

EQUINET SEMINAR

Accessibility and reasonable accommodation

Monday 4th and Tuesday 5th April 2016

LOCATION: Vienna (Austria) (*venue to be confirmed*)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT

In the last years, the issue of the advancement of reasonable accommodation and accessibility in the workplace and beyond has been high on the EU and international non-discrimination agendas.

If adopted, the **proposal of the EU Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive**¹ would complement the Framework Employment Directive by obliging the EU Member States to provide persons with disabilities with general accessibility and reasonable accommodation in areas beyond employment.

In the context of the review of the EU's performance in **implementing the UNCRPD**, the UN Committee published [its concluding observations](#). It formally recommends the EU to take effective action to ensure that persons with disabilities receive the reasonable accommodation they need, including by moving forward on the proposals of the **European Accessibility Act**² and the Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive.

The concept of reasonable accommodation is also essential for **other grounds of discrimination**. The example of accommodation of religious and cultural practices and needs in the workplace is particularly relevant in a context of rising discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief.

In light of this, the **Equinet 2013 Good Practice Guide** "[Equality bodies supporting good practice on making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities by employers and service providers](#)" and the **2014 perspective** "[Realising Rights. Equality bodies and people with disabilities. Supporting the review of the European Union Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#)" both highlight significant challenges for equality bodies in promoting reasonable accommodation and accessibility. These reports will serve as bases for discussion at the upcoming Seminar on Reasonable Accommodation and Accessibility.

OBJECTIVES

Equinet will organise a **one and a half day capacity-building seminar** for equality bodies' staff members **on accessibility and reasonable accommodation**.

The seminar will take stock of the experiences of equality bodies on accessibility and reasonable accommodation. It will build on previous work by Equinet in this field, notably on the 2014 Perspective and the 2013 Good Practice Guide.

In particular, the seminar will aim to:

- **Build capacity of equality bodies' staff** members in understanding, promoting and ensuring reasonable accommodation and accessibility by:
 - Facilitating the exchange of good practices

¹ [Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation](#) (2 July 2008)

² [Proposal of European Accessibility Act](#), European Commission, 2 December 2015

- Initiating discussions on challenges encountered by equality bodies in this area
- Providing equality bodies with practical advice on how to implement effectively the concepts of accessibility and reasonable accommodation

- **Update equality bodies on recent EU and international developments** related to reasonable accommodation and accessibility

PARTICIPANTS

This Equinet seminar is dedicated to an audience of approximately **45 equality bodies' staff members** with **responsibilities in dealing with accessibility and reasonable accommodation issues**. The seminar agenda allows for participation with different professional backgrounds, including **communication and policy experts**.

DRAFT AGENDA

DAY 1

08:30 – 09:00 Welcome & Registration

OPENING SESSION

09:00 – 09:20 *Opening address*
Evelyn Collins, Chair of the Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Erwin Buchinger, Austrian Disability Ombudsman

09:20 – 10:00 *Keynote address*
 Accessibility and reasonable accommodation on the ground of disability: definitions, scope and challenges
Professor Anna Lawson, Leeds University (TBC)

10:00 – 10:15 Questions & Answers

10:15 – 10:30 Coffee Break

SESSION 1

Setting the Scene – Specific challenges and ways forward on accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disability

This sessions aims to update participants on the EU and international framework for accessibility and reasonable accommodation on the ground of disability and address specific challenges in relation to these issues.

10:30 – 10:50 **The EU legal and policy framework for accessibility and reasonable accommodation**
Emmanuelle Grange, Head of Unit, Disability & Inclusion, DG Employment, European Commission

10:50 – 11:10 **The UNCRPD, accessibility and reasonable accommodation: implementation and challenges**
Sara Brunet, Chair of the ENNHRI's CRPD Working Group (CRPD WG) and Senior Lawyer, Equality and Human Rights Commission (TBC)

11:10 – 11:30 Questions & Answers

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee Break

WORKSHOP 1

Discussion groups: Promoting accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in employment

In this first workshop session, speakers will provide equality bodies with practical advice on how to

make accessibility and reasonable accommodation a reality in the workplace and how to cooperate with duty bearers.

Participants will divide in two groups and rotate after 45 minutes.

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| 11:45 – 13:15 | Making accessibility and reasonable accommodation a reality in the workplace | Representative of the European Disability Forum |
| | Cooperating with duty bearers: the case of businesses | Susan Scott-Parker OBE , Founder and CEO, Business Disability International |
| 13:15 -14:15 | Lunch Break | |

WORKSHOP 2

Discussion groups: Promoting accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disability beyond employment

This workshop session will focus on concrete aspects of accessibility and reasonable accommodation beyond employment.

Participants will divide in two groups and rotate after 45 minutes.

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| 14:15 – 15:45 | Accessibility and reasonable accommodation beyond employment: overview and challenges | Ignacio Sola-Barleycorn , Seconded National Expert, Equality and Citizen’s Rights Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) |
| | Access to goods and services: the Easy-to-Read project | Aleksandra Ivanković , Executive Director, Inclusion Europe |
| 15:45 – 16:00 | Coffee Break | |

WORKSHOP 3

Discussion groups: Equality bodies’ good practices

Discussion in small rotating groups (one rotation after 45 minutes). Participants will attend 2 discussion groups.

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| 16:00 – 17:30 | Cooperation with duty bearers: the case of municipalities | Facilitation: Maria Ventegodt Liisberg , Department Director, Equal Treatment, Danish Institute for Human Rights |
| | Accessibility, reasonable accommodation and arbitration in Austria | Facilitation: Aaron Banovics , Office of the Austrian Disability Ombudsman |
| | Awards: “Come on in – access to everyone” project | Facilitation: Liisa Pakosta , Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia |
| | Raising awareness: “Every customer counts” project | Facilitation: Representative of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland |
| 17:30 | End of the first day | |
| Evening | Social event | |

DAY 2

SESSION 2

Reasonable accommodation beyond the ground of disability

This session will address reasonable accommodation on other grounds than disability.

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| 09:00 – 09:30 | Reasonable accommodation beyond the ground of disability: definitions and main concepts | Gabrielle Caceres Frasquiel , researcher, Centre Perelman de Philosophie du Droit, Université Libre de Bruxelles |
| 09:30 – 09:45 | The ground of religion or belief and gender: issues in | Sandra Konstatzky , Deputy Ombud, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria |

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| | counselling-practice | |
| 09:45– 10:00 | The grounds of race and ethnic origin | Joël Le Déroff , Senior Advocacy Officer, ENAR – the European Network against Racism |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | The ground of age | Nena Georgantzi , Policy Officer, AGE Platform Europe |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | Coffee Break | |
| WORKSHOP 4 | | |
| Discussion groups: Reasonable accommodation beyond the ground of disability | | |
| Discussion in small rotating groups (rotation after 45 minutes). Participants will take part in 2 discussion groups. | | |
| 10:30 – 12:00 | The grounds of religion and belief and gender | Facilitation: Sandra Konstatzky , Deputy Ombud, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria |
| | The grounds of race and ethnic origin | Facilitation: Joël Le Déroff , Senior Advocacy Officer, ENAR – the European Network against Racism |
| | The ground of age | Facilitation: Nena Georgantzi , Policy Officer, AGE Platform Europe |
| CONCLUDING SESSION | | |
| 12:00 – 12:15 | Anne Gaspard , Equinet Executive Director Erwin Buchinger , Austrian Disability Ombudsman | |
| 12:15 | Closing Lunch | |

