years may be valuable.</p>
The number of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills	32	70% of member respondents say they make use of the knowledge, etc of Equinet a great deal of quite a lot, so one might reasonably infer that 70% of all

Indicator	Result	Comment
and learning gained as a result of Equinet activities		the members do from this sample, hence 32
Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda		
Evidence of influence by Equinet contributions in policy and legal documents published by European institutions and international organisations	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC Report on Directive 2004/113/EC & EP Report on Directive 2006/54/EC on implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services • Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium as speakers and a chair
Objective C: Serving as a knowledge hub on equal treatment		
Number of unique visitors and other relevant website analytics (e.g. average time spent per page)		<p>This internally recorded data show the traffic to the website from 1 January to 31 December 2015.</p> <p>41,063 sessions, implying 25,172 unique users with 101,736 page views.</p> <p>Visitors usually visit 2.48 pages per session and spend 2:41 minutes on our website during each session.</p> <p>The peaks in July are linked to the publication of job offers in both Equinet and ENNHRI</p>
Number of followers and other relevant social media analytics	Twitter = 859 LinkedIn Group = 93 Facebook = 1590	<p>There has been a 45% increase in the number of followers on Twitter, up from 474 on 8 January 2015 to 859 on 5 January 2016. The number of accounts that Equinet follows has also doubled, up from 281 at the beginning of 2015 to 563 at the beginning of 2016. Throughout 2015, we had 569 Tweets altogether, including retweets of other people's tweets.</p> <p>The number of Facebook followers has increased by roughly a third from 1071 on 8 January 2015 to 1590 on 5 January 2016</p> <p>We plan to disband the Linked In group and create a profile for Equinet to raise awareness about the publications, events etc. there. The group is not updated and when we have made attempts to engage with members (who are more than our members), there has been no feedback.</p>
Number of opens and clicks in disseminated Equinet	Total opens in year =	Total clicks in-year = 1137

Indicator	Result	Comment
newsletters	5438	Average opens per edition 388 In June, there was a big importation of email addresses from all of the events that we had during the year, as well as other lists being amalgamated into one single list.
The number of equality bodies and stakeholders making use in their work of the research publications	Members = 44.4% all the time or often External = 70% all the time or often	One might be able to reasonable infer from these figures the number of members who use Equinet's publications as the sample was large, but the External figure may be more dubious, since, arguably, only the least active of external stakeholders were arguably less likely to respond to the survey.
<u>Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members</u>		
Perceptions of equality bodies that their work has been supported and enhanced by the work of Equinet	?	This question was not directly asked in the survey. Question 5a) did ask about how influential Equinet is as a result of its policy contributions and legal documentation, but that's not quite the same thing. There are questions too on Equinet as a knowledge and communication hub, but that's not quite the same thing either. However, both of the answers to these questions are positive and one might generally infer that the answer to this specific question is very encouraging. However, we don't quite have data to be sure.

Right indicators?

What is this information trying to tell us and does it tell us what we need to know?

Comparing the output indicators with the data used for the last three years (see Figure 4 of this report), one might argue that the outputs chosen for the new KPIs, while appropriate in many ways, don't quite yet provide a full picture of the scale of Equinet's operations. We lack a sense still of volume, inputs (money and effort) and participation (who attended what). Both the new KPIs and the table at Figure 4 also lack a summary of immediate outcome, as registered by the post-event evaluations and summarised in the graph on page 15. So, perhaps a review of especially the output indicators may be helpful in the months ahead.

As for the outcome indicators, they are an effective first go at a difficult topic. We may need to tweak the evolution questions a little to ensure that we can actually assess each KPI effectively, but in general they seem to do the job.



What does the data mean?

When one considers the data here, it is, in some cases, it's hard to know what 'good' or 'excellent' looks like as we have neither trend data, nor comparisons with others. Generally, the picture looks positive, but one can't quite be sure.

Right process?

What follows from this is that there should be regular reports – we suggest six-monthly is fine for outputs and yearly for impact indicators – where the meaning from the KPIs can gradually be discerned.

These data should show target and past trends as well as current performance. Of course, this is not to say in any way that more is better and we must focus on volume of work. It could be, for example that volumes fall, while impact increases. Were this to be the case, the board would a) have data to show that and b) likely be inclined to understand how this was the case.

Conversely, if volumes of work were increasing, but indicator of impact were falling, the board would again wish to understand how. And, with such data, it can start to ask smarter questions.

Thus, we must conclude that having routine reports of this nature will gradually enhance the board's ability to give accountability and sharpen the focus of the staff to do those things that are most important

Other levers

Adopting a Theory of Change

While KPIs may help monitor the strategic plan, there may be a missing piece still in the jigsaw. By means of this evaluation we are attempting to measure or at least gauge impact. Thus, we assume that one thing, probably Equinet's activities, lead to some outcome and eventual policy impact. But what exactly is the supposed relationship between these elements? And if we assert that relationship does the data in fact substantiate it? Indeed, are we collecting the right data (ie KPIs) to test our assumptions?

The assumptions that a social change agency makes about how change is delivered are often described in a [theory of change](#). Very roughly, Equinet's theory of change may go something like that described in Figure 9.

Figure 8: Towards a Theory of Change?

Of course, such a rough first attempt misses much out and colleagues will doubtless be able quickly to improve upon it, but this is the point: getting to the place where there is an agreed theory of change may enable greater focus, enable smoother evaluation and offer a model that members themselves may wish to take up.

Governance continuity/quality

Many of the areas of Equinet's world receive high praise again this year, but none more so than the governance of the network. Why then suggest any change? A couple of points suggest some minor adjustments to help ensure continued governance quality and consistency, all of which make sense. In addition, there are four points that occur to the consultant:

- Considering lengthening the board terms to facilitate continuity of leadership
- Review the regional 'constituencies' to give them more credibility than they enjoy at the moment
- Consider a skills/perspectives review of each new board to help facilitate a conversation on whether there are any gaps and how such gaps are to be made up (eg by cooption, etc)
- Consider adopting a Code of Good Governance appropriate to the sector and, as they frequently suggest, undertaking every couple of years 'goht-touch' governance performance reviews and/or individual board member reviews

Financial sustainability

Previous reports have observed how activity may be constrained by reliance on just one source of income. It is pleasing to see how increased financial sustainability is being considered at the present time by looking at other grants from other funders. A positive trend – and a change that marks the resolution to a long-running discussion. May it continue!

Staff retention – risk register

This has also been a topic for previous reports since it is an area of risk for the network. And it makes one wonder about whether there is a risk register in place, where these and other risks may be itemised, evaluated and their effects mitigated.

Data on the external issues

Mention was made by respondents of the great value that robust data can have to make any policy case. And it was further said that Equinet is in a unique position in this respect to collect and collate data on cases, and so on. Acknowledged as a problematic area, this must be an opportunity for Equinet if it can make progress where others have so far failed.

Overall

To deepen Equinet’s impact, during troubling times for the sector, consideration of strengthening the levers both to understand and to manage things is an appropriate response. This evaluation report finds that it is perhaps in these four areas where that can most effectively be done.

5. Appendix 1

Survey Questions

Q.1: Strategic Plan

- * a) Equinet developed and agreed a new Strategic Plan a year ago. To what extent do you feel Equinet is on track to deliver the strategic objectives (building capacity and peer support of equality bodies; contributing to the European equality agenda, serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment; and consolidating the network and the position of its members) over the period 2015 to 2018?

Reflections?

Q.2: Performance

- * a) Taking each of Equinet’s main work areas in turn, what is your view of their timeliness, accuracy and usefulness, i.e. their quality and impact? (Score 1-5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent)

	<u>Timeliness</u>	<u>Accuracy</u>	<u>Usefulness</u>
Conferences			
Seminars			
Working groups			
Training			



Clusters

Project: Evaluation Lab

Publications

Internal Communication

External Communication

b) How could the needs of Equinet's highly diverse membership be met better in the future?

Q.3: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies

- * a) To what extent do you believe that your organisation makes use in its work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of Equinet's activities?
- * b) What proportion of the staff of your organisation do you estimate make use of this knowledge, as described above?

Reflections?

Q.4: The European dimension of your work

- * How well do you feel that your organisation is equipped to engage at the European policy level as a result of Equinet's work and presence?

Reflections?

Q.5: Influence

- * a) How influential do you feel Equinet is as a result of its policy contributions and legal documentation amongst EU institutions?
- * b) How influential do you feel Equinet and national equality bodies are amongst the network's other stakeholders (i.e. not EU institutions)?

Reflections?

Q.6: Equinet as a knowledge and communication hub

- * a) How well do you feel that your work is represented to external audiences by Equinet?
- * b) How well does Equinet facilitate exchange of information and exchange more broadly among members?
- * c) To what extent does your organisation make use in its work of Equinet's research and publications?

Reflections?



Q.7: Membership Engagement

- * a) How relevant and useful is the information provided by the current internal communication methods (Members' Bulletins)?
- * b) If it were available, would you use additional methods for internal communications to link with other members, such as a well-developed Members' Forum?

Reflections?

Q.8: Governance

- * How well is Equinet governed in your view?

Reflections?

Q.9: Equinet's Secretariat

- * a) How efficiently does the Secretariat deliver in terms of its key administrative functions (reimbursements, membership questions, answering requests, etc)?
- * b) How effective is the Secretariat supporting the work of equality bodies?

What are the next steps for its development in your view?

Q.10: Network decision-making:

- * How efficient and appropriately inclusive is the decision-making in the network, in your view?

Reflections?

6. Appendix 2: Evaluating the impact of Equinet's work 2015

As a professional European network, the credibility of Equinet's work rests both on (i) the effective implementation of the foreseen activities as well as on (ii) its ability as an organisation to show meaningful results brought by the implementation of the activities. As it has done each year, Equinet has commissioned an **external technical evaluation** of its activities (and an external financial review), offering valuable insights, learning and evaluation outcomes of relevance for the Board to steer the action of the network into the future. The results of this should be available in March 2016.

Furthermore, for activities under each strategic goal, a range of **indicators** have been devised that will help with assessing success, based on objectives that were set for each activity in this work plan and in line with Equinet's Strategic Plan.

Output Indicators

Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies.

1. *The number of staff members of different equality bodies engaged with in the capacity building activities.*

➔ We calculated that 340 staff members attended our events throughout 2015, however we are aware that the same people might have attended more than one event, and this was not taken into account for the 2015 events. For 2016, a new measuring system has been put into place, which should give more accurate figures for the actual numbers of staff members that attended all of our events.

2. *The number of specific innovations promoted for the work of equality bodies.*

➔ The Evaluation Lab, the Cluster on Standards and the Training session on EU funds were the three new innovations that we developed in 2015.

Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda.

3. *The number of contributions made to European level policy-making and activity in the field of non-discrimination and equality.*

➔ This year, Equinet spoke at 17 different events, as well as producing three Equinet Perspectives, one on [Gender Equality](#) another on [Religion and Belief](#), and the third on [Economic and Social Rights](#).

4. *The number of European level policy-makers and stakeholders engaged with on issues of equality and non-discrimination.*

➔ Equinet met with 95 people in 67 external meetings. However, this does not include those people that we met through our own events or those external events which we attended or participated as speakers.

Objective C: Serving as a knowledge and equal treatment hub on equal treatment.

5. Number of e-newsletters published.

➔ 14 external e-Newsletters were produced throughout 2015, including 10 Newsbooks and four Spotlights on Equality Bodies. There was no Newsbook produced in February as there was an urgent rush to finish all of the publications from 2014 before the end of February. Furthermore, the Newsbook for August was put together with the July Newsbook as summer edition, for lack of news.

6. Number of research and reports published.

➔ Five publications were produced this year

- An Equinet Perspective - [The Persistence of Discrimination, Harassment and Inequality for Women](#)
- An Equinet Perspective - [A Growing Agenda: The work of equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief](#)
- An Equinet Discussion Paper – [Equality bodies and Freedom of Movement](#)
- An Equinet Paper – [The Sanctions Regime in Discrimination Cases and its Effects](#)
- An Equinet Perspective – [Equality bodies contributing to the protection, respect and fulfilment of Economic and Social Rights](#)

7. Number of meetings and interactions with stakeholders.

➔ There were 20 occasions where Equinet got to speak with stakeholders through external meetings and events.

Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members.

8. Number of meetings with stakeholders that enable coherence and cooperation on shared concerns.

➔ Of the 20 meetings mentioned above, the two meetings organised with NGOs and social partners at the beginning of September 2015, as well as the meeting on the Horizontal Directive could be included here.

9. Number of initiatives to explore and deepen understanding of links between equality, human rights and ombudsman mandates.

➔ Equinet was represented in all of the events held within the Cooperation Platforms organised by Council of European, European Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA), ENNHRI and Equinet. These included:

- Hate crime and hate speech meeting in Riga in March 2015
- Operational Platform on Roma Equality meetings in January and December 2015 in Strasbourg
- Economic and Social Rights meeting in October 2015 in Strasbourg
- Communication meeting in Vienna in May 2015

Furthermore, Equinet attended the ENNHRI Working Group on UNCPRD twice during the year.

Impact Indicators

Objective A: Building capacity of and peer support for equality bodies.

1. *The number of staff members of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of their participation in Equinet activities.*

➔ To be assessed by the evaluation report.

2. *The number of equality bodies making use in their work of the knowledge, skills and learning gained as a result of Equinet activities.*

➔ To be assessed by the evaluation report.

Objective B: Contributing to the European equality agenda.

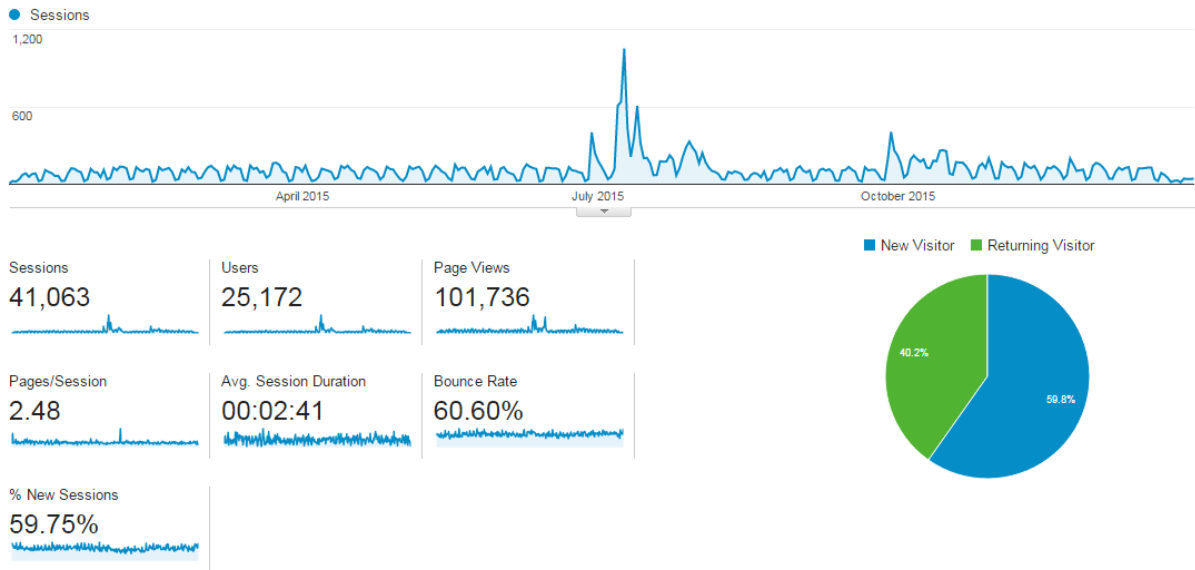
3. *Evidence of influence by Equinet contributions in policy and legal documents published by European institutions and international organisations.*

➔ EC Report on Directive 2004/113/EC & EP Report on Directive 2006/54/EC on implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services

➔ Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium as speakers and a chair.

Objective C: Serving as a knowledge hub on equal treatment.

4. *Number of unique visitors and other relevant website analytics (e.g. average time spent per page).*



This chart shows the traffic to the website from 1 January to 31 December 2015. The peaks in July are linked to the publication of job offers in both Equinet and ENNHRI.

5. *Number of followers and other relevant social media analytics.*

- ➔ There has been a 45% increase in the number of followers on Twitter, up from 474 on 8 January 2015 to 859 on 5 January 2016. The number of accounts that Equinet follows has also doubled, up from 281 at the beginning of 2015 to 563 at the beginning of 2016. Throughout 2015, we had 569 Tweets altogether, including retweets of other people’s tweets.
- ➔ The number of Facebook followers has increased by roughly a third from 1071 on 8 January 2015 to 1590 on 5 January 2016.

6. *Number of opens and clicks in disseminated Equinet newsletters.*

	Subscribers	Opens	Clicks
Newsbook Nov-Jan	1110	343	122
Newsbook Feb-Mar	1013	261	47
Newsbook April	1173	354	97
Newsbook May	1073	290	58
Newsbook June*	1921	478	90
Newsbook Jul-Aug	1929	470	101
Newsbook Sept	1934	460	124
Newsbook Oct	1943	451	90
Newsbook Nov	1937	486	103
Newsbook Dec	1931	446	110
Spotlight April	1081	247	53
Spotlight July	1933	426	49

Spotlight October	1915	392	53
Spotlight December	1919	334	40
Total Newsbooks		4039	942
Total Spotlights		1399	195
Total		5438	1137
Average Newsbooks		403,9	94,2
Average Spotlights		349,75	48,75
Average		388,4285714	81,21428571

*Note that in June, there was a big importation of email addresses from all of the events that we had during the year, as well as other lists being amalgamated into one single list.

7. *The number of equality bodies and stakeholders making use in their work of the research publications.*

➔ To be assessed by the evaluation report.

Objective D: Consolidating the network and the position of its members.

8. *Perceptions of equality bodies that their work has been supported and enhanced by the work of Equinet.*

To be assessed by the evaluation rep