**Equality Bodies and Equinet -**

**Promoting equality in Europe**

What are equality bodies?

Why do we need equality bodies?

What challenges to equality bodies face?

What does the European network of equality bodies do?

1. **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[[1]](#footnote-1), as well as gender[[2]](#footnote-2). However, many Member States have gone beyond these requirements and ensured 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

1. **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.

1. **CHALLENGES AHEAD**

Equality bodies face important challenges:

3.1 ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISES

Cuts in financial and human resources, 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.

3.2 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 Members 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.

1. **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.

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

1. **CONTACT**

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**Equinet members and the grounds they cover per country**

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

**Grounds: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other**

**Albania**

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination

Website: [www.kmd.al](http://www.kmd.al)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Austria**

Ombud for Equal Treatment

Website: [www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at](http://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at)

Austrian Disability Ombudsman

Website: [www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at](http://www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity

**Belgium**

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men

Website: [www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be](http://www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be)

Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities)

Website: [www.unia.be](http://www.unia.be)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Bulgaria**

Commission for Protection against Discrimination

Website: [www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com](http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**Croatia**

Office of the Ombudsman

Website: [www.ombudsman.hr](http://www.ombudsman.hr)

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality

Website: [www.prs.hr](http://www.prs.hr)

Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities

Website: [www.posi.hr](http://www.posi.hr)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Cyprus**

Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)

Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.cy](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**Czech Republic**

Office of the Public Defender of Rights

Website: [www.ochrance.cz](http://www.ochrance.cz)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Denmark**

Board of Equal Treatment

Website: [www.ast.dk](http://www.ast.dk)

Danish Institute for Human Rights

Website: [www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Estonia**

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner

Website: [www.svv.ee](http://www.svv.ee)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, gender identity

**Finland**

Ombudsman for Equality

Website: [www.tasa-arvo.fi](http://www.tasa-arvo.fi)

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman

Website: [www.syrjinta.fi](http://www.syrjinta.fi)

Employment:gender, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**(FYRO) Macedonia**

Commission for the Protection against Discrimination

Website: [www.kzd.mk](http://www.kzd.mk)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**France**

Defender of Rights

Website: [www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Germany**

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

Website: [www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de](http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**Greece**

Greek Ombudsman

Website: [www.synigoros.gr](http://www.synigoros.gr)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin

**Hungary**

Equal Treatment Authority

Website: [www.egyenlobanasmod.hu](http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu)

Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights

Website: www.ajbh.hu

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Ireland**

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Website: [www.](http://www.)ihrec.ie

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Italy**

National Office against Racial Discrimination

Website: [www.unar.it](http://www.unar.it)

National Equality Councillor

[www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale/](http://www.lavoro.gov.it/ConsiglieraNazionale/)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**Latvia**

Office of the Ombudsman

Website: [www.tiesibsargs.lv](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, other

**Lithuania**

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

Website: [www.lygybe.lt](http://www.lygybe.lt)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, other

**Luxembourg**

Centre for Equal Treatment

Website: [www.cet.lu](http://www.cet.lu)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief

**Malta**

National Commission for the Protection of Equality

Website: [www.equality.gov.mt](http://www.equality.gov.mt)

National Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Website: [www.knpd.org](http://www.knpd.org)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Montenegro**

The Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)

Website: [www.ombudsman.co.me](http://www.ombudsman.co.me)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Netherlands**

Netherlands Institute for Human Rights

Website: [www.mensenrechten.nl](http://www.mensenrechten.nl)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion & belief, other

**Norway**

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud

Website: [www.ldo.no](http://www.ldo.no)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Poland**

Commissioner for Human Rights

Website: [www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief

**Portugal**

Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality

Website: [www.cig.gov.pt](http://www.cig.gov.pt)

Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment

Website: [www.cite.gov.pt](http://www.cite.gov.pt)

High Commission for Migration

Website: [www.acm.gov.pt](http://www.acm.gov.pt)

Employment:gender, sexual orientation, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**Romania**

National Council for Combatting Discrimination

Website: [www.cncd.org.ro](http://www.cncd.org.ro)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Serbia**

Commissioner for Protection of Equality

Website: [www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs](http://www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Slovakia**

National Centre for Human Rights

Website: www.snslp.sk

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Slovenia**

Advocate of the Principle of Equality

Website: [www.zagovornik.net](http://www.zagovornik.net)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

**Spain**

Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination

Website: [www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es](http://www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es)

Employment:race & ethnic origin

Beyond employment: race & ethnic origin

**Sweden**

Equality Ombudsman

Website: [www.do.se](http://www.do.se)

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity

**United Kingdom**

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Website: Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Employment:gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

Beyond employment: gender, race & ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender identity, other

1. Directive 2000/43/EC [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Directives 2010/41, 2006/54, 2004/113 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)