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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**

# #AGM2015: Equinet AGM elects new Executive Board (2015-2017)

On the occasion of the [2015 Equinet Annual General Meeting](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-welcomes-three-new-members), Board Elections were held to appoint the new [**Equinet Executive Board (2015-2017)**](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Executive-Board-):

* **Evelyn COLLINS**,*Chief Executive*, **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**, Northern Ireland (Chair)
* **Kosana BEKER**, *Assistant to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality*, **Commissioner for Protection of Equality**, Serbia
* **Sarah BENICHOU**, *Head of ‘Access to Rights and Discriminations’ Unit*, **Defender of Rights**, France
* **Anna BŁASZCZAK**, *Deputy Director of the Department of Equal Treatment and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***, Human Rights Defender**, Poland
* **Patrick CHARLIER**, *Acting Director*, **Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities**, Belgium
* **Sandra KONSTATZKY**, *Deputy Director*, **Ombud for Equal Treatment**, Austria
* **Elisabeth LIER HAUGSETH**, *Deputy Ombud***, The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud**, Norway
* **Kalliopi LYKOVARDI**, *Coordinator of Anti-Discrimination Unit*, **Greek Ombudsman**, Greece
* **Petr POLAK**, *Head of the Division of Equal Treatment*, **Public Defender of Rights**, Czech Republic

Indeed, the first meeting of this new board took place after the AGM and appointed **Evelyn Collins (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland) as the Chair of the Executive Board 2015-2017**.



Equinet Executive Board 2015-2017: K. Beker, P. Charlier, E. Collins, E. Lier Haugseth, S. Konstatzky, K. Lykovardi, P. Polak, A. Blaszczak (missing S. Benichou)

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# #AGM2015: Equinet welcomes three new member equality bodies

Following unanimous ratification of new membership applications, Equinet is pleased to welcome **three new members**, raising Equinet’s membership **to 45 national equality bodies from 33 countries across Europe**:

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| --- | --- |
| https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ca7cb0e9cba4eeb79c4db1929/images/b1d7a605-67b1-4b1a-9654-212515647f9a.jpg[**Austrian Disability Ombudsman**](http://www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at/)**, Austria** | https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ca7cb0e9cba4eeb79c4db1929/images/b1d7a605-67b1-4b1a-9654-212515647f9a.jpg[**The Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)**](http://www.ombudsman.co.me/)**, Montenegro** |
| https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ca7cb0e9cba4eeb79c4db1929/images/b1d7a605-67b1-4b1a-9654-212515647f9a.jpg**[Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities](http://www.posi.hr/), Croatia** |

# #AGM2015: Other key highlights

 **Adoption of the Equinet 2016 Work Plan**

The Equinet Work Plan 2016 was adopted by Equinet members. It presents an overview of the main goals and targets for the year ahead, as well as the main activities, initiatives and other means of achieving those goals.

[Equinet 2016 Work Plan](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Annual-Reports-and-Workplans%2C80-) can be downloaded here.

**Jenny R. Yang, Chair of the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, delivers keynote address**

Jenny R. Yang, Chair, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, delivered a keynote address providing an insight into the experience and challenges faced by her equality in the US context.

Watch the full speech [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcoVkvlJLes).

**Pictures and other highlights**

Pictures of Equinet AGM and other relevant information are available [on Equinet’s website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-welcomes-three-new-members).

# Reminder: Equinet Strategic Litigation Cluster – registration by Friday 30th October

[Equinet 2015 Work Plan](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Annual-Reports-and-Workplans%2C80-) foresees the creation of a **Cluster on Strategic Litigation**. Equinet will assist the setting up of a members-led thematic cluster which will bring together equality bodies’ legal experts with an interest in strategic litigation in discrimination cases.

An information note has been made available **on Equinet’s Members’ Area** (<http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Cluster-on-Strategic>).

Should you be interested in participating in the Cluster, we would be grateful if you could e-mail Tamas Kadar, Equinet Senior Policy Officer (tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org) by **Friday 30th October**:

* Indicating whether you are interested in participating in this Cluster
* Describing your experience (and that of your institution) with strategic litigation in 1-2 paragraphs
* Indicating the key question(s) that you would like the Cluster to focus on

# New Equinet Publications

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| --- | --- |
| http://www.equineteurope.org/local/cache-vignettes/L150xH212/arton759-d2c59.png | **EQUINET HIGHLIGHTS 2014 -2015**This publication provides a succinct **overview of the highlights of Equinet’s achievements from January 2014 to July 2015**, linked to our strategic goals.It can be downloaded [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Highlights-2014-2015).  |
| A Growing Agenda: The Work of Equality Bodies on the Ground of Religion or Belief | **EQUINET PERSPECTIVE “A GROWING AGENDA: THE WORK OF EQUALITY BODIES ON THE GROUND OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**This perspective aims to explore and communicate **the strategic approaches** developed by equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief; the **body of work** carried out on the ground of religion or belief; and the **implications and learning** from this work.It can be downloaded [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/A-Growing-Agenda-The-Work-of).  |

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Wednesday 9th December** | Board meeting *(Paris, France)* |
| **Capacity-Building Events** | **Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th November** | Religion & Belief Seminar, *(London, United-Kingdom)* |
| **Conferences** | **Tuesday 8th December** | Conference on the Freedom of Movement Directive *(Paris, France)* |
|  **Working Group Meetings** | **Monday 2nd November** | Second meeting of the Communications Working Group *(Berlin, Germany)* |
| **Monday 17th November** | Second meeting of the Gender Equality Working Group *(Berlin, Germany)* |
| **Other meetings (invitation only)** | **January 2016** | Second meeting of the Evaluation Lab |

**PART 2: EQUINET MEMBERS’ UPDATES**

# Requests from Equinet members

* **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) – Request on the provision of legal advice and assistance (Deadline: 31st October)**

The **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland** is a representative Equality Body and it provides advice and guidance **to individuals who believe that they have been discriminated against on the protected grounds and who wish to proceed with cases to Tribunals or Courts**. At present the Equality Commission is revising its **policy on “The Provision of Legal Advice and Assistance”**. This policy has been in place for some years and was last revised in 2010.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland would be very grateful to hear from other representative Equality Bodies in Europe, in particular with regard to what criteria, if any, are used to decide whether or not a case should be supported. **It would be helpful if you could answer the following questions:**

1. Does your organisation provide legal representation to individuals in discrimination cases?
2. What kind of representation do you provide?
3. What criteria do you use (eg legal uncertainty / ripple effect / cost-benefit etc etc) to decide whether or not a case should be supported?
4. Do you intervene in cases where you are not the complainants’ representative and if so, in what circumstances?

**Please send you contributions to Anne McKernan, Director of Legal Services** (AMcKernan@equalityni.org) by **31st October**. In case you need more information, please contact her directly.

* **Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – Information on anti-discrimination legislation and transformation (Deadline: as soon as possible)**

**“The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights** (hereinafter referred to as “the Centre”) collects all relevant information in terms of anti-discrimination legislation and also evaluates transformation of the adopted legislative provisions into the practice.

**The Act No. 160/2015 Coll. Code of contentious Civil Procedure** was adopted on July 2015 and it will come into force in July 2016. It contains the provisions concerning the protection of a weaker party in civil proceedings. The Act defines the weaker party as a consumer, an employee and a person, who has been discriminated. These subjects of the proceeding are protected especially by the provisions, that stipulate the obligation of the court to inform the weaker party about all the rights and obligations within the proceeding and gather all evidence, not only the evidence that weaker party designate in the claim. The Centre acts on behalf of the person, who has been discriminated and also other weaker parties can be represented by other relevant public authorities within the civil proceedings. These are the most important amendments in the Slovak Republic legislative. The victims of discrimination can also use the institution of the reversed burden of proof, which is guaranteed by our legal order.

Due to abovementioned facts, please, allow me to ask you some questions about the legislative situation in your country. The Centre appreciates each response and after the process of gathering all relevant information, the Centre will evaluate it and try to take all positive actions into the practice in the Slovak Republic.

Please send your answers to cenkner@snslp.sk **as soon as possible**. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

**The questions:**

**1.)** Can you find in your legislation any provisions that protect the weaker party (the victim of discrimination) within the civil proceedings? Is there any extraordinary process of the court in such kind of proceedings compare to the general process in civil proceedings? If yes, could you describe it? Which legal measures can help the weaker party to succeed in the lawsuit?

**2.)** If the legal order in your country does not include such legislative measures yet, are there any proposals or possibilities of its adoption?

**3.)** Which legal act/acts regulate this issue in your country? Please, state the number/s and the heading of the act/acts.

**4.)** What is the experience in practice within the legal proceedings in your country with the utilization of such legislative provisions by the equality bodies/a discriminated person? Do you have any statistics in this issue?

**5.)** Do you know about a concrete court decisions in your country, in which a victim of discrimination succeeded and the provisions of legal order have helped the weaker party to win the anti-discriminatory lawsuit? If yes, can you please state the number of the court decision?”

# Equinet Members’ Initiatives

* **National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE – Malta) – Research on Equality Bodies’ Good Practices in the field of Non-Discrimination**

As part of the project “*Developing a Culture of Rights through Capacity Building*”, the Maltese NCPE has commissioned Grant Thornton Services Ltd to conduct a research on Equality Bodies’ Good Practices in the field of Non-Discrimination which includes:

* A **research on equality bodies’ good practices** by analysing at least 10 equality bodies in 10 EU Member States, excluding Austria and Northern Ireland and taking into account relevant reports, studies and statistics
* The study will involve **an online questionnaire** (and subsequently a number of Skype/telephone interviews) that will specifically target equality bodies in EU Member States.

The purpose and scope of the data collected by Grant Thornton Services Ltd is **to seek methods and tools equality bodies use to reach out to target groups and stakeholders**, especially in sectors to the extended remit of NCPE and also to other sectors such as disability.

Through this study, promising practices in the field of non-discrimination will be identified, providing strategies tailored towards the diversity of the target groups that an equality body such as NCPE has. The recommendations of this research will be used to develop positive experiences and promising practices. It will delineate any developments or improvements that have been put in place throughout the years and shed light on the differences, contrasts and/or similarities o experiences, circumstances and needs.

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

# ERIO’s 4th workshop “Fighting hate speech against Roma: the Role of Equality Bodies” – Presentations 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 workshop presentations, pictures and reports of the event will be published on [ERIO’s website](http://www.erionet.eu/event-161015).

# Reminder: European Commission – Consultation on the Implementation of the Self-Employed Directive 2010/41/EC (Deadline: 20th November 2015)

The European Commission is welcoming contributions from equality bodies in relation to the application of the Directive 2010/41/EC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EC.

More information about the consultation is available on [Equinet’s Members’ Area](http://www.equineteurope.org/Consultation-on-the-implementation).

**Contributions should be sent by 20th November to** **JUST-D1-UNIT@ec.europa.eu**

# Reminder: European Commission - Public consultation on the implementation of the Directive 79/7/EEC on the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (Deadline: 14th December 2015)

This public consultation is a part of the evaluation of the Council Directive 79/7/EEC on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security under the recently adopted [Commission's Better Regulation Framework](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc_guide_en.htm). This public consultation will be used to collect the views of the broad public in the context of evaluating the implementation and application of Directive 79/7/EEC.

**The public consultation consists of an online questionnaire which should be filled in by 14th December 2015.**

More information as well as the evaluation questionnaire are available [here](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/opinion/150901_en.htm).