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**Dear Equinet Members,**

This Members’ Bulletin gathers **the main Equinet internal updates, with the objectives of giving you a clearer overview of Equinet activities**. We very much hope this members’ bulletin will be useful in your day-to-day work and we would be grateful if you could **disseminate it among your colleagues**. Your feedback is also greatly appreciated. Should you have any comments or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact **Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer** (jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org / 0032 2 212 31 80).

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### **PART 1: EQUINET UPDATES**

# Reminder: Equinet Information Form 2016 – Contact persons and Working Group membersDeadline: Monday 18th January

For the start of every year, the Equinet Secretariat sends a request inviting Members to confirm or update the list of **your contact persons and** **representatives participating in the Equinet’s Working Groups**. In the **information form** which was sent to the Equinet contact persons and heads of equality bodies **on 14th December 2015**, we kindly ask you to inform us of:

         any changes in your organisation’s **Equinet contact person** or their contact details

         any changes in your organisation’s **representatives participating in Equinet Working Groups**

This exercise is important as it ensures that our records are up to date and that Working Group members in your organisation receive all the relevant communication and material.

**We kindly ask you to complete the information form, and return it signed by Monday 18th January to Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org.**

Please note that the first meeting of some working groups will take place already in February 2016, thus adhering to this deadline is important. In cases where we do not receive the forms on time, information about the first meetings will be sent to current working group members.

# Reminder: Equinet Members Survey 2015Deadline: Friday 22nd January 2016

Equinet will once again carry out the **annual independent external evaluation** of the year’s work and of the activities of our Network.

**Transform Management Consultancy's John Tierney (UK)** has been selected once more as the expert evaluation consultant to undertake this comprehensive evaluation of Equinet’s activities. Transform has designed a short questionnaire for Equinet's Members and for our other stakeholders.

This evaluation presents us with a great opportunity to gather feedback from our membership and other partners, to help identify room for improvement and to let our community have their say about matters that may concern them.

Your input to this evaluation is crucial in helping us reflect on our Strategic Plan (2015-2018), now one year into its life, as well as to gather feedback on a number of other areas and new initiatives. Therefore, we would be very grateful if you would take a moment to complete a short questionnaire before 22 January 2015.

Completing it should take no longer than **10 minutes** or so, and your responses will be treated as confidential by our evaluation contractor, Transform, who, as previously, will present us with the key findings, but never attributed to their author. We thank you in advance for your responses and your cooperation.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation survey questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact directly John Tierney (john@trans4mgt.com or +44 845 862 5247).

**The survey is available [here](https://surveymonkey.co.uk/tr/v1/te/akU_2BQc2vAhAsa_2B264x1g6_2FpF_2Fhy3EhxbpxJDHYpYZT2_2Bt4YkcZIljuOy5jwi5ERBIP1qYhQAH9CPNkd8j2TcgzL6_2BAgVAnnitrYxzdRFKchAJf24ksWos4Ftb04oTEhlVy59oRH1VZkI1uAzEqC3loTOD_2BOgoJkqYtl3p3tGXEeaHBrLvKWNj3aMZkKCjUb3_2FeFV7nhDVfCzthDxjKkHfg_3D_3D).**

# Download the Equinet calendar of activities 2016

Following the adoption of the Equinet 2016 work plan, the Secretariat prepared a provisional calendar of activities for 2016. It is available [in the Equinet Members’ Area](http://www.equineteurope.org/spip.php?page=forum_membres_article&id_article=773).

Please note that this is a **provisional document.** It will evolve over time. Invitations to each activities with final dates and confirmed locations will be sent to you in due time.

Should you need more information, please contact Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org / 0032 2 212 31 80).

# Equinet and equality bodies – Promoting equality in EuropeNew Equinet brochure available

**What are equality bodies? Why do we need equality bodies? What challenges do equality bodies face?** This new Equinet brochure aims to raise awareness about the role of and challenges faced by equality bodies at national and EU level, but also, on the way they can cooperate and bring added value to the work of stakeholders in their daily work.

The work of Equinet, European network of equality bodies is also outlined. The network promotes equality in Europe by supporting and enabling the work of equality bodies to be independent and effective as valuable catalysts for more equal societies.

A list of Equinet members and the grounds of discrimination covered per country is also available.

**Download the brochure** [**here**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-bodies-and-Equinet) **and do not hesitate to disseminate it among your contacts. Should you wish to order hard copies, please contact Sarah Cooke O’Dowd, Equinet Communication Officer (****sarah.cookeodowd@equineteurope.org****).**

# New Equinet paper: The sanctions regime in discrimination cases and its effects

This study, carried out by Katrin Wladasch of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institut of Human Rights, aims to identify different types of sanctions as a tool for fostering the implementation of the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. A specific focus is given to the (potential) role of equality bodies in strengthening effectiveness, proportionality and dissuasiveness of sanctions’ regimes.

**Download the paper [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/The-Sanctions-Regime-in).**

# Equinet Cluster on Strategic Litigation is launched

The Work Plan for 2015 outlines how Equinet would assist the setting up of a members-led thematic cluster bringing together equality bodies’ legal experts with an interest in strategic litigation in discrimination cases.

Strategic litigation is already used by some equality bodies, while others currently consider experimenting the use of this tool to take up cases that can result in important clarifications of the applicable law and positive changes going beyond the merits of the particular case. This thematic cluster provides a space for interested equality bodies as part of an expert group to:

* Discuss the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of strategic litigation,
* Share and discuss criteria for strategic litigation and
* Analyse successful examples of court cases where strategic litigation brought about positive results and developments in the law.

**More information is available [here](http://equineteurope.org/Equinet-Cluster-on-Strategic-779).**

# Next meeting of the FRA – CoE – ENNHRI – Equinet Platform on Economic and Social Rights and Equality on Thursday 28th January 2016

**The Platform on Economic and Social Rights and Equality** is one of the 4 Platforms for cooperation and coordination set up by Equinet, the Council of Europe, the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency, and the European Network of NHRIs following a conference in October 2013.

The **second meeting of the Platform on Economic and Social Rights and Equality** will be organized by the **Council of Europe’s Department of the European Social Charter in Strasbourg**, Agora Building, Room G05, on **28 January 2016 (9.30 am – 5 pm)**. The meeting will focus on the identification of concrete cooperation activities and the development of tools for further co-operation and exchange of information and good practices in the field of advancing economic and social rights and equality. This topic is of specific relevance in light of the upcoming perspective by Equinet’s Policy Formation Working Group on the role of equality bodies in contributing to the protection, respect and fulfillment of economic and social rights.

**The Council of Europe will bear the cost of travel and subsistence expenses of 14 representatives of EQUINET.**

**Interested Equinet member organisations should contact the Equinet Secretariat (tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org ) at their earliest convenience.**
Their expressions of interest will be forwarded to the Council of Europe in order to send a formal invitation and organize logistics.

# Freedom of Movement Conference: pictures and presentations available

On 8 December 2015, the [Defender of Rights](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/) hosted the **Conference "Equality bodies and the new freedom of movement directive – challenge or opportunity?"** in Paris (France). This conference was dedicated to the role of equality bodies in combating nationality-based discrimination in the framework of the implementation of the new Directive.

This Equinet conference was dedicated **to the role of equality bodies in combating nationality-based discrimination in the framework of the implementation of the new [Directive 2014/54/EU on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32014L0054)**. It brought together equality bodies and relevant European stakeholders to analyse the role and potential challenges for equality bodies under the Directive and generally in addressing nationality-based discrimination.

**- The Speakers’ Presentation and pictures are available [on the Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-bodies-and-the-new). A summary of the event will follow in the coming weeks.
- Download the Equinet Background Paper “Equality bodies and freedom of movement” [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-Bodies-and-Freedom-of).**

# Summary of the last Gender Equality Working Group meeting is available

The Summary of the last meeting of the [Equinet Gender Equality Working Group](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Thematic-Working-Groups-) is available on the [Equinet Members’ Area](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Gender-Related-Issues-).

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Working Groups** | **Tuesday 1st March** | WG Communication *(Nicosia, Cyprus)* |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Friday 4th March** | Board meeting *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Other meetings (invitation only)** | **Friday 29th January** | Second meeting of the Evaluation Lab (Brussels, Belgium) |

### **PART 2: EQUINET MEMBERS**

# Updates - Equinet members

* **Commission for the Protection of Equality, Serbia - Twinning Project - Increasing the visibility and capacities of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality**

*Article written by Barbara Liegl (Resident Twinning Adviser - EU Twinning Project - Support to the advancement of human rights and zero tolerance to discrimination) and Ljiljana Loncar (Commission for the Protection of Equality – Serbia)*

On the eve of the approval of Serbia’s Action Plan for Chapter 23, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (CPE) is a key player in the EU Twinning project “Support to the advancement of human rights and zero tolerance to discrimination”. The overall project objective is to strengthen and encourage the implementation of the relevant legislative framework promoting equality and anti-discrimination, and protecting the rights of minorities and human rights defenders and bring the legislative framework in line with European standards. The specific objective is to strengthen the existing capacity of relevant national institutions such as the CPE and other key stakeholders for the implementation of human rights and for enhancing the implementation of anti-discrimination policies at national and local level.

This Twinning project brings together public sector expertise from Austria (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights) and Slovenia (Office for National Minorities) with the CPE and the Office for Human and Minority Rights (OHMR) of the Republic of Serbia with the aim of enhancing peer to peer activities. About fifteen European experts will cooperate with CPE and a wide range of stakeholders by exchanging experiences, knowledge and skills through training events, trainings of trainers, developing legal and institutional analyses and drafting recommendations.

The CPE wants to make use of the project activities as an opportunity for increasing her visibility at the regional and local level to ensure equal access to justice for persons who have experienced discrimination. A special focus on strengthening mechanisms to follow-up on the implementation of recommendations issued by the CPE will contribute to establishing structures effectively preventing future discrimination. Staff of the CPE will be able to further advance their skills on how to handle complaints, on what kind of data to collect and on making use of it in assessing and presenting complaints. Outreach work targeting National Councils of National Minorities, towns/municipalities, police, judges, prosecutors and CSOs and a public awareness raising campaign will support the development of a culture of rights encouraging the reporting of incidents of discrimination.

**More information is available in [Serbian](http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs/rs/%D0%B8%D0%BF%D0%B0-2011/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D1%83-%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%80%D1%83-%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B3-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%98%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%80%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%92%D0%B5%D1%9A%D1%83-%D1%99%D1%83%D0%B4%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%85-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D1%83) and [English](https://owa.univie.ac.at/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=7bCAlioJ43Tr2WI0vopzIHUwK1Uwr9rU5175HWEKGQEGubJjZuTSCGgAdAB0AHAAOgAvAC8AYgBpAG0ALgBsAGIAZwAuAGEAYwAuAGEAdAAvAGUAbgAvAHMAdABvAHIAeQAvAG4AZQB3AHMALwBrAGkAYwBrAC0AZQB2AGUAbgB0AC0AdAB3AGkAbgBuAGkAbgBnAC0AcAByAG8AagBlAGMAdAAtAHMAdQBwAHAAbwByAHQALQBhAGQAdgBhAG4AYwBlAG0AZQBuAHQALQBoAHUAbQBhAG4ALQByAGkAZwBoAHQAcwAtAGEAbgBkAC0AegBlAHIAbwAtAHQAbwBsAGUAcgBhAG4AYwBlAC0AZABpAHMAYwByAGkAbQBpAG4AYQB0AGkAbwBuAC0AcwBlAHIAYgBpAGEA&URL=http%3a%2f%2fbim.lbg.ac.at%2fen%2fstory%2fnews%2fkick-event-twinning-project-support-advancement-human-rights-and-zero-tolerance-discrimination-serbia).**

* **Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency – Report: Equal Rights – Against gender discrimination**

More protection from sexual harassment in the workplace, elimination of disadvantages for trans and intersex people and an effective law for the enforcement of equal pay between the sexes - these are the main demands laid out in a report made by the independent commission set up by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency this year.

The main recommendations for action were made in regard to:

* **Sexual harassment in employment and education**

"Sexual harassment is a serious example of discrimination on grounds of sex and not a trivial offense. That must be reflected in court and in the amount of compensation", Wowereit said at the launch of the report. "In addition, public and private employers have to make the issue a top priority. Employees need to know to whom they can turn to if they are a victim of harassment. Only then can we create a climate that has no place for disadvantage".

* **Non-discriminatory treatment of gender diversity, in particular trans\* and inter\***

The Commission laid particular emphasis on discrimination experienced by trans\* - and intersex\* people. Forced operations on intersex children are clear violations of human rights and must stop. Furthermore bureaucratic hurdles in sexual reassignment and name changes for transgender people are an impertinence", Allmendinger said.

* **Closing the gender pay gap**

There are significant pay differences between the sexes, and the majority of experts call for a change in legislation. "In Germany, women earn on average 22 percent less than men, we are thus among the worst in Europe", Wowereit said. "This is partly due to a framework of insufficient childcare or tax disincentives. Secondly, it is due to lack of transparency and a problematic review of activities. We must develop an effective equal pay law."

**More information and the report are available** [**here**](http://equineteurope.org/Equal-Rights-Against-Gender)**.**

### **PART 3 – EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS’** **REQUESTS**

# FRA Questionnaire: Cooperation between NHRBs and National Parliaments (Deadline: Friday 22nd January 2016)

Dear Equality Bodies, NHRIs and Ombudspersons,

**‘Enhancing contribution to processes at the national level’** is one of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights’ key strategic objectives. To help us further reach this goal **we would kindly ask you to answer six short questions.**

The Agency has been steadily strengthening its national ties via its networks of national liaison officers (NLOs), civil society organisations (FRP) and – of course – **national human rights bodies (NHRBs)**. Over the last two years FRA has also increased its visibility in and cooperation with national parliaments across the EU. It has presented research outcomes and recommendations in eight national parliaments, and invited MPs as participants to conferences and events. In addition, the Agency has contributed to inter-parliamentary debates on migration and privacy and data protection.

National Parliamentary Focal Points (NPFPs) were nominated to be the primary contact points for FRA in the Member States’ parliamentary administrations to structure and facilitate the Agency’s cooperation with national parliaments.

The Agency will continue to foster the cooperation among national bodies in the Member States responsible for promoting and protecting fundamental rights. During FRA’s stakeholder meeting on 19-20 November, which brought together 115 national institutions’ representatives of the 28 Member States, the Agency was encouraged to continue these efforts.

One particular aim in our work on national level is to better map if and how FRA stakeholders cooperate at the national level. Taking inspiration from both the [Belgrade Principles on the relationship between NHRIs and Parliaments](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-9_en.pdf) (2012) and [Resolution 1998 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20928&lang=en) entitled Improving cooperation between NHRIs and Parliaments in addressing equality and non-discrimination issues (2014), we kindly ask you to provide us with some information on the practical ways your organisation cooperates with national parliament by filling in a short questionnaire by 22 January 2016.

Please find the questionnaire [here](http://fra.europa.eu/surveys/index.php/121488/lang-en).

This input on the domestic state-of-affairs will help us strengthen our common role-sharing and information-sharing capacities with Parliaments.

# Reminder: European Commission – Public consultation on Work Life Balance (Deadline: Wednesday 17th February)

Last week, the European Commission opened a **public consultation “on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers”.** According to the European Commission, “the purpose of this consultation is to gather views on the development and implementation of a range of possible tools at EU-level to support work-life balance”.

The consultation is available in the **24 European languages.** Contributions are welcome by **Wednesday 17th February.**

We strongly encourage you to contribute to the consultation in order to make sure that equality bodies are taken into account in any future actions which could be planned by the European Commission.

The Equinet Secretariat will also prepare a contribution based on the 2013 Work Life Balance Perspective (<http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-Bodies-promoting-a-better>) and the learnings of the Work Life Balance Seminar which was held in Tallinn in June 2015 (<http://www.equineteurope.org/Work-Life-Balance-and-Pregnancy-682>).

**- The public consultation is available** [**here**](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/opinion/1511_roadmap_reconciliation_en.htm)**.
- For more information, please contact Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer (****Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org****)**

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