

Equinet Conference

Strengthening the effectiveness of European Equal Treatment Legislation

Brussels, Thursday, 16 June 2016

VENUE

European Economic and Social Committee, Room VMA1
Rue Van Maerlant 2, 1040 Brussels, Belgium ([How to get to the EESC](#))

BACKGROUND

Equality and non-discrimination are key general principles of the European Union, as spelled out in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

The European Union as well as the Council of Europe have already adopted wide-ranging and strong legislation to ensure equality and combat discrimination in Europe. These European legislative instruments have been largely transposed to the legal systems of Member States. However, “the review of national experiences reveal that there are still challenges to their implementation and application,”¹ jeopardising the effectiveness of the legislation and the reaching of its objective to put into effect in the Member States the principle of equal treatment.

As the European Commission highlighted in its [Report on the application of Council Directive 2004/113/EC](#), ‘to combat discrimination and ensure equal treatment, Member States and stakeholders have recognised that equality bodies are essential to move from “the law on paper to the law in practice” and to ensure that the legal rights are actually applied on the ground’. At the same time, the Commission also found it necessary to commit to exploring ‘ways of clarifying the requirements concerning equality bodies under the Directive, particularly the key concepts of independence and effectiveness’.

The work of equality bodies shows that there are areas where current levels of protection do not appear to be fully comprehensive and adequate, such as in the fields of work-life balance, education and media, or discrimination outside employment on various grounds.

Building on previous Equinet Perspectives and reports, the conference will bring together stakeholders and equality bodies to assess progress achieved and still to be made, with specific attention to the role of equality bodies in better regulation and implementation. The specific challenge of creating the conditions for equality bodies to fulfil their potential will also be discussed, using the [Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies](#), proposed by the Equinet Cluster on Standards for equality bodies.

¹ [European Commission Report on the application of Council Directive 2000/43/EC \(2014\) and Council Directive 2000/78/EC \(2014\)](#)



<p>OBJECTIVES</p>	<p>This one-day conference is organised under one of the four broad strategic goals of Equinet: ‘Contributing to the European Equality Agenda’.</p> <p>Equality bodies are on the front line in the work of promoting equality and combating discrimination. They have developed practical experience, learning and expertise in the implementation of equal treatment legislation in their country.</p> <p>In turn, ensuring the effective and correct implementation and application of Union legislation is at the heart of the European Commission’s Better Regulation agenda.</p> <p>The conference sets out to discuss the experiences of equality bodies and other stakeholders with the implementation and possible shortcomings and gaps in EU equal treatment legislation and to find ways to make this legislation comprehensive in its scope and more effective on the ground.</p> <p>In particular, the conference aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a platform to all stakeholders to discuss the challenges and gaps in the field of equal treatment legislation and its effective implementation • Share the experiences of equality bodies and other participants with implementing equal treatment legislation • Identify shortcomings and gaps in equal treatment legislation • Set out a vision for the future of comprehensive and effective EU equal treatment legislation • Clarify requirements concerning equality bodies under the EU equal treatment directives to ensure they can fulfil their potential in support of effective equal treatment legislation
<p>TARGET AUDIENCE</p>	<p>This conference is aimed at heads and senior experts from National Equality Bodies, as well as from EU and international institutions and agencies, representatives from NGOs, national ministries, NHRIs and Ombud institutions, policy and legal experts, social partners and other organisations active in the field of equality.</p>
<p>REGISTRATION</p>	<p>Please register via this link by 3 June.</p> <p>In case you need more information/support to fill in the form, please contact Yannick Godin, Administration and Finance Officer (yannick.godin@equineteurope.org / 0032 2 212 31 82).</p>
<p>SOCIAL MEDIA</p>	<p>You can follow the conference via Twitter (@equineteurope) and using the hashtags: #EquinetConference, #MoreEquality and #BetterStandards.</p>
<p>FOLLOW-UP</p>	<p>Equinet will publish a summary report of the Conference and will upload the speakers’ presentations on its website at: www.equineteurope.org/activities/events</p> <p>In addition to visiting our website, you can also follow the work done by Equinet and its 45 European member equality bodies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribing to our monthly newsletter from our homepage; • Following us on Facebook (EquinetEurope) and Twitter (@equineteurope).



AGENDA

15 JUNE 2016

- 19.00 – **Towards a more equal Europe**
21.00 Reception for invited participants

16 JUNE 2016

- 08.30 – **Registration and Welcome**
09.00

Opening:

- 09.00 – **Evelyn Collins**, Chair of Equinet, Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
09.30 **Pavel Trantina**, President, Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC), European Economic and Social Committee

Keynote Address:

- 09.30 – **Equal treatment as a cornerstone of Good Administration**
10.00 **Emily O'Reilly**, European Ombudsman

SESSION 1 – Setting the Scene: Challenges in the field of equality law

- 10.00 – **Chair: Kirsi Pimiä, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland**
11.00 Strong equality legislation already exists in Europe but reaching its full impact is hindered by the lack of effective implementation. This session will discuss issues and factors hindering effective implementation and promising practices in overcoming these obstacles.

Contributions by:

- **Dr. Sara Benedi Lahuerta**, University of Southampton, United Kingdom
- **Paul d'Auchamp**, Deputy Regional Representative for Europe, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Christine Lüders**, Head, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Germany)

Questions & Answers – Discussion

- 11.00 – **Coffee break**
11.30

SESSION 2 – The contribution and potential of equality bodies

- 11.30 – **Chair: Evelyn Collins, Equinet Chair, Chief Executive of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**
13.00 Equality bodies are essential factors in making equality legislation effective and impactful. Their potential spans from advice, promotion and monitoring to enforcement and sanctioning. However, the lack of clear and strong standards for the setting up, independence and operations



of equality bodies often hinders the realisation of their full potential. This session will discuss the potential of equality bodies and the standards and safeguards they need in order to fulfil this potential.

Contributions by:

- **Professor Maleiha Malik**, King's College London, United Kingdom
- **Andreas Stein**, Head of Unit for Equality Legislation, European Commission DG JUST
- **Tena Šimonović Einwalter**, ECRI member and Croatian Deputy Ombudswoman
- **Patrick Charlier**, Director, UNIA, Belgium

Questions & Answers – Discussion

13.00 –
14.00

Lunch

SESSION 3 – Looking forward: Towards more effective equal treatment legislation

Chair: (TBC)

14.00 –
15.30

Equality and non-discrimination are key founding values and general principles of the EU. However, currently equality law does not cover all areas where the EU has legislative competence, resulting in a hierarchy of rights. Furthermore, as discussed in previous sessions, already existing legislation does not always live up to its potential due to the lack of effective implementation. This session will set out a vision for a comprehensive and effective equal treatment legislation in Europe.

Contributions by:

- **Ulrike Lunacek**, Vice-President, European Parliament (video message)
- **Soraya Post**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Pierre Baussand**, Director, Social Platform
- **Pavel Trantina**, President, Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC), European Economic and Social Committee
- **Martin Mörk**, Deputy Ombudsman and Head of Litigation, Equality Ombudsman (Sweden)

Questions & Answers – Discussion

15.30 –
16.00

Closing address – Professor Christopher McCrudden, Queen's University Belfast

Closing – Anne Gaspard, Executive Director, Equinet

