

Information Kit on Equality Bodies for Members of the European Parliament

Equinet European network of equality bodies

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EQUALITY BODIES – PUBLIC DEFENDERS FOR EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

At a time when many EU citizens are discriminated against on the basis of their **gender, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and belief, disability, or other grounds**, the public institutions known as “equality bodies” play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of the EU.

They have this role because **EU equal treatment legislation** obliges Member States to set up equality bodies to combat discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, as well as gender. However, many Member States have gone beyond these requirements and ensured that equality bodies can also deal with discrimination based on the other grounds mentioned above.

These bodies have a **distinct role from national governments and civil society organisations**. They promote equality and make sure that equal treatment legislation is applied by:

- **Investigating** cases of discrimination
- **Building a culture** that is respectful of rights
- **Providing information** and in some cases **legal support** to potential victims
- **Monitoring and reporting** on discrimination issues
- **Conducting research** and providing **policy recommendations**
- **Engaging** with companies, NGOs and public bodies to foster non-discriminatory practices and ensure awareness and compliance with equal treatment legislation



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EQUALITY BODIES AS VALUABLE PARTNERS

Equality bodies are **authoritative voices** in matters of discrimination at national level (for example, implementing the law on race discrimination, combating the gender pay gap, providing statistics on discrimination etc.). As a **first point of contact for victims** of discrimination, they have an extensive understanding of how discrimination affects European citizens. They can provide reliable **“from the ground” information** on the challenges faced by victims and on national equal treatment policies. Equality bodies also make the **EU legislation work better** by monitoring and taking an active part in the implementation of the EU Directives.



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CHALLENGES AHEAD

However, they also face important challenges:

NEED FOR STRONG EU STANDARDS

Current EU Directives mainly govern the establishment of equality bodies. The functions and powers of equality bodies and the levels of protection they provide are very different across Member States. Moreover, EU Directives do not specify standards to protect equality bodies from reduction of powers or resources. **In order to have a concrete impact at the national and EU levels, standards on the independence, effectiveness, functions and powers of equality bodies would be an important step forward.**

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS

Cuts in financial and human resources, reorganisation of the legal and institutional structure can undermine the accessibility, independence and sustainability of equality bodies' actions. Moreover, **lack of political commitment has undermined the ability of some equality bodies to achieve their full potential.** This challenging context is worsened by rising inequalities and discrimination.

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THE ROLE OF EQUINET

We can be your first point of contact for information relating to equality bodies. We can facilitate your engagement with the equality body(ies) in your country and provide relevant and fact-based information about their experience with various non-discrimination topics. We can also provide you with information on their activity, expertise, good practices, and challenges.

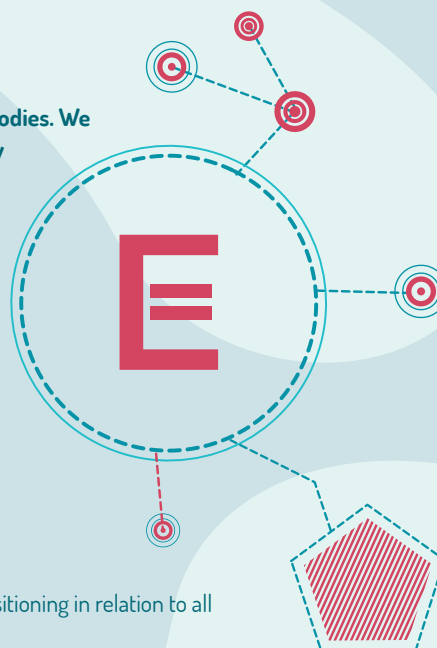
We can do this because Equinet is the platform of equality bodies in Europe, with 41 member organisations from all 28 EU Member States as well as 3 non-EU countries. Equinet and its Brussels-based Secretariat have enjoyed a good and close working relationship with EU institutions in the past 7 years. The network is co-funded by the European Commission and Equinet's member organisations.

OUR MISSION:

- Developing the skills and competences of staff
- Sharing lessons and experience from the work of equality bodies
- Raising the profile of equality bodies and contributing to their strategic positioning in relation to all stakeholders at EU level

OUR ACTIVITIES:

- Connecting staff members of equality bodies through working groups and training events.
- Organising high-level seminars on key topics on the EU agenda in the field of equality and non-discrimination.
- Support research, exchange of information, data and expertise through the publication of reports and good practice guides and policy perspectives.



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

As an MEP, you can play a key role in helping equality bodies overcome these challenges and reach their full potential at national

and EU levels.

- ✓ You can find your national equality body on the list (see reverse), follow its work and engage with it as a resource on non-discrimination issues.
- ✓ You can support stronger standards on the powers, functions and independence of equality bodies in EU directives and policy-making.
- ✓ You can support the effective implementation of EU equal treatment Directives and enhanced protection on all grounds of discrimination under EU legislation.
- ✓ You can connect with Equinet – the European Network of Equality Bodies: read, use and spread our publications, attend our events and follow our daily work on our website or social media channels.

Co-funded by the Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS Programme of the European Union



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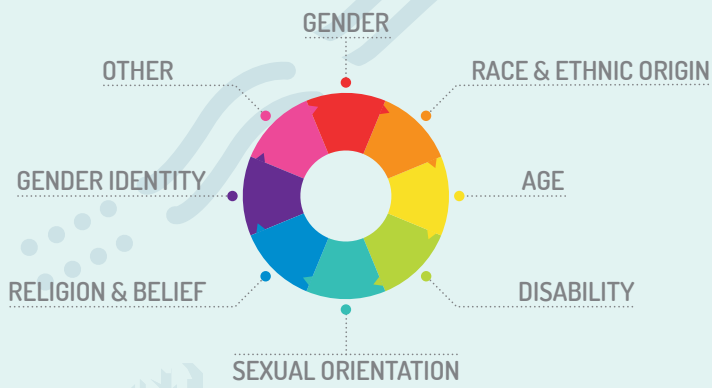
www.equineteurope.org



Equinet Members and the grounds they cover per country*

Equinet European network of equality bodies

* This list illustrates only the grounds covered by the mandates of Equinet's Member Equality Bodies. In some cases, it is possible that other grounds are covered by the country's legislation.



		EMPLOYMENT	BEYOND EMPLOYMENT		
				Ireland	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission www.equality.ie
				Italy	Nataly Office against Racial Discrimination - UNAR www.unar.it National Equality Councillor www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale/
				Latvia	Office of the Ombudsman www.tiesibsargs.lv
				Lithuania	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman www.lygybe.lt
EMPLOYMENT	BEYOND EMPLOYMENT			Austria	Ombud for Equal Treatment www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at
				Belgium	Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities www.diversiteit.be and www.diversiteit.be Institute for the Equality of Women and Men http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be
				Bulgaria	Commission for Protection against Discrimination www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com
				Croatia	Office of the Ombudsman www.ombudsman.hr Ombudsperson for Gender Equality www.prs.hr
				Cyprus	Office of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) www.ombudsman.gov.cy
				Czech Republic	Office of the Public Defender of Rights www.ochrance.cz
				Denmark	Board of Equal Treatment www.ast.dk Danish Institute for Human Rights www.humanrights.dk
				Estonia	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner www.svv.ee
				Finland	Ombudsman for Equality www.tasa-arvo.fi Ombudsman for Minorities www.ofm.fi
				(FYRO) Macedonia	Commission for the Protection against Discrimination www.kzd.mk/mk/
				France	Defender of Rights www.defenseurdesdroits.fr
				Germany	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de
				Greece	Greek Ombudsman www.synigoros.gr
				Hungary	Equal Treatment Authority www.egyenlobanasmod.hu Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights www.ajbh.hu
				Luxembourg	Centre for Equal Treatment www.cet.lu
				Malta	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality www.equality.gov.mt National Commission for Persons with Disability www.knpd.org
				Netherlands	Netherlands Institute for Human Rights www.mensenrechten.nl
				Norway	Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud www.ldo.no
				Poland	Human Rights Defender www.rpo.gov.pl
				Portugal	Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality www.cjg.gov.pt Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment www.cite.gov.pt High Commission for Migration www.acidi.gov.pt
				Romania	National Council for Combating Discrimination www.cncd.org.ro
				Serbia	Commission for the Protection of Equality www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs
				Slovakia	National Centre for Human Rights www.snspl.sk
				Slovenia	Advocate of the Principle of Equality www.zagovornik.net
				Spain	Spanish Race and Ethnic Equality Council www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.org
				Sweden	Equality Ombudsman www.do.se
				United Kingdom	Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com Equality Commission for Northern Ireland www.equalityni.org