

EQUINET SEMINAR

Accessibility and reasonable accommodation

Monday 4th and Tuesday 5th April 2016

LOCATION: Hotel Wimberger, Neubaugürtel 34 – 36, Vienna (Austria)

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**.

AGENDA

MONDAY 4th APRIL

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

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

Chair: Evelyn Collins, Chair of the Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

This session 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 ENNHRI's CRPD Working Group and Senior Lawyer, Equality and Human Rights Commission

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 50 minutes.

11:45 – 13:25	Making accessibility and reasonable accommodation a reality in the workplace	Christina Wurzinger , European Disability Forum Board Member, Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons and Peter Noflatscher , Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons
	Cooperating with duty bearers: the case of businesses	Susan Scott-Parker OBE , Founder and CEO, Business Disability International
13:25 -14:30	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 50 minutes.

14:30 – 16:10	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
16:10 – 16:30	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.

16:30 – 18:00	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: Frank Fleming , Manager, Advice and Compliance Division, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
18:00	End of the first day	
Evening	Social event	

TUESDAY 5th APRIL

SESSION 2

Reasonable accommodation beyond the ground of disability

Chair: Jessica Machacova, Project Officer, Equinet Secretariat

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

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 counselling-practice	Sandra Konstatzky , Deputy Ombud, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
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

