

EQUINET SEMINAR

A QUESTION OF FAITH. RELIGION AND BELIEF IN THE WORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

9-10 November 2015, Novotel London West, London



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Equinet warmly thanks the chairs, speakers and participants for having contributed to the success of this event.

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EQUINET & SEMINAR

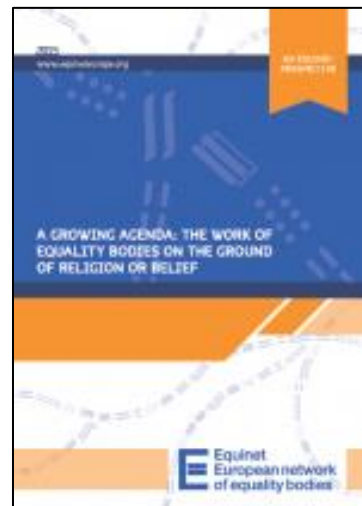
BACKGROUND

Equinet is the **European Network of Equality Bodies**, a membership organisation bringing together [45 equality bodies](#) from 33 European countries including all EU Member States.

Equality bodies are public organisations assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and promoting equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some or all the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union law – **gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability**.

Equinet promotes equality in Europe through supporting and enabling the work of national equality bodies. It supports equality bodies to be independent and effective as valuable catalysts for more equal societies.

Equinet's Seminar '**Religion and Belief in the Work of Equality Bodies**' follows Equinet's Perspective '**A Growing Agenda: The Work of Equality Bodies on the Ground of Religion or Belief**', issued in September 2015.



The seminar drew its focus from the work of equality bodies and Equinet related to discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. It aimed to:

- **Update equality body staff members** on recent European developments related to religion and belief.
- **Build capacity of equality body staff members** and **strengthen their skills** in combating discrimination on the ground of religion or belief by:
 - Facilitating the **exchange of good practices**.
 - Sharing and discussing main conclusions of the **Equinet Perspective on religion and belief** with all Equinet members.
 - Initiating **discussions on challenges** encountered by equality bodies in this area.

SEMINAR AGENDA

| MONDAY 9 th NOVEMBER | | |
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| 08:30 – 09:00 | Welcome & Registration | |
| OPENING SESSION | | |
| 09:00 – 09:20 | <p>Opening address Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Baroness Onora O’Neill, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain</p> | |
| 09:20 – 10:00 | <p>Keynote address Legal challenges to frame religious discrimination</p> | <p>Prof. Isabelle Rorive, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)</p> |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Questions & Answers | |
| SESSION 1 | | |
| The European legal and policy framework for discrimination on the ground of religion or belief | | |
| CHAIR: Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland | | |
| 10:15 – 10:45 | <p>The EU legal and policy framework for discrimination on the ground of religion or belief</p> | <p>Andreas Stein, Head of Unit, Equality Legislation, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission</p> |
| 10:45 – 11:05 | <p>The OSCE/ODIHR framework and activities in the area of freedom of religion and belief</p> | <p>Dr. Kishan Manocha, Senior Adviser on Religion and Belief, OSCE/ODIHR</p> |
| 11:05 – 11:20 | Questions & Answers | |
| 11:20 – 11:45 | Coffee Break | |
| SESSION 2 | | |
| Equality Bodies’ strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief | | |
| CHAIR: Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy, Equinet Secretariat | | |
| 11:45 – 12:05 | <p>Equality Bodies’ Strategies – Findings from Equinet Perspective on Religion and Belief</p> | <p>Niall Crowley, independent expert and author of Equinet Perspective on Religion and Belief</p> |
| 12:05 – 12:20 | <p>Engaging with duty bearers – the case of employers and companies</p> | <p>Sue Coe, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain</p> |
| 12:20 – 12:35 | <p>Engaging with policy-makers and producing policy recommendations</p> | <p>Nikolina Patalen, Office of the Ombudsman, Croatia</p> |
| 12:35 – 12:50 | <p>Producing communication</p> | <p>Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-</p> |

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| | campaigns and information tools | Christel Skramstad , Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway |
| 12:50 – 13:05 | Legal advocacy and strategic litigation | Imane El Morabet , Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium |
| 13:05 – 13:15 | Questions & Answers | |
| 13:15 – 14:15 | Lunch Break | |
| WORKSHOP 1 | | |
| Developing strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief | | |
| 14:15 – 16:15 | Discussion and preparation of strategy papers in small groups | |
| | Engaging with employers and companies | Facilitation: Sue Coe , Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great-Britain |
| | Contributing to legislative change | Facilitation: Nikolina Patalen , Office of the Ombudsman, Croatia |
| | Communicating on religious diversity | Facilitation: Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-Christel Skramstad , Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway |
| | Legal advocacy and strategic litigation | Facilitation: Imane El Morabet , Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium |
| 16:15 – 16:30 | Coffee Break | |
| 16:30 – 17:30 | Reporting in plenary and discussion Each group will present a strategy paper based on the case study and the group discussions. | |

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| TUESDAY 10th NOVEMBER | | |
| SESSION 3 | | |
| Multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds | | |
| CHAIR: Imane El Morabet, Legal Advisor, Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Belgium | | |
| 09:00 – 09:30 | Multiple discrimination, intersectionality and conflicts with other grounds | Erica Howard , Associate Professor, Middlesex University London |
| 09:30 – 10:00 | Presentation of the findings of the 2015 Equinet Perspective and the 2012 Equinet Legal Report on religion and belief | Zuzana Pavlíčková , Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and member of Equinet Policy Formation Working Group Jayne Hardwick , Equality and |

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| | | Human Rights Commission, Great Britain, and moderator of Equinet Equality Law Working Group |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | The gender equality perspective: women and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief Presentation of the project “Forgotten women: the impact of islamophobia on Muslim women” | Julie Pascoët , Policy Officer, ENAR (European Network against Racism) |
| 10:20 – 10:40 | Sexual orientation and gender identity perspective : LGBTI and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief Presentation of the joint project with ILGA-Europe on the interface between religion or belief and LGBTI rights | Alan Murray , President, ENORB (European Network of Religion and Belief) |
| 10:40 – 11:00 | Questions & Answers | |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Coffee Break | |
| WORKSHOP 2 | | |
| Addressing multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds | | |
| | Discussion in small rotating groups (one rotation after 45 minutes) | |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | Litigation and conflicts of rights – the Lee v Ashers Baking Co Ltd “Cake” Case - | Facilitation: Anne McKernan , Director Legal Services, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland |
| | Intersection of religion or belief with gender equality | Facilitation: Julie Pascoët , Policy Officer, ENAR (European Network against Racism) |
| | Intersection of religion or belief with sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination | Facilitation: Alan Murray , Director of ENORB (European Network of Religion and Belief) |
| CONCLUDING SESSION | | |
| 13:00 – 13:30 | Rebecca Hilsenrath , Interim Chief Executive, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain Anne Gaspard , Equinet Executive Director | |

SEMINAR SUMMARY



OPENING ADDRESS



Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, opened the Seminar by introducing the work of Equinet and of equality bodies on discrimination based on religion or belief. She stressed the important input of Equinet’s Working Group on Policy Formation that produced the perspective [A Growing Agenda: The Work of Equality Bodies on the Ground of Religion or Belief](#), which

served as a basis for the programme of the Seminar. She concluded by pointing to the crucial role of equality bodies in fighting discrimination based on religion or belief.



Baroness Onora O’Neill, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Great Britain addressed the participants of the Seminar by giving an introduction to the topic of religious or belief discrimination. She stressed the highly topical aspect of the issue, which is at the forefront of every newspaper. She underlined that the key GB piece of legislation focusing on this topic is the 2010 Equality Act. Moreover, she explained that an

informed and balanced dialogue was needed to reflect on religious matters, and the Call for Evidence issued by EHRC on the topic received more answers than any other survey issued by EHRC. She reflected on the legal meaning of ‘religion or belief’, particularly as regards to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and highlighted that this article covered a life-orienting set of beliefs. She finally discussed the crucial topic of reasonable accommodation on grounds of religion or belief, in the field of employment. In this view, she explained that, whilst the 2010 Equality Act provides a comprehensive understanding of reasonable adjustments on grounds of disability, there is no symmetry with other grounds such as religion or belief.



Professor Isabelle Rorive, from the Université Libre de Bruxelles delivered a keynote speech regarding the legal challenges that frame religious discrimination.

She explained that the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) once relied on the contracting out doctrine regarding reasonable accommodation based on religion or beliefs, but that the Eweida case partly reversed this doctrine.

She also underlined that several ECtHR cases mentioned the notion of reasonable accommodation, notably the Eweida case.

She stressed the importance of the Thlimmenos v. Greece case, which is the first leading case issued by the ECtHR condemning a State on religious discrimination. The applicant, a Jehovah Witness, refused to enrol in the army for religious reasons and was denied a position of chartered accountant 6 years later because he held a criminal record linked to his religious belief. The State was found to be in breach of Articles 9 and 14.

She also highlighted that, with the EU Equal Treatment Directive on Employment of 2000, religion or belief was finally introduced in European anti-discrimination law as a prohibited ground in the field of employment. She explained that there was a link between indirect discrimination and reasonable accommodation.

In order to fight indirect discrimination, sometimes the solution is to introduce a general non-discrimination measure, but the answer can also be to adjust to the specific needs of a person – for example, by introducing fireproof headscarves. She added that the ECtHR has a lot of self-restraint regarding religion or belief, granting a very wide margin of appreciation to states.

Moreover, the ECtHR has a very broad and liberal definition of religion or belief, not based on theological considerations but rather on criteria such as the fact that it must be genuine, not simply a viewpoint and compatible with human dignity. She finally explained that same-sex marriage created some friction of rights, notably when same-sex couples were denied access to some goods and services due to the religious beliefs of the people delivering those goods and services. These cases rely on very peculiar types of accommodation, based on conscientious objection in the military sense. She concluded by underlining that this analogy can be questioned, as these two types of situations are very different.

Isabelle Rorive's power point presentation is available [here](#).

SESSION 1

The European legal and policy framework for discrimination on the ground of religion or belief



Session 1 gathered speakers who gave an overview of the existing EU legal framework and of the political work of the OSCE on religion and belief. The session was chaired by Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland



Andreas Stein, Head of the Unit on Equal Treatment Legislation of the European Commission focused on the current EU legal developments regarding discrimination based on religion or belief. He explained that the [EC Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium](#) focused on the implementation of existing Directives, on adopting the Horizontal Directive, on empowering national equality bodies and on encouraging the adoption of reasonable accommodation practices.

He added that reasonable accommodation on grounds of religion or belief is not necessarily an easy concept to implement. In addition to having to define what an unreasonable burden is for employers, this concept often places a burden on other employees (e.g. in relation to time off work for religious reasons).

He also explained the important friction between a 'classic' discrimination perspective cases of a disadvantaged minority and the perspective of (majority) religious organisations sometimes involving situations where a large part of the job market in certain areas (hospitals, childcare) is

controlled by organisations from a certain religious background. In that context he discussed Directive 2000/78/EC, and especially Article 4 of this legislation, which focuses on occupational requirements which can be applied to organisations with a religious ethos.

He finally highlighted that one of the biggest issues regarding EU developments on religious discrimination, is the absence of Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) case law on the matter. However, there are two pending cases. In a French case, a female engineer refused to remove her headscarf when delivering trainings after a client's enquiry, and was consequently dismissed. The French court asked the CJEU whether not wearing a headscarf due to a client's request was a genuine occupational requirement. In a Belgian case, a receptionist decided to start wearing a headscarf and the company consequently adopted a rule prohibiting the wearing of signs of religion or belief. The Belgian court asked the CJEU whether this constituted a case of direct or indirect discrimination or if it was discriminatory at all.



Dr. Kishan Manocha, Senior Adviser on Religion and Belief at the OSCE/ODIHR, delivered a presentation on the framework and activities of his organization in the area of freedom of religion or belief. Underlining that OSCE is composed of 57 participating states and that its commitments are political but not legally binding, he explained that freedom of religion or belief has been emphasized in the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document and the

2013 Kyiv Ministerial Council Decision. The primary focus of the OSCE is on the duty of states to respect, promote and protect freedom of religion and belief for all. He added that it is crucial to highlight that freedom of religion and belief cannot be seen in isolation from freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, gender equality and children rights.

He also stressed that the collaboration of OSCE with equality bodies could be coordinated at several levels, including for awareness-raising of international standards on freedom of religion or belief, capacity building work, and the developing of thematic cooperation platforms with national equality bodies and Equinet – on freedom of religion and belief on the workplace, and on women's rights.

Kishan Manocha's presentation is available [here](#).

SESSION 2 Equality Bodies' strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief



Session 2 focused on the strategies adopted and delivered by equality bodies to address discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. This session allowed the sharing of experiences and best practices by member organisations of Equinet. This session was chaired by Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy at the Equinet Secretariat.



Niall Crowley, independent expert and author of the Equinet Perspective on Religion and Belief, presented the Perspective which reflected the work undertaken by the Working Group on Policy Formation regarding religious discrimination and equality bodies.

He first presented the context in which the Perspective was delivered, underlining notably the growing importance of religious diversity in a context of immigration in Europe, which may lead to discrimination against minority religions.

He highlighted two main issues dealt with by equality bodies: hostile discourse (Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism) and accommodation of religious practices. He then focused on strategies used by equality bodies in this field, ranking three types of priority. On high priority, he notably identified a growing casework on religion or belief; on middle priority, he mentioned the lack of hierarchy between grounds; and on low priority, he evoked limited religious diversity. He also listed a potential set of actions for equality bodies: at the legal level, they could be the principal intervenor; for promotion, they could deliver employer training or provide guidance material; for communications, they could highlight important casework; for research, they could act on the lack of data; and for policy they can influence the position and rights of minority religions in society.

To conclude, Niall Crowley explained that equality bodies should develop their work on the ground of religion or belief and that Equinet should support equality bodies in pursuing this growing agenda. Member States should develop equal treatment legislation and the European Commission should lead the way by pushing the adoption of the Horizontal Directive.

Niall Crowley's presentation is available [here](#).



Sue Coe from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain presented the work of her organization, particularly in regards to engagement with duty bearers such as employers and companies.

Highlighting that the ground of religion or belief was a priority for the EHRC, she listed various missions of the Commission, such as looking at the existing legislative framework, creating a more balanced dialogue and improving employers' practices. Confronted with a small number of relevant cases, she wondered whether they truly reflected the situation of religious discrimination in the workplace.

She then presented EHRC's call for evidence on religion or belief in the workplace and service delivery, where they received both positive and negative experiences. The key findings of this study showed that some workplaces were very inclusive, but that in other places, religion is seen as a private matter that should not be discussed at work. Most importantly there are cases of discrimination in recruitment and promotion, particularly for women wearing hijabs. Moreover, some people were being mocked or dismissed by colleagues, which left them silenced and nervous about their religion or belief. She added that EHRC received some submissions with LGBTI people who had unfortunate interactions with other colleagues, based on religious beliefs. She also underlined that there was confusion at the workplace about what constituted

lawful practices and policies, and what was unlawful. She concluded by suggesting some support for employers, such as guidance, online training, simple checklists and infographics.

Sue Coe's presentation is available [here](#).



Nikolina Patalen, from the Office of the Ombudsman in Croatia, delivered a presentation on how to engage with policy-makers and produce policy recommendations on discrimination on the ground of religion or belief.

She explained that, in 2012, the Ombudsman produced a survey on general perception, attitudes and prejudices in Croatia. She added that her organization

was statistically monitoring discrimination complaints, and that since 2009, 79 were filed on the ground on religion (which equals to 5.5% of all complaints filed). She underlined that if complaints are small in number, there seems to be a larger number of people discriminated against.

Moreover, a very large number of these complaints (1/3) are cases of multiple discrimination. She focused notably on the cases of Muslim women who were denied driving licenses, because they wore headscarves in photographs. This was due to a national regulation according to which photographs on driver's licenses should contain a photo of person without a head covering. The Ombudsman found that such provision leads to multiple discrimination on the grounds of religion and age. Following this, she explained that the Minister of the Interior issued new Regulations on driving licenses in April 2013. It now includes the provisions which allow citizens' photographs with head covering which is worn for religious or medical reasons.

Nikolina Patalen's presentation is available [here](#).



Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-Christel Skramstad, from the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud in Norway, delivered a presentation on how to produce communication campaigns and information tools on religious discrimination.

Explaining that Norway is becoming a multicultural society, and that many harmful practices were noticed in the country, they gave crucial communication advice for equality bodies.

Equality bodies should be identified as experts in religious discrimination cases, through easily accessible tools. They added that equality bodies should learn how to dialogue with journalists, notably by setting the terms or talking about more topics than only the law. They also explained that equality bodies should address conflicting interests, as they are responsible for bringing knowledge and balanced opinions to the public and to relevant stakeholders. They concluded by encouraging equality bodies to ‘pick up the phone’, underlining that in such a difficult context, equality bodies have a social responsibility to contribute to the debate.

Katrine G. Pettersen’s and Maj-Christel Skramstad’s presentation is available [here](#).



Imane El Morabet, from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities in Belgium, delivered a presentation on legal advocacy and strategic litigation regarding cases of religious discrimination.

She explained that the Belgian Centre, having a legal mandate to go to court, uses strategic litigation as a tool for change. The most important criteria to take a case to court is to clarify the law. As there is no case law about religion or belief within the context of the Framework Directive, there is a strong need for legal certainty. The Centre has the will to push the debate to higher levels (and preferably to the CJEU).

She presented a case of direct discrimination on the ground of religion or belief, about a dismissal within a private security company, following the will of an employee to wear a headscarf. She stated that the court in this case used a doubtful interpretation, notably highlighting that the ground of religion or belief should only be applied for the inner belief and not for the expression of the belief. She added that the Centre brought the case to the highest

court, asking different questions and in particular one concerning neutrality in the context of commercial enterprises. She concluded by presenting the request for preliminary ruling to the CJEU issued following their strategic litigation process.

Imane El Morabet's presentation is available [here](#).

WORKSHOP 1

Developing strategies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief



The first session of Workshops was comprised of four workshops that were hosted by Equinet Members. In the workshops, participants discussed examples of **strategies carried out by equality bodies to address discrimination on the ground of religion or belief.**

The first part of the workshops was dedicated to actively discussing some key topics, and the outcome of all the workshops were discussed in plenary by rapporteurs in a second part.

One workshop was hosted by **Sue Coe from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain** and looked at how to engage with employers and companies. With the use of 6 'thinking hats', they sought to find creative solutions, notably employer to employer conversations about good practices.

A second workshop was hosted by **Nikolina Patalen from the Office of the Ombudsman in Croatia**, on how equality bodies could contribute to legislative change. Focusing on a case where a hospital refused to perform bloodless surgery in order to accommodate religious beliefs, participants identified key challenges to address, potential stakeholders to target, and established a list of possible actions to overcome this situation and induce a policy change.

A third workshop was hosted by **Katrine G. Pettersen and Maj-Christel Skramstad from the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud in Norway** and explored how to communicate on religious diversity. Following a warm up where facilitators asked participants to decide whether they agree, disagree or are unsure about given statements, participants shared examples about how they communicate on religious diversity. Reflecting on how to develop a media strategy, the long-term objective being to enhance general tolerance among the population, the case of Portugal was notably further discussed, as they have set up a network with religious experts leading to interreligious dialogue.

The fourth workshop was hosted by **Imane El Morabet from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities in Belgium** and focused on legal advocacy and strategic litigation on discrimination cases based on grounds of religion or belief. The workshop allowed participants to identify challenges where litigation is needed (such as conflicts of rights), but also to discuss how to select cases (mostly when they bring new elements to jurisprudence). It was established that strategic litigation can have potential negative effects (such as being involved in conflicts between groups), it also has positive ones, such as building the reputation for the equality body, changing society and clarifying legislation.

SESSION 3 Multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds



Session 3 gathered speakers who presented work and best practices on multiple discrimination and conflict of religious-based discrimination with other grounds of discrimination. The Session was chaired by **Imane El Morabet, from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities in Belgium.**

Erica Howard, Associate Professor at the Middlesex University London delivered a presentation on multiple discrimination, intersectionality and conflict with other grounds. She began by making a distinction between compound discrimination and intersectional discrimination, the first definition concerning cases where a ground compounds or adds to another, and the second one concerning cases where two or more inseparable grounds are intersecting. She added that EU law on anti-discrimination does not elaborate much on multiple discrimination, and mentioned that the Explanatory Memorandum of the proposed Horizontal Directive emphasized the need to tackle multiple discrimination. She then mentioned some important case law from



the Court of Justice of the European Union, indicating that, for the Johann Odar v. Baxter case and the Z v a Government Department case, the Court looked at each ground separately. She further indicated that the right to manifest one's religion or belief is not absolute, it can be restricted if this is necessary for the protection of the rights of others. For example, on Pichon and Sajous v France ECtHR case, where an applicant refused

to sell contraceptive for religious reasons, the Court said that applicants cannot give preference to their religious beliefs and cannot impose them on others as long as contraceptives are legal. She also presented her work with ILGA on intersection of rights with freedom of religion or belief, where she set a human rights framework to approach the issue.

Erica Howard's presentation is available [here](#).



Jayne Hardwick, from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain and moderator of the Equinet Working Group on Equality Law, delivered a presentation on the [2012 Equinet legal report on religion and belief](#).

She first explained that a focus on this topic was deemed necessary, as the issue is notably becoming highly present in Europe. She

explained that discrimination based on religion and belief in employment and vocational training was prohibited by the General Framework Directive, adding that the extent to which an individual is permitted to manifest their beliefs when these conflict with the fundamental rights of others has given rise to a number of cases considered by courts and equality bodies.

The Framework Directive includes exceptions for occupational requirements, on cases of genuine and determining occupational requirement, and when it touches churches or organisations with a religious ethos. After presenting Articles 9 and 2 of the ECHR, she gave a snap shot of crucial case law in the matter. She notably presented the Ladele and others v. UK case, where Ms Ladele brought a claim for direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on religious grounds following disciplinary action taken against her in connection with her refusal to carry out civil partnership ceremonies. The Court found the local authority and domestic courts had not exceeded the margin of appreciation available to them and therefore it cannot be said that there has been a violation of Art 14 read with Article 9.

She finally discussed the occupational requirement in the Framework Directive, which is encompassed in Article 4. After presenting the Reanay case, she underlined that a number of countries did not implement Article 4 correctly and went beyond the terms of the Directive.

Jayne Hardwick's presentation is available [here](#).



Zuzana Pavlíčková, from the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and member of Equinet Policy Formation Working Group, gave a presentation on the intersectional aspect of the [2015 Equinet Perspective on Religion and Belief](#). She explained that intersectional issues for religion and belief touched on gender, notably with Muslim women wearing headscarves, on race and ethnic origin, on age and on socio-economic

issues. She also explained that there could be tensions between grounds. For instance, the ground of religion or belief could clash with gender on issues such as sexual health or reproductive rights, or it could clash with gender identity on issues such as gender recognition. She finally listed actions of equality bodies on intersectionality, mentioning a Belgian seminar on religiosity and sexual orientation issues, discussions with many stakeholders including churches in Northern Ireland, guidance provided to employers on managing issues of grounds in tension and statements to support LGBT people in Serbia.

Zuzana Pavlíčková's presentation is available [here](#).



Julie Pascoët, Policy Officer at the European Network against Racism (ENAR) delivered a presentation on women and discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. More specifically, she presented ENAR's project **"Forgotten women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women"**.

She explained that, as Muslim women are often easily identifiable, stereotypes on Muslim women are widespread in public discourse and in the media. She underlined the importance of taking a multiple discrimination approach, as only understanding discriminatory experience of Muslim women in terms of religion does not grasp the complexity of discrimination affecting women. The work on forgotten women included many outputs, including eight national reports and one comparative European report, but also roundtables and

a European symposium. She explained that the project is expected to increase monitoring of the impact of multiple discrimination affecting Muslim women, and to increase awareness and support of generalist feminist/women organisations for Muslim women.

She also shared the first findings of the project, showing that Muslim women suffer from the same inequalities that all women experience but these are compounded by additional factors, including discrimination based on ethnicity and religion. Moreover, testimonies reveal a deep feeling of exclusion, and there are different strategies to avoid or minimize the risk of being discriminated against, such as self-exclusion, dropping out, making alternative choices. She finally gave preliminary recommendations to equality bodies on this issue, such as disaggregating data on religious discrimination complaints by other grounds such as gender to better understand the phenomenon or exploring ways to use the gender ground of discrimination when litigating in cases of discrimination against Muslim women.

Julie Pascoët's presentation is available [here](#).



Alan Murray, President of the European Network of the European Network on Religion and Belief delivered a presentation on LGBTI issues and discrimination on the ground of religion and belief. He underlined that the main activity of the network is to work on burning religion and belief issues, often in partnership with DG Justice, Equinet and equality bodies. He explained that, while it could be difficult to unite within the

network, due to differences between and within religions, they promote inter-religious dialogue. He added that their role is to look equally at promoting understanding between religions. They also work with LGBT organisations, and specifically ILGA-Europe. The goal is to foster mutual understanding and ignite joint actions, which is why they launched a series of seminars. In London, they organized a seminar with 18 Imams and LGBTI activists. He gave other examples of seminars, notably in Spain where there was a strong welcome from the LGBT movement in a very catholic country or in Bulgaria with Orthodox youth.

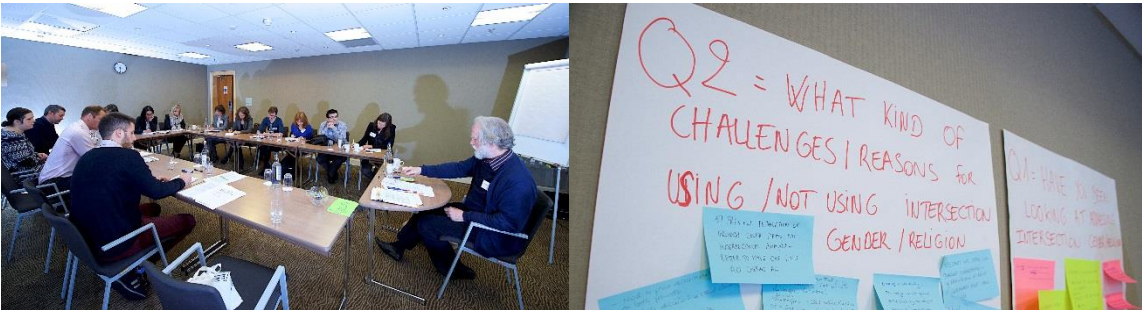
WORKSHOP 2

Addressing multiple discrimination and conflict with other grounds

The second session of Workshops was comprised of three workshops hosted by Equinet Members and partners. The aim of the workshops was to exchange knowledge and good practices among the equality bodies in order to encourage developments in the work of equality bodies and potentially to achieve positive changes in their countries.

The session was comprised of the following workshops:

- Litigation and conflicts of rights – the Lee v Ashers Baking Co Ltd “Cake” Case - **Anne McKernan, Equality Commission of Northern Ireland**
- Intersection of religion or belief with gender equality- **Julie Pascoët, European Network Against Racism**
- Intersection of religion or belief with sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination - **Alan Murray, European Network of Religion and Belief**



CLOSING SESSION



Rebecca Hilsenrath, Interim Chief Executive from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain closed the Seminar by giving some final remarks on the issue of religion or belief. She explained that religions could have good or bad impacts on our societies, depending on man's ability to accept the belief of others. She underlined that one of the EHRC's missions was to improving understanding and good practice in this field. She added that a thorough analysis must be led to determine what the definition of religion and belief entails. She ended her presentation by thanking the speakers, and highlighting the positive aspects and impacts of the Seminar.



Anne Gaspard, Executive Director of Equinet Secretariat, summarized some issues raised during the presentations and workshops. She touched upon the worrying rise and persistence of discrimination on the ground of religion and belief. She explained that the European Commission first [Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](#) was a good step towards change. She reminded the participants of the crucial role played by equality bodies in this field. She then highlighted some important developments in the work and governance of Equinet, notably regarding the upcoming conference on equality bodies and free movement, or the election of a new executive board, as well as the welcoming of three new members in the network. She finally thanked the participants of the Seminars, the speakers and addressed a particularly warm thank you to members of the EHRC, which provided crucial support for the organization of the Seminar.

Speakers' presentations and pictures are available on the [Equinet's website](#).

<http://www.equineteurope.org>



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