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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**

# Last chance to register to the Conference “Equality Bodies and the New Freedom of Movement Directive – Challenge or Opportunity?” (Paris, 8th December 2015) *Deadline: Monday 30th November*

On **8 December 2015**, the [Defender of Rights](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/) will host the Conference **"Equality bodies and the new freedom of movement directive – challenge or opportunity?"** in Paris (France).

This conference is 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 will bring 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 draft agenda and the registration form are available** [**on the Equinet website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-bodies-and-the-new)**.**

# Reminder: Survey about the work done by equality bodies in the field of economic, social and cultural rights (Deadline: as soon as possible)

Equinet 2015 Work Plan foresees that **the Equinet Working Group Policy Formation** “*discuss and produce a perspective on the contribution of equality bodies to the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. This topic has gained more relevance in the context of austerity measures aggravating violations of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly with respect to groups that are more vulnerable to discrimination (migrants, older persons, disabled persons, Roma etc.). The perspective will take account of the work done by equality bodies in the field and their use of international instruments such as the European Social Charter or the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU*.”

On 29th October, a survey was disseminated to the members of the Working Group. The answers to this survey will feed into the preparation of **the next perspective of the Equinet Working Group on Policy Formation** on this topic. Your answers will be much appreciated and will ensure a good overview of the contribution of equality bodies to this important field of rights.

Please send your answers to tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org and niallcrowley1@gmail.com **as soon as possible.**

The survey is available here:



# Equinet Religion and Belief Seminar: presentations and pictures are available

On 9 and 10 November 2015, staff of member equality bodies joined hosts Equinet and the [Equality and the Human Rights Commission](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/) in London for a capacity building seminar entitled **"A question of faith. Religion and belief in the work of equality bodies"**.

The seminar aimed to take stock of legal and political developments, as well as remaining challenges in ensuring freedom of religion and combating religious or faith-based discrimination at European and national levels. It analysed the role of and challenges for equality bodies in addressing issues of religion and belief by discussing good practices in the use of their legal, research, communication and promotional functions.

**- The Speakers’ Presentation and pictures are available** [**on the Equinet website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Seminar-A-question-of)**. A summary of the event will follow in the coming weeks.
- Download the new Equinet Perspective “A growing agenda. The work of equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief”** [**here**](http://www.equineteurope.org/A-Growing-Agenda-The-Work-of)**.**

# Paris attacks: A note of solidarity and a call for respect and dialogue

Equinet supports the capacity and the potential of equality bodies to contribute to positive change for individuals, organisations and institutions, and society as a whole. Following the dreadful events in Paris on Friday 13 November, our European Network expresses solidarity with our colleagues at the French [Defender of Rights](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/), headed by Jacques Toubon.

In this context, we share the sentiments as expressed by one of our member equality body in Belgium, with the following message:

“The [Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities](http://www.diversitybelgium.be/) wishes to express its solidarity with the French people. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families in particular. Every one of us has been affected on an individual and collective level.

The nature, amplitude and violence, but also the proximity of the Paris attacks, touch us in particular, but we do not forget the men, women and children who die every day in other attacks, in violent conflict or on the road trying to escape them.

The attacks on 13 November are a direct attack against our freedom, our democracy, and the rule of law. And it is in their name that we must react with vigor but also with coherence. This means that we must refuse to make generalisations and stigmatise groups or communities that could be too easily blamed as a whole for such acts. We must fight hate, violence and discrimination together, through dialogue and respect.”

**See the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities statement in** [**French**](http://www.diversite.be/attentats-paris-le-centre-plaide-pour-le-respect-et-le-dialogue) **and** [**Dutch**](http://www.diversiteit.be/aanslagen-parijs-het-centrum-pleit-voor-respect-en-dialoog)**.**

# Summary of the last Working Group Communication meeting is available

The Summary of the last meeting of the [Equinet Working Group Communication](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Thematic-Working-Groups-) is available on the [Equinet Members’ Area](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Communication-Strategies-and-93-).

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Wednesday 9th December** | Board meeting *(Paris, France)* |
| **Conferences** | **Tuesday 8th December** | Conference on the Freedom of Movement Directive *(Paris, France)* |
| **Other meetings (invitation only)** | **January 2016** | Second meeting of the Evaluation Lab |
| **Wednesday 16th December** | Meeting of the Cluster on Strategic Litigation |

### **PART 2: EQUINET MEMBERS’ UPDATES**

# Requests from Equinet members

* **Office of the Public Defender of Rights (Czech Republic) – Travel insurances and medical expenses related to pregnancy (Deadline: 13th December 2015)**

The following request has been sent by the Office of the Public Defender of Rights (Czech Republic).

“We received complaint of pregnant woman who wanted to arrange travel insurance for travelling abroad (or more precisely from abroad to Czech Republic). She asked almost all insurance companies operating in Czech Republic but did not find any insurance company who covered medical expenses related to pregnancy for women who is at more than 26th (or 24th or 28th) week of pregnancy. There was only one exception who offered insurance to pregnant women at 7th month of pregnancy. Some insurance companies do not cover medical expenses related to pregnancy at all. They cover any other medical expenses but complication related to pregnancy. The same conditions are for trip cancellation – exclusion for cancellation related to pregnancy or childbirth. The question is what the practice in other European countries is. I would like to ask Equinet members to following questions:

**1)** Is there in your country any special legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sex (pregnancy) in the area of providing insurance? Please specify.

**2)** What is your interpretation of article 5 (3) of the directive 2004/113/EC? Is the situation described above contrary to article 5 (3) of the directive?

**3)** Is there any case law related to providing travel insurance to pregnant women? Please specify circumstances of the cases.

**4)** Do you have any complaints of pregnant women related to travel insurance?

**5)** Are there any court cases related to access of pregnant women to travel insurance?

**6)** Do you have any other suggestions to the case described above?”

**Please send your answers by the 13th December directly to Jana Kvasnicová, lawyer in the Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic (****jana.kvasnicova@ochrance.cz****). Do not hesitate to take up contact if you have any further questions. Thank you in advance!**

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

# Request from the Social Platform – Resources on the impact of budget cuts on women (Deadline: Thursday 10th December)

Equinet received the following request from the [Social Platform](http://www.socialplatform.org/) secretariat:

“Social Platform is currently working on a study on the **cost of non-investing in social services, with reference to women, families and children**. We are also looking for studies on the impact of budget cuts on women. **Do you have any studies/articles/research in mind that could be related to this topic?**”

**The deadline for replying to this request is Thursday 10th December. Please contact directly** **julie.marange@socialplatform.org**

#  Expression of interest: FRA training on monitoring of forced returns, 2016 (Deadline: Tuesday 15th December 2015)

Equinet received the following request from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA):

“Dear Equality Bodies, NHRIs and Ombudsmen,

FRA is stepping up its work on monitoring forced return in 2016 and plans to offer a 1-week intense training for monitors and future monitors. We would kindly ask you – in case that monitoring of forced returns is in your mandate – to propose candidates for such a training by responding to PIA.TIRRONEN@fra.europa.eu by 15 December. In your proposal, please explain your institution’s mandate in this field and the role of your proposed candidate in this work.

**The objectives will be to:**

* Improve the knowledge of return monitors on applicable FR in the context of forced return
* Build the skills of return monitors to translate this knowledge into their own actions
* Guide return monitors on how to observe forced returns based on criteria and early warning signs
* Guide return monitors on how to report observations in relation to potential FR violations
* Build confidence in return monitors on their own ability to know about FR and apply them in the context of return monitoring

**Target Group**

* Experienced return monitors (police, border oversight bodies, NHRIs, NGOs, NPMs)
* Newly appointed return monitors (s.a.)
* Organisations which have return monitoring in their mandate but haven’t acted on this yet

FRA will carry out this training in cooperation with the ICMPD and Frontex.“

# 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****)**

# ERIO’s 4th workshop “Fighting hate speech against Roma: the Role of Equality Bodies” – Report available

On 16th October 2015, the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), in cooperation with Equinet, **held a workshop with equality bodies and Roma representatives** hosted by the Belgian Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities.

**The report, workshop presentations, and pictures of the event are available on the** [**ERIO’s website**](http://www.erionet.eu/event-161015)**.**