

Equality bodies and Equinet

Promoting equality in Europe

Equinet

European network of equality bodies

- What are equality bodies?
- Why do we need equality bodies?
- What challenges do equality bodies face?
- What does the European network of equality bodies do?



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EQUALITY BODIES : NATIONAL DEFENDERS OF EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Equality bodies are public institutions set up across Europe to promote equality and tackle discrimination on grounds of **gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability or other grounds**. They play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of the EU.

Their role is defined in accordance with **EU equal treatment legislation** requiring Member States to set up equality bodies to combat discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, as well as gender. However, many Member States have gone beyond these requirements and ensure that equality bodies can also deal with discrimination based on the other grounds mentioned above.

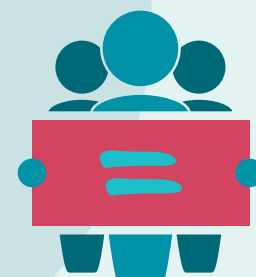
These bodies have a **distinct role from national governments and civil society organisations**. They promote equality and ensure that equal treatment legislation is applied by:

- **Investigating** cases of discrimination
- **Building a culture** that is respectful of rights
- **Providing information** and in some cases **legal support** to potential victims
- **Monitoring and reporting** on discrimination issues
- **Conducting research** and providing **policy recommendations**
- **Engaging** with public bodies, employers and NGOs to foster non-discriminatory practices and ensure awareness and compliance with equal treatment legislation

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EQUALITY BODIES AS VALUABLE PARTNERS

Equality bodies are **authoritative voices** in matters of discrimination at national level (for example, implementing the law on tackling race discrimination, overcoming the gender pay gap, providing statistics on discrimination, etc.). As a **first point of contact for victims** of discrimination, they have an extensive understanding of how discrimination affects people in Europe. They can provide reliable **“on the ground” information** about the challenges faced by victims and on national equal treatment policies. Equality bodies also work towards the **better implementation of EU legislation** by monitoring and taking an active part in the implementation of the EU Directives.



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THE ROLE OF EQUINET

Equinet provides a first point of contact for information relating to equality bodies. **We can facilitate engagement with equality bodies across Europe and provide relevant and fact-based information about their experience with various non-discrimination topics.**

We can do this because Equinet is the platform of equality bodies in Europe, with 45 member organisations from all 28 EU Member States as well as 5 non-EU countries. Equinet and its Brussels-based Secretariat have enjoyed a good and close working relationship with EU institutions since the network was established in 2007. The network is co-funded by the European Commission and Equinet's member organisations.

OUR MISSION:

- **Promoting equality in Europe** by supporting and enabling the work of national equality bodies.
- **Supporting equality bodies to be independent and effective** as catalysts for more equal societies.

OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Building capacity and peer support of equality bodies.
- Contributing to the European equality agenda by communicating the learning from the work of equality bodies.
- Serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment, between and within the European and national levels.
- Consolidating the network and the position of its members.

OUR ACTIVITIES:

- Connecting staff members of equality bodies through working groups, seminars and training events.
- Organising conferences on key topics on the EU agenda in the field of equality and non-discrimination.
- Supporting research, exchange of information, data and expertise through the publication of reports, good practice guides and policy perspectives.

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CHALLENGES AHEAD

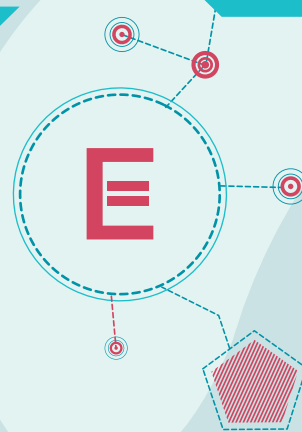
Equality bodies face important challenges:

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISES

Cuts in financial and human resources and the reorganisation of the legal and institutional structure can undermine the accessibility, independence and sustainability of equality bodies' actions. Moreover, **lack of political commitment has undermined the ability of some equality bodies to achieve their full potential**. This challenging context is worsened by rising inequalities and discrimination and a concern about under-reporting.

NEED FOR STRONG EU STANDARDS

Current EU Directives mainly govern the establishment of equality bodies. However, the functions and powers of equality bodies and the levels of protection they provide are very diverse across Member States. Moreover, EU Directives do not specify standards to ensure that equality bodies are granted adequate powers and resources. **In order to fulfill their potential and maximise their impact, standards on the independence, effectiveness, functions and powers of equality bodies would be an important step forward.**



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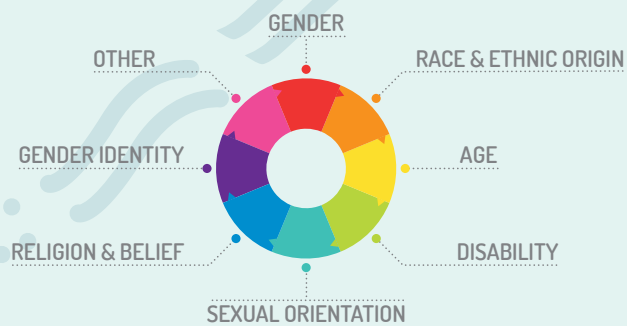
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Equinet Members and the grounds they cover per country

Equinet European network of equality bodies

* This list illustrates only the grounds covered by the mandates of Equinet's member equality bodies. In some cases, it is possible that grounds differ from those covered by the country's legislation.



EMPLOYMENT	BEYOND EMPLOYMENT		EMPLOYMENT	BEYOND EMPLOYMENT	
		Albania Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination www.kmd.al			Ireland Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission www.ihrec.ie
		Austria Ombud for Equal Treatment www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at Austrian Disability Ombudsman www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at			Italy National Office against Racial Discrimination www.unar.it National Equality Councillor www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale/
		Belgium Institute for the Equality of Women and Men www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) www.unia.be			Latvia Office of the Ombudsman www.tiesibsargs.lv
		Bulgaria Commission for Protection against Discrimination www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com			Lithuania Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman www.lygybe.lt
		Croatia Office of the Ombudsman www.ombudsman.hr Ombudsperson for Gender Equality www.prs.hr Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities www.post.hr			Luxembourg Centre for Equal Treatment www.cet.lu
		Cyprus Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) www.ombudsman.gov.cy			Malta National Commission for the Promotion of Equality www.equality.gov.mt National Commission for Persons with Disability www.knpd.org
		Czech Republic Office of the Public Defender of Rights www.ochrance.cz			Montenegro The Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman) www.ombudsman.co.me
		Denmark Board of Equal Treatment www.ast.dk Danish Institute for Human Rights www.humanrights.dk			Netherlands Netherlands Institute for Human Rights www.mensenrechten.nl
		Estonia Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner www.svv.ee			Norway Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud www.ldo.no
		Finland Ombudsman for Equality www.tasa-arvo.fi Non-Discrimination Ombudsman www.syrjinta.fi			Poland Commissioner for Human Rights www.rpo.gov.pl
		(FYRO) Macedonia Commission for the Protection against Discrimination www.kzd.mk			Portugal Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality www.cig.gov.pt Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment www.cite.gov.pt High Commission for Migration www.acm.gov.pt
		France Defender of Rights www.defenseurdesdroits.fr			Romania National Council for Combating Discrimination www.cncd.org.ro
		Germany Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de			Serbia Commissioner for Protection of Equality www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs
		Greece Greek Ombudsman www.synigoros.gr			Slovakia National Centre for Human Rights www.snsnp.sk
		Hungary Equal Treatment Authority www.egyenlobanasmod.hu Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights www.ajbh.hu			Slovenia Advocate of the Principle of Equality www.zagovornik.net
					Spain Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es
					Sweden Equality Ombudsman www.do.se
					United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com Equality Commission for Northern Ireland www.equalityni.org