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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 AGM - 2015 Board Elections & Voting Documents (Friday 9th October 2015, Brussels)

* **EQUINET BOARD ELECTIONS 2015 – Overview of candidates**

Following the Call for nominations of Board candidates in the context of the upcoming Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 9 October 2015 in Brussels, we are pleased to inform you that **12 Equinet members nominated a candidate** for the elections of the new Equinet Executive Board for a two-year mandate (October 2015- AGM 2017).

The **nine members of the next Equinet Board will be elected by secret ballot** during the **late morning of the AGM by Equinet members’ representatives**, following an opportunity for each candidate to introduce their motivation to the AGM plenary members.

The **full information submitted by each Candidate** (including nomination forms and CVs), as well as relevant documents relating to the Equinet Board Elections, are available to Members on the dedicated **internal Board Elections webpage under Equinet Members’ Area** (<http://www.equineteurope.org/-EQUINET-2015-BOARD-ELECTIONS->).

Please do not hesitate to contact Equinet Secretariat (Yannick Godin, Administration and Finance Officer – Yannick.godin@equineteurope.org –Tel: +32 2 212 31 82) should you be reminded of your organization’s login access and password.

**All Equinet members are encouraged to consult carefully the nomination forms and CVs submitted by each candidate in preparation for the Equinet AGM and Board Elections on 9 October**.

* **EQUINET AGM 2015 – Voting Documents**

These are the voting items that will be put forward to the vote of the General Assembly of Members at the AGM:

1. **Three new Equinet membership applications**, reviewed and endorsed by the Equinet Board to be presented for Members’ ratification:
* Application for membership from the **Federal Ombudsman for People with Disabilities, Austria**
* Application for membership from the **Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman), Montenegro**
* Application for membership from the **Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities, Croatia**
1. The **Equinet Work Plan 2016**, proposed by the Equinet Executive Board for adoption by Members, as a main voting item:
* Equinet Work Plan 2016
1. Other **important voting documents** of the Equinet AGM include:
* **Equinet Accounts 2014**
* **Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2014**

All voting items can also be consulted online, on the dedicated website of the AGM (<http://www.equineteurope.org/-Annual-General-Meeting->).

All member organisations are **invited to review all voting documents ahead of the AGM**. The following documents are open to written amendments by members **until 2 October:**

* Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2014
* Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2016

Amendments to these voting items can only be submitted using the **‘Amendment proposal form’**, to be completed and returned to Equinet by **no later than 2 October (14h00 CET)** so that we can inform other members of any proposed amendments ahead of the AGM. The amendment proposal form can also be downloaded from the dedicated AGM website (<http://www.equineteurope.org/-Annual-General-Meeting->).



# Reminder: Register to Equinet Seminar “A question of faith. Religion and belief in the work of equality bodies” (9th and 10th November 2015, London) (Deadline: 15th October 2015)


On **9-10 November 2015**, Equinet, with the support of the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/), is organising **the Seminar "A question of faith. Religion and belief in the work of equality bodies"** in **London** (UK).

This Equinet seminar is dedicated to an audience of approximately **45 staff members of equality bodies with responsibilities in dealing with religion and belief issues**. The training programme allows for participation with different professional backgrounds, including legal and policy experts.

The seminar will aim to:

* **Update equality bodies staff members** on recent European developments related to religion and belief
* **Build capacity of equality bodies staff members** and **strengthen their skills** in combating discrimination on the ground of religion and belief by:

**-** Facilitating the exchange of good practices

**-** Sharing and discussing main conclusions of the upcoming Equinet Perspective on religion and belief with all Equinet members

**-** Initiating discussions on challenges encountered by equality bodies in this area

**Registration via** [**this link**](http://form.jotformpro.com/form/52421359239961) **by 15 October 2015.**

**The draft agenda of the Seminar is available** [**on Equinet’s website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Seminar-A-question-of)**.**

**Contact**: Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org)

# Equinet Strategic Litigation Cluster – registration by Wednesday 30th September

[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 **Wednesday 30th September**:

* 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

# Equinet Training Session: “Helping Equality Bodies to Apply for and Use EU Funds” – presentations and training module are available

On 3rd and 4th September 2015 Equinet, with the support of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, organised a training session on **“Helping equality bodies to apply for and use EU funds”** in Sofia, Bulgaria. The training session was delivered by Mélissa Moothoo, Mission Director at [Welcomeurope](http://www.welcomeurope.com/), a Paris-based consultancy providing training and advice on European grants and funds. Annalise Frantz, Senior Project Executive at the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (Malta), also provided the participations with her experience.

The agenda of the training session is available on [Equinet’s website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Training-Session-Helping-equality).

**The training module and power points presentation are available on Equinet’s Members’ Area (**[**http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-training-session-on**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-training-session-on)**).**

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Friday 9th October** | Annual General Meeting & Board Elections *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Wednesday 9th December** | Board meeting of new elected Board members |
| **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 28th September** | Second meeting of the Equality Law Working Group *(Bratislava, Slovakia)* |
| **Wednesday 14th October** | Second meeting of the Policy Formation Working Group *(Strasbourg, France)* |
| **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

* **National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (Malta) – Request on investigations of complaints investigated by other legitimate bodies (Deadline: as soon as possible)**

The NCPE would appreciate feedback from EQUINET members with reference to what the different Equality Bodies do during the investigations of complaints in cases **where the same complaint is being investigated by other legitimate bodies**, such as for instance by the Executive Police or the Industrial Tribunal.

Please send your feedback to **Maria Filletti from the NCPE (****maria.filletti@gov.mt****)** with Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer in copy (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org) as soon as possible**.** Should you need more information, please contact directly Maria Filletti.

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

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). In case you need more information, please contact her directly.

* **Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – Information on anti-discrimination legislation and transformation (Deadline: 21st October 2015)**

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 for the years.

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 **by 21 October 2015**. 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?

# Members Initiatives: events, bilateral meetings and campaigns

* **Meeting of the Nordic Antidiscrimination and Gender Equality Ombudsman (31st August and 1st September 2015, Torshavn)**

The Nordic Antidiscrimination and Gender Equality Ombudsmen met in Torshavn (Faroe Islands) on 31st August and 1st September. It is an informal meeting to **exchange experiences of our work and how we can develop it**. The participants comes from **Denmark, Finland, the Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**. The tradition is to meet annually and that responsibility to host the meeting circulates. As there has been changes in legislation as well as mandate and organisation for several of the ombudsmen during the last couple of years it was decided that the first day would be spent on a basic introduction about how it looks today in each country. The second day was dedicated to presentations and discussions about how we work with extremism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia. We also talked about how we can coordinate our participation in international networks and seminars.

The next meeting will be in Greenland.

*Text written by Kerstin Jansson from the Swedish Equality Ombudsman*

* **French Defender of Rights launches a new online platform to combat racism**

On 15 September, Jacques Toubon, the Defender of Rights (France), officially launched an online platform entitled ’Egalité contre le racisme’ (Equality against Racism), aimed at providing practical tools and advice to combat cases of racial and ethnic discrimination.

More information about the Platform can be found [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/French-Defender-of-Rights-launches).

**The online platform can be accessed** [**here**](http://egalitecontreracisme.fr/)**.**

* **Norwegian Equality Ombud (LDO) and Spanish Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination organise a European roundtable on Standards for equality bodies**

Held on 22 September 2015 in the offices of the Secretary of State of Social Services and Equality (Spain), this European roundtable was organized in the framework of **a bilateral exchange project between the Norwegian Equality Ombud (LDO) and the Spanish Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination**.

The aim of this roundtable was to reflect on the challenges posed by an expansion of existing equality bodies in terms of the discrimination grounds covered, its powers, its visibility and/or its accessibility and capacity to reach out to victims of discrimination and to come up with strategies and practical solutions to tackle them.

European institutions, leading staff of the Norwegian LDO and other selected European equality bodies, members of the Spanish Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination and independent experts in the field of non-discrimination attended the meeting. Equinet members were present in most session as speakers.

**More information as well as power points presentations are available on** [**Equinet Members’ Area**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Strengthening-equality-bodies-A-748)**.**

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

# Reminder: CHARTERCLICK Project - Questionnaire on the use of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Deadline: as soon as possible)

The CharterClick! (*"Don’t knock at the wrong door: CharterClick!"* - <http://www.charterclick.eu>) is a **large scale research project** co-financed by the European Commission under the “Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme 2013” and implemented during February 2015-January 2017.

It aims to **set up an on-line, freely accessible platform** with a set of tools in order to provide assistance in understanding whether and how reliance on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights can be of help in a specific case.

The toolkit will target **victims of fundamental rights violations, their representatives, national judges and national human rights bodies (NHRBs)**.

**On Friday 24th July, Equinet sent a questionnaire** to its contact persons. This questionnaire is primarily functional to the elaboration of one of two main tools that will be uploaded on the Platform, notably:

* A document collecting the practices of NHRBs as regards the application of the Charter
* A Database with the relevant decisions of the NHRB and judiciary on the use of the Charter.

The questionnaire is available here:



Please send your contribution **as soon as possible** to charterclick@dsg.unifi.it with Federica Casarosa (federica.casarosa@eui.eu), Madalina Moraru (madalina.moraru@eui.eu) and Tamas Kadar, Equinet Senior Policy Officer (tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org) in copy.

# Reminder: Register to ERIO’s 4th workshop “Fighting hate speech against Roma: the Role of Equality Bodies” (Deadline: 25th September 2015)

The **European Roma Information Office (ERIO)**, in cooperation with EQUINET (European Network of Equality Bodies) invites you to attend a workshop with Equality Bodies and Roma representatives which will take place on **16 October** **2015** hosted by the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Belgian equality body - **Rue de Ligne 37, 1000 Brussels, Belgium)**.

Within the framework of the Race Equality Directive 2000/43 (RED) and national equality laws (legal provisions regulating media), the workshop will focus on how Equality Bodies can fight hate speech against Roma. By organising this workshop, we aim to:

* Foster discussion between different Equality Bodies, civil society and experts on effective practices and challenges to tackle hate speech against Roma
* Provide a platform for Equality Bodies to exchange good practices on hate speech (e.g. prevention, public awareness, litigation)
* Promote cooperation between Equality Bodies and civil society to jointly address hate speech against Roma

**ERIO will arrange and cover the expenses of accommodation and travel of representatives of Equality Bodies.**

The workshop will be in English.

**Places are limited**. Please confirm participation as soon as possible, latest by **25 September 2015**.

Register by email/phone, by sending your name, surname and the organisation you represent to: **office@erionet.eu****- Tel: +32 (2) 733 3462.**

# Stakeholder consultation on the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Multiannual Framework 2018-2022 (Deadline: 16th October)

The European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) would like to gather views **from its key stakeholders** on the thematic areas of FRA’s work from 2018-2022.

FRA carries out its tasks within the thematic areas determined by a five-year Multiannual Framework (MAF). The next MAF, covering the years 2018-2022, will be adopted by the Council of the EU during 2017, acting on a proposal by the European Commission and after consulting the European Parliament. FRA’s independent Management Board plays an important role as it is to provide an input to the Commission, when preparing its proposal on the MAF.

We would like to invite you to respond to an **online questionnaire on the MAF 2018-2022** with 11 questions which takes a total of 8 minutes. Please click on the following link to take part in this consultation: <http://fra.europa.eu/surveys/index.php/286572/lang-en>

The results of the consultation will inform the FRA Management Board’s Opinion on the new MAF. Stakeholders participating will receive the outcome of this consultation, together with the Board’s Opinion on the MAF, in early 2016. The Board will submit its Opinion to the European Commission during the first half of 2016.

**We look forward to receiving your valuable contributions and views by 16th October 2015.**

# 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**

# 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).