**
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 Membership and Policy Officer** (jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org / 0032 2 212 31 80).

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

# Save the date: Equinet Annual General Meeting29th – 30th September 2016, Brussels, Belgium

This year, the Equinet Annual General Meeting will take place on **Thursday 29th September (afternoon) and Friday 30th September (morning)** in Brussels, Belgium *(venue to be confirmed)*.

The following items will be submitted to the vote of the General Assembly:

* Equinet AGM 2015 Minutes and 2015 Accounts
* Potential new Membership application(s)
* Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2017
* Revised Elections Board procedures

The AGM programme will also include opportunities to connect equality bodies to relevant updates and developments in the field of equality at European Level, and to the work of key EU stakeholders, including through the participation of Mr. Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and representatives of the European institutions.

More information, including registration procedure and draft agenda, will be sent to the Equinet contact persons and heads of equality bodies soon.



# Overview - PDFEquinet Working Paper on Standards – Dissemination and call for translation

On the occasion of the evening reception and the conference “Strengthening the effectiveness of European equal treatment legislation” which were held last week in Brussels, Equinet officially launched its **working paper on developing standards for equality bodies**.

This Working Paper is the result of discussions that took place in the framework of the Equinet Cluster on Standards in 2015, as well as contributions and comments provided by Equinet members.

It seeks to establish positions that equality bodies could promote, negotiate and advance vis-à-vis European and national administrations in the establishment of standards for equality bodies at European level and their implementation at national level.

**Dissemination**

The Working Paper, as well as a visual briefing summarising its key messages, are available [on the Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Working-Paper-on-Developing-Standards-for-Equality-Bodies) and **attached to this email**. We would be grateful if you could disseminate it to your relevant contacts in order to ensure maximum impact of our messages.

**Translation**

UNIA, one of the two Belgian equality bodies, kindly translated the Working Paper in French (available soon). If your organisation would consider its translation it in your national language, please get in touch with **Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy** (tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org).

# Equinet Reception – Towards an Equal Europe and Equinet Conference – Strengthening the effectiveness of European equal treatment legislation (15th & 16th June 2016, Brussels)Pictures and presentations available

On 15th and 16th June, Equinet organised an **evening reception** and a **conference** in order to mark the launch of our [working paper on developing standards for equality bodies](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-Working-Paper-on-Developing-Standards-for-Equality-Bodies).

We warmly thank the equality bodies’ representatives who participated in these important events.

**Wednesday 15th June: Reception – Towards an equal Europe**

A reception hosted by the **Office of the Northern Ireland Executive** for invited participants, to officially launch the Working Paper on developing standards for equality bodies. This reception brought together the heads of equality bodies with top European officials, including as guest of honour Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourová and European Commission Director General for Justice and Consumers, Tiina Astola.

**Thursday 16th June: Conference – Strengthening the effectiveness of European equal treatment legislation**

This conference, held at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels, set out to discuss the experiences of equality bodies and other stakeholders with the implementation and possible shortcomings and gaps in EU equal treatment legislation. It also aimed to find ways to make this legislation comprehensive in its scope and more effective on the ground. The specific challenge of creating the conditions for equality bodies to fulfil their potential were also discussed.

Pictures of the reception and conference, as well as presentations delivered during the conference, are available [on the Equinet website](http://www.equineteurope.org/Strengthening-the-effectiveness-of-European-Equal-Treatment-Legislation).

A summary of the conference will be made available soon.

# Reminder: Equinet research – Survey on Positive and Equality DutiesDeadline: Friday 1st July

The [Equinet 2016 Work Plan](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Annual-Reports-and-Workplans%2C80-) foresees the commissioning of **a study on the use of positive duties and equality duties in promoting equality duties**. Following an [open call for proposals](http://www.equineteurope.org/Call-for-Proposals-An-Equinet), international expert Niall Crowley was contracted to prepare a research paper on the prevalence and importance of these duties throughout Europe and on the role of equality bodies in implementing them. We hope you might be able to assist us in this important project.

The first step in the project is to gather information and perspectives from equality bodies. On 13th June, Equinet contact persons and members of the Policy Formation Working Group received a survey **(also attached to this email in ANNEX 1)** which will serve as a basis for the content and conclusions of the research. We would be grateful if you could fill it in by Friday 1st July 2016.

**Practical notes:**

* If there are no positive duties or equality duties in your national legislation, we would be grateful if you would respond by simply saying so! The last question will ask for your assessment of what further developments you would like to see in your equal treatment legislation, and we would be happy to hear your opinion whether you think such duties would be helpful even if they are not currently provided for.
* The current research project on positive and equality duties will complement, but in no way duplicate the Equinet report on [Positive Action Measures (2014)](http://www.equineteurope.org/Positive-Action-Measures). Thank you for keeping that in mind when thinking about your answers!

**Please return the survey by Friday 1st July to** **Katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org****.**

# Reminder: EEA & Norway Grants - Public consultationDeadline: Friday 5th July

**Note:** This communication was sent Wednesday 22nd June to Equinet contact persons & Equinet board members from equality bodies from Norway and beneficiary countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia)

**Dear Equinet members,**

We are very happy to announce that there will be an area of support relevant to equality bodies in the upcoming financing period of the EEA & Norway Grants (for more general information about the Grants, please visit: <http://eeagrants.org/>). One of the priorities of the Grants in the area of Human Rights will be to:

“Develop and empower ombudsman institutions, national human rights platforms and equality bodies,” with “capacity building measures linked to developing and empowering ombudsman institutions, national human rights institutions and equality bodies” as a suggested measure.

Currently, your governments will still negotiate the details of the programs. As such, there are two actions we could take to make sure equality bodies are supported and in a position to make the most of this opportunity.

* Talk to your government and give them ideas for the kind of measures you would find useful for your capacity building, including potential regional cooperation with your colleagues in other recipient countries.
* Respond to the open consultation on what priorities should be in the EEA & Norway Grants for 2014-2021 (final deadline 8 July 2016).

Equinet will respond to the open consultation on behalf of the network, and we would therefore be very grateful **if you could help us do so by answering a few questions below**. You are also encouraged and more than welcome to answer the open consultation directly in the name of your organization as well!

We thank you in advance for providing your input by no later than **5 July (internal deadline)** through this link: <https://form.jotform.com/61654724554965>

For any clarification or support, please do not hesitate to contact Katrine Steinfeld, Policy Officer, Equinet Secretariat: Katrine.Steinfeld@equineteurope.org - Tel: 0032 2 212 31 85

Thank you so much for your assistance and we hope this opportunity will be of interest to you!

# Equinet Seminar on Gender and Education19th and 20th May, Prague, Czech RepublicPresentations and pictures available

On 19th and 20th May, Equinet, together with the Czech [Public Defender of Rights](http://www.ochrance.cz/en/), organised a one and a half day capacity-building seminar for equality bodies’ staff members’ gender equality in education.

It took stock of the experiences of equality bodies with ensuring gender equality in education and will build on previous work by Equinet in this field.

The presentations and pictures of the seminar are available [on the Equinet website.](http://www.equineteurope.org/Seminar-Gender-Equality-in) A summary will be made available and sent to the participants in the coming weeks.

# 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. The next meeting will be held in October in Belgrade, Serbia.

**Equinet contact person:** Katrine Steinfeld, Equinet Policy Officer (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 Membership and Policy Officer (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org).

1. **COOPERATION PLATFORM ON ROMA EQUALITY**

The last meeting of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE) was held on 7th and 8th June in Athens, Greece. A joint statement on evictions of Roma people is currently under preparation and will be released next week.

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

1. **COOPERATION PLATEFORM ON HATE CRIME**

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

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

# Save the date! Next Equinet Meetings

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| **Capacity-building events** | **13th and 14th October** | Training event on social media *(Dublin, Ireland)* |
| **9th and 10th November** | Seminar on race and ethnicity *(Budapest, Hungary)* |
| **Governance** **Meetings** | **Thursday 8th September** | Board meeting *(Helsinki, Finland)* |
| **Thursday 29th and Friday 30th September** | Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) *(Brussels, Belgium)*  |
| **Conferences and other Equinet events** | **Monday 19th September** | Meeting of the Evaluation Lab *(Location: TBC)* |
| **First week of December** | Conference on intersectionality and gender equality *(Brussels, Belgium)* |

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

# Equinet members’ requests

* **Reminder: Request to other Equinet members**

**Dear Equinet members,**

In order to use updated contact lists and avoid spamming and multiple sending, should you want to circulate a request/question to Equinet members, please contact Jessica Machacova, Equinet Membership and Policy Officer (Jessica.machacova@equineteurope.org). Thank you very much!

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

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| http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/jpg/logo__temp__croatia.jpg“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****) as soon as possible.** |

* **Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia – Conflict between freedom of expression and discrimination on the ground of gender**

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| “Dear friends from Equinet,   (Click to enlarge picture)We are turning to you in relation to a question about **conflict between freedom of expression and discrimination**. The facts of the case are the following:* School teacher (subject: history and society) publishes an article in national press expressing views that conflict with gender equality (accusing women of not having children). He identifies himself as a school teacher, but doesn’t mention the name of the school.
* School fires the teacher based on damage (with this article and naming himself as a teacher) to school’s reputation and conflict with school’s curriculum supporting gender equality.
* The teacher is also a member of the extreme right-populist political party and its areal board and expresses such views on his personal Facebook page
* There have been occasions that refer to gender based harassment in the school that the school has documented, but did list as only secondary reasons for firing the teacher.

Now the teacher turns to us, claiming that the school has discriminated him based on his political views. That he has a right to express his views against gender equality as a teacher at the public media and this freedom has to be protected. Shortly: Schoolteacher is accusing the school for firing him due to his political views and school has an argument, that these political views are against the school values and state + school curriculum. General question: If the employer has clearly expressed its values, incl. equal treatment and gender equality, and a member of the staff uses freedom of expression to state other views in a public media, what about the employers rights.Equal treatment act of Estonia: "Discrimination of persons on grounds of religion or other beliefs is prohibited upon termination or cancellation of employment contracts." If anyone has experience in solving similar cases, we would very much appreciate your advice and input.Kind regards,Liisa Pakosta Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia liisa.pakosta@svv.ee “ |

* **Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland – Vocational Education**

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| Katarzyna Wilkołaska-Żuromska from the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights sent us the following questions: 1. **In your country, how are vocational education (professional education) systems organized? Do they work correctly and are they popular? Are there any promotional campaigns for women to choose typically male professions? Does your equality body take action in relation to the promotion of vocational education and equal access for women and men to vocational education?**

In Poland for many years, vocational education was neglected, and the majority of students choose high schools, because there was a belief that going to the university, after high school, guarantees a better job. If someone decided to go to the vocational school was guided by gender stereotypes referring to division of professions. The result is a segregation of professions and women usually choose less paid occupations (e.g. hairdresser, florist). Currently, we have too many university graduates who remain unemployed and the lack of specialists in the labor market. Therefore, the government decided to rebuild the vocational education.Seeing this as an opportunity also for women I would be very grateful for sharing with us the information are there any promotional campaigns for women to choose typically male professions? Does equality bodies take action in relation to the promotion of vocational education and equal access for women and men to vocational education? Maybe you had some complaints relating to equal access to vocational education.1. **The second question concerns the anti-discrimination procedures in higher education. Are such procedures implemented in your countries? Was it the initiative of universities? Are the equality bodies involved in its implementation? Do you operate efficiently?**

http://www.equineteurope.org/IMG/png/logo_poland_new.pngPlease send your input to Katarzyna Wilkołaska-Żuromska, Antidiscrimination Law Unit - Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Poland (k.wilkolaska@brpo.gov.pl). |

# Updates from Equinet members

* **Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic – Summary report on Protection against Discrimination 2015**

The Czech Public Defender of Rights just released its **summary report on Protection against Discrimination**. It covers the year 2015. It notably shows a high increase of the number of complaints since 2010 (from 178 to 379 per year). Majority of complains deals with discrimination cases occurring in employment.

The report in English is available [here](http://www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/DISKRIMINACE/Vyrocni_zpravy/2015-DIS-annual-report.pdf). You can also contact Monika Stachonova, Press Office & Foreign Affairs (stachonova@ochrance.cz).

* **Unia, Belgium – Annual report 2015**

Unia (formely Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) presented its 2015 annual report „Living together put to the test“. It sets up the difficult and challenging context which Unia had to face last year in Europe and Belgium. It also provides an overview of the cases received by the equality body.

The summary of the report is available in English and the report is available in French and Dutch on the [Unia’s website](http://unia.be/en/publications-statistics/publications/annual-report-2015.-living-together-put-to-the-test-1).

* **Annual report 2015 from Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia**

The Ombudsman’s Office of the Republic of Latvia also published its annual report for the year 2015. The report has a broader focus on human rights but also outline the work of the Ombudsman on discrimination issues. It is available in English [here](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/content/zinojumi/Tiesibsarga_zinojums_2015_01022016_EN_final.pdf).

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

# Request from the European Commission – Survey on pregnancy/maternity leave-related discrimination

In the context of the “New Start” initiative for work-life balance, the European Commission asked us to disseminate the following questions on pregnancy/maternity leave-related discrimination.

**1.** Based on received complaints, what is your experience with discrimination on grounds of announcing the pregnancy to the employer, taking maternity leave and upon returning to work? Would you know the number of overall complaints you received in this area in the last five years?

**2.** Based on received complaints, do you find that there is a lack of substantiation of the grounds for dismissal in writing in cases of dismissal?

**3.** Based on received complaints, do you find that preparatory steps measures, such as searching for and finding a permanent replacement for the relevant employee or procedural steps such as consulting the employee representation are taken for dismissals?

**4.** Do you find that dismissals often occur after the end of the period of maternity leave? What is the most frequent time-frame for dismissals to take place?

**5.** Are there any cases of discrimination for taking up other types of family related leaves (parental, paternity, carers') leave and upon returning to work? Would you have a breakdown of these complaints by gender?

Please send you contributions to Katrine Steinfeld, Equinet Policy Officer (Katrine.steinfeld@equineteurope.org) by **Monday 29th August**.

# OHCHR thematic study on UNCRPD Article 5 – Equality and non-discrimination (Deadline: 30th June)

The Human Rights Council Council has requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a study on article 5 of the UNCRPD in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including national human rights institutions, and to present the study to the Human Rights Council before its thirty-fourth session. The OHCHR has invited NHRIs to contribute information on any of the issues that they consider relevant to the study. In particular, views and information would be welcome in response to the following [questions](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bN54l7KGAduiqiTeYhRWoOrKjTXL9KjFDlOELXFT8dk/edit?pref=2&pli=1). Deadline for responses: 30 June 2016.

# Social Change Initiative - The Road to Marriage Equality Summer School (18th – 21th July 2016)

The Road to Marriage Equality Summer School is being hosted by The Social Change Initiative (SCI) in partnership with Social Intelligence Associates. The Summer School is aimed at not-for-profit organisations in Ireland, the U.K. and Europe. It will act as a master class on campaigning and how to use shared learning to focus on influencing and effecting social change. The Marriage Equality Referendum which took place in the Republic of Ireland in May 2015 will provide the basis for the lessons at the Summer School.

More information and tickets available [here](http://www.thesocialchangeinitiative.org/marriage-equality/).