**
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 / 0032 2 212 31 80).

**Equinet Members’ Bulletin on Internal Network Updates – Table of contents**

***(Ctrl + Click to follow the link)***

**PART 1: EQUINET UPDATES**

* Equinet Conference – **Strengthening the effectiveness of European equal treatment legislation**
* Reminder: **Equinet - Consultation on equality, integration and inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers**
* **Equinet Cluster on Strategic Litigation** - Final agenda available
* **Equinet Seminar on Gender and Education** - Final agenda available
* **Equinet & Equality and Human Rights Commission roundtable event** (20th April 2016, Brussels)
Summary available
* Updates: **Cooperation Platforms involving Equinet - Council of Europe – ENNHRI – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)**
* Save the date! **Next Equinet Meetings**

**PART 2: EQUINET MEMBERS**

* **Equinet members’ requests**
* **Updates from Equinet members**

**PART 3: EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS’ REQUESTS**

* FRA - **Summary of responses of FRA's consultation of NHRBs on their cooperation with National Parliaments**

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

# Equinet Conference – Strengthening the effectiveness of European equal treatment legislationThursday 16th June 2016, BrusselsDeadline for registration: Friday 27th May

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.

This 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. It also aims 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 will also be discussed.

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.

**Networking Reception – Wednesday 15th June**

A reception will be held in Norway House from 7pm on 15 June for invited participants, aiming in particular to bring together the heads of equality bodies. Invitations will be sent in due course.

**More information about the conference is available on the** [**Equinet website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Strengthening-the-effectiveness-of-European-Equal-Treatment-Legislation)**.
Register** [**here**](https://form.jotform.com/61232013537949) **by Friday 27th May.
For more information, please contact Tamás Kádár, Head of Legal and Policy Team (****tamas.kadar@equineteurope.org****).**

# Reminder: Equinet - Consultation on equality, integration and inclusion of migrants and asylum seekersDeadline: 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  by **Monday 16th May**.

# Equinet Cluster on Strategic Litigation18th May, Brussels, BelgiumFinal agenda available

On Wednesday 18th May, members of the **Equinet Cluster on Strategic Litigation** will meet for the second time in Brussels.

Equinet set up this thematic cluster in 2015 with the consideration that strategic litigation is already used by some equality bodies, while others currently consider experimenting with the use of this tool to take up cases that can result in important clarifications of the applicable law and positive changes going beyond the merits of the particular case.

**The final agenda of the Cluster meeting is attached (ANNEX 1) to this email.**

# Equinet Seminar on Gender and Education19th and 20th May, Prague, Czech RepublicFinal agenda available

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

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

In particular, the Seminar 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

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

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

**The summary of the event is available** [**on the Equinet website**](http://www.equineteurope.org/Equinet-EHRC-Roundtable-on-The-Parenthood-Penalty)**.**

# 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).

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).

1. **COOPERATION PLATFORM ON ROMA EQUALITY**

The next meeting of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE) will be held on 7th and 8th June in Athens, Greece.

**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.

**Equinet contact person:** Sarah Cooke O’Dowd, Communication Officer (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)* |
| **First week of October (TBC)** | Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) (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

* **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) by **15th May 2016.**

* **Institute for the Equality of Women and Men – Question on child beauty pageants (Deadline: as soon as possible)**

The Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men is currently working on child beauty pageants (also called “mini miss” or “little miss”).

**If these types of competitions are mentioned in your national laws and/or are forbidden, please contact Eva Abella Martin (****Eva.ABELLAMARTIN@iefh.belgique.be****) as soon as possible.**

* **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****)** **as soon as possible.**

* **Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic – Headscarves in schools**

The Public Defender of Rights (the Czech equality body) is currently dealing with the case of the Nursing College that prohibits wearing of any headdress in special classrooms for physics, chemistry and biology. The ban is imposed by the internal school regulation. The declared reasons for the ban is safety and protection of students and others (without exception). Would you consider such a case to constitute indirect discrimination? Could it be discriminatory against Muslim students wearing a headscarf – ‘hidjab’?

**We would be grateful for any information concerning similar cases that you may have encountered. Could you provide us with domestic (or European) case-law in this regard?**

In case you have never handled any similar case, we would be grateful for sharing your opinion. The key questions are:

* Is there a legitimate aim?
* If yes, are the means of achieving the aim appropriate and necessary?

**Please send the information to Eva Nehudkova,** **eva.nehudkova@ochrance.cz****, by the end of June, 2016.**

* **Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Lithuania – Capacity-building experts (Deadline: as soon as possible)**

“We have started a new project in the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson Office in Lithuania (OEOO), dedicated to capacities building for office staff members. **We have planned to invite foreign experts for few different training sessions**. One would be dedicated to improve OEOO external communication and equality mainstreaming, other – to raise efficiency of the Equality Body, organizational and operational capacity, alongside with staff competence and skills in order to develop a strategic plan and internal communication of OEOO. We are particularly interested in experts who could teach us:

- How to create a shared vision and consensus among employees about where their organization is going. The main outcome of the training should be the development and approval of a strategic plan.

- How to raise the trust of Equality Body within the country; how to improve equality mainstreaming by approaching the audience, choosing the right language, channels and means of information, establishing the proper accessible image of the institution.

**Do you know some good experts, who could cover these topics, or you had similar and effective training in your Office and could recommend somebody?** Thank you in advance.”

**Please send your contributions to Mintautė Jurkuté -** **mintaute.jurkute@lrs.lt**

# Updates from Equinet members

* **Czech Republic, Public Defender of Rights - Czech Defender intervening before Constitutional Court**

Czech hospitals newly cannot charge a special fee for the presence of a father or another close person at child birth – they can only demand the payment of their extra costs connected with it, as the Czech Constitutional Court ruled in recent days. Czech Public defender of Rights Anna Sabatova welcomed the Court ruling from the position of amicus curiae. The Constitutional Court agreed with her conclusions.

Czech ombudsman focused on the issue in the past. She said the participation of a close person in a child birth should be free. She disagreed with a fee for the presence of a doula, a specially trained woman who provides emotional and practical support for the expectant mother and her family, either.

For more information are available [here](http://praguemonitor.com/2016/04/17/fathers-no-longer-forced-pay-attending-births-under-court-ruling). You can also contact Monika Stachonova, Press Office & Foreign Affairs (stachonova@ochrance.cz).

* **Denmark, Danish Institute for Human Rights – Annual Report 2015**

The report offers an overview of the most important improvements and setbacks for human rights in Denmark. The institute has a legal obligation to provide an annual account on human rights for the Danish Parliament and the report serves as a key document in the institute’s counselling on human rights issues to the Danish members of parliament.

In the report, the institute also provides a brief insight into its research and international work and the important knowledge that it gains through cooperation projects with local National Human Rights Institutions and authorities, as well as in international fora.

The annual report can be downloaded in English [here](http://www.equineteurope.org/Annual-report-International-progress-and-Danish-setbacks-for-human-rights).

* **Slovakia, National Centre for Human Rights – Annual Report 2015**

The Annual Report on Activities of the Slovak National centre for Human Rights 2015 provides an overview of the activities and outputs undertaken by the Center last year.

The report underlines growing activities in the area of education, in particular, when it comes to migration and extremism.

As a conclusion, it mentions that „the activities and outputs of the Centre in 2015 have proven its irreplaceable and stable position among institutions active in the area of human rights and a special status in the field of observance of the principle of equal treatment under the Antidiscrimination Act.“.

The report can be downloaded in English [here](http://snslp.sk/?locale=en#page=2427).

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

# FRA - Summary of responses of FRA's consultation of NHRBs on their cooperation with National Parliaments

In December 2015, FRA consulted Equality Bodies, National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudsmen about their experiences of cooperating with national parliaments.

This consultation was inspired by the Belgrade Principles on the relationship between NHRIs and Parliaments (2012) and Resolution 1998 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe entitled ‘Improving cooperation between NHRIs and Parliaments in addressing equality and non-discrimination issues’ (2014).

It aims to inform FRA about existing models of cooperation between NHRBs and national parliaments in light of the Agency’s strategic objective to further raise awareness on its work and increasing impact of FRA evidence.

9 equality bodies contributed to the consultation. The summary of the contributions are attached to this email in ANNEX II.