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Dear Equinet Members,**

This Members’ Bulletin gathers **the main Equinet internal updates, with a view to provide you with a clearer overview of Equinet activities**. We very much hope this members’ bulletin will be useful in your day-to-day work and we would be grateful if you could **disseminate it among your colleagues**. Your feedback is also greatly appreciated. Should you have any comments or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact **Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer** ([jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org](mailto:jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org) / 0032 2 212 31 80).

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### **PART 1: EQUINET UPDATES**

# Equinet Working Paper on developing standards for equality bodies

Under our Work Plan for 2015, Equinet set up a **thematic Cluster** providing a platform of work and engagement among a group of equality bodies’ experts with an interest in **advancing the development of European standards for equality bodies**. The importance of the Equinet Cluster and its work was further underlined by the engagement of heads and high-level representatives (including Equinet Executive Board members) of 23 equality bodies at the **two meetings** held in 2015.

The **objectives** of the Cluster were defined as:   
**1)** Examining current international standards produced at international levels to identify the relevance of these to the diverse situations of equality bodies and to establish the gaps that exist;   
**2)** Examining the case for the development of standards specifically for equality bodies and identify the areas that such standards need to address;   
**3)** Reviewing the published work of Equinet to identify the learning that should inform and shape the content of these standards.

We presented a first draft of an Equinet Working Paper based on the Cluster’s discussions at the Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October 2015. Following the AGM, and in light of further feedback and comment from some member organisations, the Executive Board has finalised and endorsed the **Equinet Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies** (available on the [Equinet Members’ Area](http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/annex_i_equinet_workingpaper_standardsnebs_march_2016_.pdf)[[1]](#footnote-1) or attached in ANNEX I).

This Working Paper will guide Equinet’s further work and engagement on standards. It is by no means a rigid and definitive position, rather a good starting point to encourage genuine progress on this important issue, in cooperation with the relevant policy-makers and legislators at European and national level. **If you have any suggestions on how we might advance debate around this Working Paper, we would be pleased to hear from you.**

**Please do not hesitate to contact** [**Tamas.Kadar@equineteurope.org**](mailto:Tamas.Kadar@equineteurope.org) **for further information or suggestions you may have.**

# Register to the Equinet Seminar on Gender and Education (19th and 20th May, Prague, Czech Republic) Deadline: Wednesday 4th May

Equinet, together with the Czech [Public Defender of Rights](http://www.ochrance.cz/en/), will organise a **one and a half day capacity-building seminar for equality bodies’ staff members on gender equality in education.**

The seminar will take stock of the experiences of equality bodies with ensuring gender equality in education. It will build on previous work by Equinet in this field. It aims to:

* **Build capacity of equality bodies’ staff members** in understanding, promoting and ensuring gender equality in the educational setting.
* Exchange **good practices on proactively promoting gender equality in education** and getting gender equality concerns in educational curricula
* Discuss and exchange **experiences** with and case work on discrimination in education
* Update equality bodies on recent **EU and international developments** related to promoting gender equality in education

**Register by Wednesday 4th May via** [**this link**](https://form.jotform.com/60984267059972)**.**

More information as well as the draft agenda are available on the [Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Seminar-Gender-Equality-in).

**For more information, please contact** [**Katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org**](mailto:Katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org)

# Call for applications: Equinet is looking for an expert on social media use Deadline: Friday 8th May 2016

Equinet is **looking for an expert on social media use to develop a training module on improved social media use for equality body communication experts**. The training module will be developed in cooperation between the contractor/expert and the Equinet Secretariat. Apart from advanced social media use, it will also look at **how to deal with the challenges of communicating values**, particularly how to deal with online **hate speech** on equality bodies’ social media channels, without limiting the right to freedom of speech. The training session will take place **in the autumn 2016**.

**We would be grateful if you could disseminate the call for applications to your relevant contacts. More information as well as the terms of reference can be found** [**here**](http://equineteurope.org/Expert-on-Social-Media-use-We-want)**.**

**For more information, please contact** [**sarah.cookeodowd@equineteurope.org**](mailto:sarah.cookeodowd@equineteurope.org)

# Reminder: Equinet - Consultation on equality, integration and inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers Deadline: Monday 16th May

***Email sent to the Equinet contact persons and WG Policy Formation on Wednesday 20th April***

In 2013, Equinet, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) established a [**cooperation platform on rights of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers**](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Thematic-Platforms-for-Cooperation-).

Following the second meeting of the Platform in February 2016, it was agreed that a work plan will be prepared by the platform partners. In order to make sure that the future work plan matches the needs of equality bodies and that we take into account the situation on the ground and the developments of recent months, we kindly ask you to give us your feedback on the following questions:

* Does your equality body have a specific mandate/project/strategic priority/campaign on the rights and equality of migrants and asylum seekers? If yes, please specify.
* Please provide examples of discrimination cases against migrants and asylum seekers. What grounds of discrimination are invoked in these cases?
* Does your equality body work on the issue of integration and inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers? If yes, please specify.
* Do you gather internal statistics to measure the number of migrants and asylum seekers seeking help from your equality body? If yes, did this number increase in the last years/months?

Please send your answers to [Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org](mailto:Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org)  by **Monday 16th May**.

# Save the date: Equinet conference on strengthening the effectiveness of Equal Treatment Legislation - 16 June 2016, Brussels, Belgium

This one-day conference is organised under one of the four broad strategic goals of Equinet: **“Contributing to the European Equality Agenda”**.

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.

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](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/better_regulation/key_docs_en.htm#top).

**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.**

It 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 Ombudsman institutions, policy and legal experts, social partners and other organisations active in the field of equality.

**More information will be available soon and registration to the event will open next week (3 May).**

# Equinet 2015 External Evaluation Report and Internal Communication Strategy 2016-2018 are available on the Equinet Members’ Area

Two new key Equinet documents are available on the [internal section of the website](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Members-Area-):

* The [**2015 external evaluation report**](http://www.equineteurope.org/-External-Evaluation,107-)**.** We warmly thanked the equality bodies which contributed to the evaluation process!
* The [**Equinet communication strategy 2016-2018**](http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/pdf/equinet_communication_strategy_2016-18.pdf). The aim of this communication strategy is to ensure that Equinet’s values-based communication supports its strategic objectives.

**Please contact** [**jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org**](mailto:jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org) **if you lost your credentials to access the Equinet Members’ Area.**

# April 2016: Overview of Equinet engagement with decision-makers

**Meeting with Vice-President of the European Parliament Ulrike Lunacek and participation in the Swiss Re’s conference on discrimination in insurance**

On 19th April, Evelyn Collins, Equinet Chair, participated as a speaker in the conference [“Getting the balance right III” organised by Swiss Re](http://www.equineteurope.org/Discrimination-in-Insurance-Getting-the-Balance-Right). This conference was designed to openly discuss concerns around unfair discrimination with respect to insurance in the EU.

On the fringes of the event, she met with Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament (Greens, Austria). They discussed the work of equality bodies to protect the rights of citizens and ensure equality inside and outside the labour market. The role of equality bodies in relation to the implementation of equality legislation in general was mentioned. The importance of the proposed Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive was also underlined.

**Meeting with the European Commission – DG Justice and Consumers**

On 20 April, Evelyn Collins, together with Anne Gaspard (Executive Director of Equinet) and Tamás Kádár (Head of legal and policy at Equinet), met with the **new Director General of the European Commission’s DG Justice and Consumers, Tiina Astola** and **the Director for Equality Ms. Salla Saastamoinen**.

The objective of the meeting was to introduce the work of Equinet and equality bodies to Ms. Astola, as she only joined the Commission in February. After being informed of our upcoming priorities and events, Ms. Astola outlined the relevant priorities of DG Justice and underlined the important contribution of equality bodies. She agreed on the need for equality bodies to be independent and effective in order to fulfill their full potential.

**Meeting of the Council of Europe Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveler Issues (CAHROM)**

Tamás Kádár (Head of legal and policy at Equinet) attended the 11th meeting of CAHROM, held in Sofia, Bulgaria. Equinet was granted observer status on CAHROM in 2015 and was invited to introduce the organisation at this meeting. Other points on the agenda included updates on the Council of Europe’s Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers and on the work of other relevant organisations such as the United Nations, OSCE-ODIHR, FRA, European Commission, and the World Bank.

# Equinet & Equality and Human Rights Commission roundtable event (20th April 2016, Brussels) Pictures available

  
On **20th April**, Equinet and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/) co-organised a **roundtable event at the European Parliament in Brussels**. The event was hosted by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). It addressed the issues of **work-life balance, pregnancy and parenthood related discrimination** at national and EU levels. It gathered Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and representatives of national equality bodies.

Pictures of the event are available on the [Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-EHRC-Roundtable-on-The-Parenthood-Penalty). A summary of the event will also be made available soon.

# Equinet seminar on accessibility and reasonable accommodation – 4th and 5th April 2016, Vienna Pictures available

On 4th and 5th April 2016, Equinet and the [Austrian Disability Ombudsman](http://www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at/) co-organised the **seminar "Accessibility and reasonable accommodation" in Vienna, Austria**. The seminar took stock of the experiences of equality bodies on accessibility and reasonable accommodation. It also aimed to build their capacity in understanding, promoting and ensuring reasonable accommodation and accessibility.

Pictures of the event as well as materials are available on the [Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Seminar-Accessibility-and). A summary will be made available soon.

# Updates: Cooperation Platforms involving Equinet - Council of Europe – ENNHRI – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

In October 2013, Equinet, the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) took the decision to establish [common platforms for cooperation](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Thematic-Platforms-for-Cooperation-) on four pressing topics.

1. **COOPERATION PLATFORM ON ADVANCING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

The last meeting of the ECOSOC Cooperation Platform was held on 28th January in Strasbourg. More information about the next meeting of the platform will be communicated in the coming weeks.

**Equinet contact person:** Katrine Steinfeld, Equinet Policy Officer ([katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org](mailto:katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org)).

1. **COOPERATION PLATFORM ON RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The second meeting of the Asylum and Migration Cooperation Platform was held in Vienna on 15th and 16th February 2016. The summary is available [on the Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Thematic-Platforms-for-Cooperation-).

**Equinet contact person:** Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer ([Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org](mailto:Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org)).

1. **COOPERATION PLATFORM ON ROMA EQUALITY**

The next meeting of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE) was postponed. OPRE members will be informed of the new date in the coming weeks.

**Equinet contact person:** Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy ([tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org](mailto:tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org)).

1. **COOPERATION PLATEFORM ON HATE CRIME**

**The FRA working party on hate crime will be held on 28th and 29th April in Amsterdam**. A short meeting of the Platform will be organised on 29th April.

**Equinet contact person:** Sarah Cooke O’Dowd, Communication Officer ([Sarah.CookeODowd@equineteurope.org](mailto:Sarah.CookeODowd@equineteurope.org)).

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Capacity-building events** | **Thursday 19th and Friday 20th May** | Seminar on Education and Gender Equality *(Prague, Czech Republic)* |
| **Governance**  **Meetings** | **Wednesday 15th June** | Board meeting *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Conferences and other Equinet events** | **Wednesday 18th May** | Meeting of the Cluster on Strategic Litigation |
| **Wednesday 15th June (evening)** | Equality Bodies Leadership Networking reception (Brussels, Belgium) |
| **Thursday 16th June** | Conference “Strengthening European equal treatment legislation and its implementation” *(Brussels, Belgium)* |

### **PART 2: EQUINET MEMBERS**

# Equinet members’ requests

* **Office of the Ombudsman, Croatia – Request on extension and renewal of drivers’ licenses (deadline: as soon as possible)**

“We have received a complaint regarding the **discriminatory effect of the Ordinance on Drivers' Licenses related to the extensions and renewals of drivers' licenses.**

The complainant asserts that, due to her vision problems, her drivers' license is being issued to her for a term of five years instead of the usual ten. Every time she needs to extend her license she is being issued with a new one, with a new expiry date. This is resulting in the fact that, along with the costs of a medical exam, each time she is also forced to pay for the costs of a new drivers' license form in the amount of 150.00 kn (20.00 Eur). Since this practice is placing her in a less favorable position in relation to the persons that are being issued with drivers' licenses for the usual ten-year term, the complainant deems she is being discriminated against on the basis of her health condition.

The competent ministry is justifying the treatment of the complainant described above citing the obligations stemming from the Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on driving licenses. In line with the cited Directive, the driving licenses in Croatia are being issued in the form of a card the appearance of which is harmonized with the relevant provisions of the Directive. Due to the fact that driving licenses are being issued in the form of a plastic-covered card subsequent changes of the data entered or the entering of additional data are not possible and thus each change results in the issuing of a new drivers' license and the charging of the citizens with the cost thereof.

We are interested to know how this issue is regulated in your countries, i.e. whether for each extension of a drivers' license a new form is being issued and charged or whether the changes are being recorded electronically.“

**Please send your contribution to Silvija Trgovec Greif (**[**Silvija.trgovec@ombudsman.hr**](mailto:Silvija.trgovec@ombudsman.hr)**)** **as soon as possible.**

* **Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria – Access to goods and services (Deadline: 15th May)**

“My question regards **access to goods and services on basis of the Directives 2000/43/EC and 2004/113/EC** and the bodies that have a mandate in this area.

The Austrian Equal Treatment Ombud **wonders whether and how the Directive 2013/11/EU on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes interferes with a mandate based on the Directives 2000/43/EC and 2004/113/EC**.

According to the Directive 2013/11/EU, each state has to establish “ADR entities” to deal with consumer claims.

We guess a problem could occur if a discrimination case and a consumer protection case could fall together, e.g. a person of foreign ethnic origin wants to make a contract for a mobile phone access but, for example, the company delivers the wrong phone or a technical asset is not working (consumer protection), and moreover they harass him on ground of his origin or let him know that they cannot give him a fix term contract because due to his origin they can`t control his financial credits (discrimination on ground of ethnicity).

**Which institution, according to the opinion of Equinet and Equinet members, would have the mandate to deal with the case? Would you say, the person has to go into 2 settlement proceedings, to the ADT entity and to the Equality Body?**

Or would – **according to the Directive 2013/11/EU – the ADR entity have the mandate to deal with the discrimination case as well?**

We would be very much interested in learning of how you see the relation between the two directives and especially the relation between ADR entities and equality bodies in cases where consumer protection problems and discrimination falls together.”

Please send your contributions to Eva Lang ([eva.lang@bka.gv.at](mailto:eva.lang@bka.gv.at)) by **15th May 2016.**

### **PART 3 – EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS’** **REQUESTS**

# 4th European IDAHO Forum, 10th-12th May 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark Official invitation

The [4th European IDAHO Forum](http://eng.uvm.dk/Gender-Equality/IDAHO-2016/?smarturl404=true) will be held between **10th and 12th May in Copenhagen**, Denmark. It will bring together European ministers and governmental representatives, the European Commission, Council of Europe, ILGA-Europe and other important actors working for LGBTI equality.

An **official invitation** has been sent to Equinet and all Equinet members (see ANNEX II attached). It also contains information about the draft programme.

Participation is free of charge. However, travel and accommodation costs will not be covered by the travel organisers.

Register to the IDAHO Forum via [this link](https://idahoforum.nemtilmeld.dk/1/). Find more information about the event on the [official website](https://idahoforum.nemtilmeld.dk/1/).

# Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU – Roundtable discussion on reconciling religion and LGBTI – Tuesday 17th May 2016, 10:00 – 12:00, Brussels

To mark the occasion of IDAHOT (International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia) 2016, the **Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the EU** invites you to a roundtable discussion on “**Reconciling religion and LGBTI: Implications for the EU’s External Policy with perspectives from religious LGBTI persons and organizations”** on **Tuesday 17 May 2016**, **10:00-12:00** at the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, (4-10 Avenue de Cortenbergh, Brussels, Belgium).

The event will feature a panel of experts from different religious organisations, other NGO’s and the EU institutions, who will share their views on how the EU and its interlocutors can work together towards finding common ground between religion and sexual orientation and gender identity.

After short presentations by the panelists, representatives from Member States, EU institutions and NGO’s present in the audience will be invited to participate in the discussion.

**Kindly RSVP to** [**bre-ish-rsvp@minbuza.nl**](mailto:bre-ish-rsvp@minbuza.nl) **by Friday 13 May 2016**

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# European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) – Update and development of a Handbook on European non-discrimination law Call for tender (Deadline: Wednesday 4th May)

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) is looking to contract the research and in-depth analysis on the key legal and jurisprudential principles of European non-discrimination law.

The objective of the contract is to update and further develop the 2010 edition of the Handbook on European non-discrimination law published by FRA in co-operation with the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe, synthesizing the European and national case law in this area.

The contractor is expected to provide a legally relevant and scientifically robust analysis of the body of discrimination-related law, stemming mainly from the ECHR, the European Social Charter and EU law. In particular, the latter should be done by illustrating relevant case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, and the European Committee of Social Rights, and where appropriate higher national courts and decisions.

**Applications are open until Wednesday 4th May. Find more information about the call and the procedure on the** [**FRA’s website**](http://fra.europa.eu/en/call-for-tender/2016/negotiated-procedure-low-value-contract-update-and-development-handbook)**.**

1. Please contact [jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org](mailto:jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org) if you lost your credentials to access the Equinet Members’ Area [↑](#footnote-ref-1)