**
Dear Equinet Members,**

This Members’ Bulletin gathers **the main Equinet internal updates, with the objectives of giving you 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 / 0032 2 212 31 80).

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

# Equinet events 2016 – Highlights

An **overview of upcoming 2016 Equinet events**, as well as an **updated version of our calendar**, have been published on the [Equinet website](http://equineteurope.org/Equinet-Events-2016).

Confirmed dates and invitations to each event will be communicated to you in due time.



# Reminder: Equinet Information Form 2016 – Contact persons and Working Group membersDeadline: As soon as possible

At the start of every year, the Equinet Secretariat sends a request inviting Members to confirm or update the list of **your contact persons and** **representatives participating in the Equinet’s Working Groups**. In the **information form** which was sent to the Equinet contact persons and heads of equality bodies **on 14th December 2015**, we kindly ask you to inform us of:

         Any changes in your organisation’s **Equinet contact person** or their contact details

         Any changes in your organisation’s **representatives participating in Equinet Working Groups**

This exercise is important as it ensures that our records are up to date and that Working Group members in your organisation receive all the relevant communication and material.

**For those who have not come back to us yet, we kindly ask you to complete the information form, and return it signed as soon as possible to** **Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org****.**

*Please note that the first meeting of some working groups will take place already in February or early March 2016, thus returning the form as soon as possible is important. In cases where we do not receive the forms on time, information about the first meetings will be sent to current working group members.*

# Reminder: Equinet Members Survey 2015Deadline: Friday 22nd January

Equinet will once again carry out the **annual independent external evaluation** of the year’s work and of the activities of our Network.

**Transform Management Consultancy's John Tierney (UK)** has been selected once more as the expert evaluation consultant to undertake this comprehensive evaluation of Equinet’s activities. Transform has designed a short questionnaire for Equinet's Members and for our other stakeholders.

This evaluation presents us with a great opportunity to gather feedback from our membership and other partners, to help identify room for improvement and to let our community have their say about matters that may concern them.

Your input to this evaluation is crucial in helping us reflect on our Strategic Plan (2015-2018), now one year into its life, as well as to gather feedback on a number of other areas and new initiatives. Therefore, we would be very grateful if you would take a moment to complete a short questionnaire before 22 January 2015.

Completing it should take no longer than **10 minutes** or so, and your responses will be treated as confidential by our evaluation contractor, Transform, who, as previously, will present us with the key findings, but never attributed to their author. We thank you in advance for your responses and your cooperation.

If you have any questions concerning the evaluation survey questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact directly John Tierney (john@trans4mgt.com or +44 845 862 5247).

**The survey is available** [**here**](https://surveymonkey.co.uk/tr/v1/te/akU_2BQc2vAhAsa_2B264x1g6_2FpF_2Fhy3EhxbpxJDHYpYZT2_2Bt4YkcZIljuOy5jwi5ERBIP1qYhQAH9CPNkd8j2TcgzL6_2BAgVAnnitrYxzdRFKchAJf24ksWos4Ftb04oTEhlVy59oRH1VZkI1uAzEqC3loTOD_2BOgoJkqYtl3p3tGXEeaHBrLvKWNj3aMZkKCjUb3_2FeFV7nhDVfCzthDxjKkHfg_3D_3D)**.**

# Reminder: Expression of interest - Cooperation Platforms Equinet-CoE-ENNHRI-FRA Deadline: Monday 1st February

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 on four pressing topics**:

* Asylum and Migration (coordinated by the FRA)
* Economic and Social Rights (coordinated by the CoE)
* Hate Crime and Hate Speech (coordinated by the FRA)
* Roma Equality (coordinated by the CoE)

Some of you already participated in the first meetings of these platforms but we would like to refresh our list of potential equality body representatives.

We would be grateful if you could **fill in the online form** (<https://form.jotform.com/60053591646961>) by **Monday 1st February 2016** in order to let us know if your organisation would like to be informed about the developments of any of the platforms, and who would be the contact person and thus available to attend the meetings for each platform.

**Background information about each platform is available in the online form**. Please note that the next meeting of the Economic and Social Rights Platform will take place on 28th January in Strasbourg and the next meeting of the Platform on Asylum and Migration will be held on 15th and 16th February in Vienna. Travel and accommodation costs of one representative per equality body will be covered by the coordinating institution. Please be informed that there will be a limited number of places available for each meeting.

**Next meetings of the Cooperation Platforms:
- Platform on Economic and Social Rights and Equality** (Thursday 28th January 2016 - 9.30 am – 5 pm**,** Strasbourg, France)  **- Platform on Rights of Migrants and Asylum-Seekers** (Monday 15th February (13:00 – 17:30) – Tuesday 16th February (09:00 – 13:00), Vienna, Austria)

# Equinet Working Groups: registration to the next meetings of the WG Policy Formation and Communication openDeadline: Monday 1st February

**WG POLICY FORMATION**

The next meeting of the WG Policy Formation will be held on **Thursday 18th February** in Brussels, Belgium. WG members are invited to register online to the meeting by Monday 1st February: <https://form.jotform.com/60054280817957>

**WG COMMUNICATION**

The next meeting of the WG Communication will be held on **Tuesday 1st March** in Nicosia, Cyprus. WG members are invited to register online to the meeting by Monday 1st February: <https://form.jotform.com/60132737613955>

# Equinet Seminar on Religion and Belief (9th and 10th November 2015, London): summary available

On 9 and 10 November 2015, staff of member equality bodies joined hosts Equinet and the [Equality and the Human Rights Commission](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/) in London for a capacity building seminar entitled **"A question of faith. Religion and belief in the work of equality bodies"**.

The seminar aimed to take stock of legal and political developments, as well as remaining challenges in ensuring freedom of religion and combating religious or faith-based discrimination at European and national levels. It analysed the role of and challenges for equality bodies in addressing issues of religion and belief by discussing good practices in the use of their legal, research, communication and promotional functions.

**- The summary, speakers’ presentations and pictures are available** [**on the Equinet website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Seminar-A-question-of)**.
- Download the new Equinet Perspective “A growing agenda. The work of equality bodies on the ground of religion or belief”** [**here**](http://www.equineteurope.org/A-Growing-Agenda-The-Work-of)**.**

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Working Groups** | **Thursday 18th February** | WG Policy Formation *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Tuesday 1st March** | WG Communication *(Nicosia, Cyprus)* |
| **Thursday 21st April** | WG Gender Equality *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Friday 4th March** | Board meeting *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Other meetings and events** | **Friday 29th January** | Second meeting of the Evaluation Lab *(Brussels, Belgium)* |
| **Wednesday 20th April** | Equinet-EHRC Roundtable on Work-Life Balance *(European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium)* |

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

# Requests by Equinet members

* **National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD), Malta**

The KNPD is asking Equinet members to send 'any information **in terms of supporting disabled persons to develop their own start-ups [business]**, or **any information you may have about international business clusters or incubators that have implemented inclusive programmes for business or start-up support'**.

Please send your contributions to **Ms. Allison Zammit** (Manager (Research and Policy), allison.zammit@knpd.org).

* **Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD), Albania – Deadline: Thursday 18th February**

The Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD, Albania), **received two complaints in relation to the admission criteria for the recruitment of police officers**. On that occasion, the CPD decided to develop a comparative overview of the legislation of the EU countries with the Albanian one.

In the attached document to the email **(ANNEX 1 - Request\_CPD\_Albania\_18.02)**, the CPD requests other Equinet members to reply to two series of questions in relation to admission criteria of police officers.

**Please send your answers by 18th February to Blerina Pirani, lawyer in the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, Albania** (blerina.pirani@kmd.al). Do not hesitate to take up contact with her if you have any further questions.

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

# Reminder: FRA Questionnaire: Cooperation between NHRBs and National ParliamentsDeadline: Friday 22nd January 2016

We received the following request from the FRA:

**‘Enhancing contribution to processes at the national level’** is one of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights’ key strategic objectives. To help us further reach this goal **we would kindly ask you to answer six short questions.**

The Agency has been steadily strengthening its national ties via its networks of national liaison officers (NLOs), civil society organisations (FRP) and – of course – **national human rights bodies (NHRBs)**. Over the last two years FRA has also increased its visibility in and cooperation with national parliaments across the EU. It has presented research outcomes and recommendations in eight national parliaments, and invited MPs as participants to conferences and events. In addition, the Agency has contributed to inter-parliamentary debates on migration and privacy and data protection.

National Parliamentary Focal Points (NPFPs) were nominated to be the primary contact points for FRA in the Member States’ parliamentary administrations to structure and facilitate the Agency’s cooperation with national parliaments.

The Agency will continue to foster the cooperation among national bodies in the Member States responsible for promoting and protecting fundamental rights. During FRA’s stakeholder meeting on 19-20 November, which brought together 115 national institutions’ representatives of the 28 Member States, the Agency was encouraged to continue these efforts.

One particular aim in our work on national level is to better map if and how FRA stakeholders cooperate at the national level. Taking inspiration from both the [Belgrade Principles on the relationship between NHRIs and Parliaments](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-9_en.pdf) (2012) and [Resolution 1998 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20928&lang=en) entitled Improving cooperation between NHRIs and Parliaments in addressing equality and non-discrimination issues (2014), we kindly ask you to provide us with some information on the practical ways your organisation cooperates with national parliament by filling in a short questionnaire by 22 January 2016.

Please find the questionnaire [here](http://fra.europa.eu/surveys/index.php/121488/lang-en).

This input on the domestic state-of-affairs will help us strengthen our common role-sharing and information-sharing capacities with Parliaments.”

# Reminder: European Commission: Input to Commission assessment under the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member StatesDeadline: 31st January 2016

***Request sent to Equinet contact persons and WG Equality Law and Policy Formation on 12th January 2016***

**Message from the European Commission to EQUINET to ask for the possibility to launch consultation with Equality Bodies via EQUINET on reporting under the Council Recommendation on effective Roma Integration measures in the Member States**

The Commission will in 2016 report for the first time on the implementation by Member States of the 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States.

The Recommendation called on Member States to **“communicate to the Commission any measures taken in accordance with this Recommendation” by January 2016**. (As you might know in the past years, since the 2011 launch of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the Commission has reported annually to the Council and the European Parliament on implementation, but Member States had no formal reporting obligation. This year's annual Commission report, consisting of a Communication and a Staff Working Document with Country fiches, will merge the reporting exercise under the EU Framework and under the Recommendation.)

For the reporting by Member States the attached structured reporting framework – following the structure and areas of the Council Recommendation – has been developed and shared with **National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) in December, asking for their reports by 31 January 2016**. As you know, the Council Recommendation goes beyond the EU Framework by covering additional areas, including a dedicated section on "Bodies for the Promotion of equal treatment" (see relevant text of the Recommendation below my email).

We trust that Member States will ensure that **their equality bodies are consulted for the reply to the Commission**. NRCPs thus might already be in contact with equality bodies concerning the national input to this ongoing reporting process.

However, we would like to alert the equality bodies of EU Member States (except Malta that has no Roma population) via EQUINET that **this consultation with the Member States is currently running**. Besides the section on equality bodies, we consider that information from the equality bodies would also be especially relevant concerning the areas of fighting discrimination and anti-Gypsyism and protecting Roma children and women (please see relevant text from the Recommendation below my email). In addition to contributing to the national reply, the equality bodies are also welcome to provide information directly to the Commission, if they wish to do so. EQUINET as a body is invited to share its input as well, but information from the national equality bodies would also be highly appreciated.

We are particularly inviting for input in the following three areas/worksheets in the attached excel file (**ANNEX II - European Commission\_Roma integration questionnaire**):

* **General info** (to help us with the management of the collected data, under A5.Type of institution providing the information: Please select "Other" and under A6. Please specify the official name of the institution: Please specify "Equality Body + (specific name)"
* **6.** Antidiscrimination
* **7.** Protection of Roma children and women
* **12.** Bodies for the promotion of equal treatment

Contributions can be sent to JUST-NRCP-COORDINATION@ec.europa.eu, with a copy to dora.husz@ec.europa.eu by **31 January 2016.**

# Request: EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) - Compendium on hate crime: invitation to submit practicesDeadline: Tuesday 16th February 2016

We received the following request from the FRA:

“As you may know, in response to the [Council conclusions on combating hate crime in the European Union](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/139949.pdf), which invited EU Member States to take appropriate measures to expedite the reporting of hate crimes by victims, FRA established the Working Party on Improving Reporting and Recording of Hate Crime in the EU. The Working Party brings together all 28 EU Member States. Please find Terms of Reference of the WP of Hate Crime [here](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/annex_1_terms_of_reference_wphc_rome_tor.pdf).

Currently, FRA’s Working Party (WP) on Improving Reporting and Recording of Hate Crime in the EU is compiling an evidence-based tool, a Compendium of Practices, to help combat hate crime at EU and Member State level efficiently and effectively. The Compendium will present detailed practices used to combat hate crime across the EU, highlighting success factors and transferable elements.

Therefore, we consider your professional experience very important and we kindly ask your contribution in building the Compendium.

FRA hosts a web tool (see hyperlinks below) to collect such practices through an easy to use online application. Contributors are encouraged to identify practices from their own experience and national context. Please bear in mind that examples of practices should at least partly involve engagement with a state authority.

* Reporting online template: <http://fra.europa.eu/surveys/index.php/738118/lang-en>
* Recording online template: <http://fra.europa.eu/surveys/index.php/816988/lang-en>

You will find these templates attached to this email in a Word format **(ANNEX III and IV of this email)**. We would appreciate to receive your input either online (preferred by FRA) or by returning filled in templates by **16 February 2016** to: hatecrime@fra.europa.eu

Thank you very much for your support in addressing hate crime in the EU.”

# Reminder: European Commission – Public consultation on Work Life BalanceDeadline: Wednesday 17th February

The European Commission has opened a **public consultation “on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers”.** According to the European Commission, “the purpose of this consultation is to gather views on the development and implementation of a range of possible tools at EU-level to support work-life balance”.

The consultation is available in the **24 European languages.** Contributions are welcome by **Wednesday 17th February.**

We strongly encourage you to contribute to the consultation in order to make sure that equality bodies are taken into account in any future actions which could be planned by the European Commission.

The Equinet Secretariat will also prepare a contribution based on the 2013 Work Life Balance Perspective (<http://www.equineteurope.org/Equality-Bodies-promoting-a-better>) and the learnings of the Work Life Balance Seminar which was held in Tallinn in June 2015 (<http://www.equineteurope.org/Work-Life-Balance-and-Pregnancy-682>).

**- The public consultation is available** [**here**](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/gender-equality/opinion/1511_roadmap_reconciliation_en.htm)**.
- For more information, please contact Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer (****Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org****)**

# Reminder: European Commission - Public consultation on the mid-term review of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020Deadline: 18th March 2016

The [European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52010DC0636) lays out a strategy to empower people with disabilities so that they can fully enjoy their rights and participate in society and the economy on an equal basis with others.

**It identifies eight main areas of actions at EU level:**

* Accessibility
* Participation
* Equality
* Employment
* Education and training
* Social protection
* Health
* External action

The purpose of the consultation is to **gather views on the challenges faced by all persons with disabilities in the European Union and on the impact so far of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**.

Opened for contribution to all citizens, organisations and public authorities, this consultation closes on 18 March 2016. The questionnaire is available [here](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=699&langId=en&consultId=19&visib=0&furtherConsult=yes) in the 24 EU languages.

We strongly encourage you to contribute to the consultation in order to make sure that equality bodies are taken into account in the mid-term review of the Strategy and any future actions which could be planned by the European Commission.

Please let us know if you are planning to send a contribution. We would be also very happy to receive your draft contribution or, if written in your national language, a summary of the key messages you conveyed to the European Commission. In any case, the Equinet Secretariat remains at your disposal in case you need assistance and more information. Please contact Jessica Machacova, Equinet Project Officer (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org / 0032 212 31 80).

Read more about the **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020** [here](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52010DC0636), [here](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:em0047) and [here](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010SC1324&qid=1447776887209).
Read more about the **public consultation** [here](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=699&langId=en&consultId=19&visib=0&furtherConsult=yes).
Read **Equinet Perspective** ["Realising Rights: Equality Bodies and People with Disabilities. Supporting the review of the European Union Disability Strategy 2010-2020".](file:///%5C%5C10.252.26.12%5Cequinet%5CCommunications%5CNewsletters%5CMembers%27%20Bulletins%5CEU%20Developments%20%281st%29%5CJanuary%202016%5CEquinet%20Perspective%20%22Realising%20Rights%3A%20Equality%20Bodies%20and%20People%20with%20Disabilities.%20Supporting%20the%20review%20of%20the%20European%20Union%20Disability%20Strategy%202010-2020%22)