

EQUINET CONFERENCE

Advancing Equality: The Potential of Equality Duties

Thursday 4 May 2017
LOCATION: Thon Hotel EU
Rue de la Loi 75,
Brussels, Belgium

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In 2016, Equinet commissioned research assessing the prevalence and state of play of equality duties in Europe. The study [*“Making Europe More Equal: A Legal Duty?”*](#) concludes that there are mainly three categories of statutory duties in place in Europe today; preventive, institutional and mainstreaming duties.

The Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe has suggested that statutory equality duties form part of “a new generation of [equality] legislation [...] beginning to emerge in response to limitations experienced in the implementation of current and previous provisions.” Each of the statutory duties identified in the study has its own design and significant achievements in progressing both institutional and societal change.

Nevertheless, the study highlights that “[t]here is an uneven spread and development of these statutory duties. Their geographical spread is significant but not comprehensive. Their ambition differs in different jurisdictions. A broad diversity of approaches in devising and implementing statutory duties is evident.”

Equinet is therefore committed to exploring the potential and current context for such duties, and is therefore organizing a conference to discuss the contribution of statutory equality duties to advancing equality, looking at what is in place across Europe and how the learning from this can be used to contribute to institutional and societal change.

OBJECTIVES

The conference sets out to **share the experiences of implementing equality duties**, as well as **good practice examples** and discuss **possibilities and challenges in introducing** such duties in other jurisdictions.

In particular, the conference aims to:

- Provide a platform to discuss the experiences obtained in implementing equality duties
- Present the conclusions of the 2016 Equinet research “Making Europe More Equal: A Legal Duty?”
- Promote equality duties as an effective tool to advance equality in all jurisdictions

TARGET AUDIENCE

This Equinet conference is aimed at 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.



AGENDA

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome & Registration

OPENING SESSION

OPENING ADDRESS

09:30 – 09:50 **Evelyn Collins**, Chair of the Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

09:50 – 10:10 *Keynote address:*
Why recommend legislation to place a duty on public authorities to promote equality? **Stefano Valenti**, ECRI, Council of Europe

SESSION 1

Setting the Scene – State of Play of Equality Duties in Europe

There is currently a limited number of jurisdictions in Europe where the duty to consider equality is laid down in national legislation. Where such duties exist, it creates a unique framework for not only combating discrimination, but for actively promoting equality. This session aims to evaluate these frameworks and discuss their challenges and advantages.

Moderator: Evelyn Collins, Chair of the Equinet Executive Board & Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

	Presentation of the Equinet Paper <i>Making Europe More Equal: A Legal Duty?</i>	Niall Crowley , Independent Expert and author of the Equinet Paper
10:10 – 11:25	The effectiveness and impact of equality duties: the case of Slovakia	Olga Pietruchova , Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Slovak Republic
	The effectiveness and impact of equality duties: the case of Northern Ireland	Louise Warde Hunter , Deputy Secretary, Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Civil Service
	Implementing equality duties: the case of Great Britain	Claire Lesko , Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain
	Equal pay surveys: the case of Sweden	Johanna Kumlin , Equality Ombudsman, Sweden

11:25 – 11:45 Coffee break

SESSION 2 – Panel Discussion

Looking Forward – Possibilities for Introducing Equality Duties

How do participants see the potential for advancing equality using statutory duties? How could implementation of such duties be improved where they already exist? What is the scope for introducing equality duties at European and national level? What types of statutory duties should be pursued? What are the advantages and the disadvantages?

Moderator: Catherine Naughton, EDF

11:45 – 13:00	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alvaro Oliveira (European Commission) • Stefano Valenti (ECRI) • Eileen Lavery (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland) • Louise Warde Hunter (Northern Ireland Civil Service) • Olga Pietruchova (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, Slovak Republic)
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- **Rita Žemaitytė-Tak** (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania)

CONCLUDING SESSION

13:00 – 13:15	Summary of discussion by Niall Crowley
13:15 – 13:30	Concluding remarks: Anne Gaspard , Equinet Executive Director
13:30 – 14:30	Closing lunch

EQUALITY BODIES' CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION

This session aims to provide a platform for equality bodies to exchange experiences in implementing, monitoring, and/or providing guidance and support to duty bearers in implementing equality duties, discussing the main challenges and advantages.

14:30 – 15:30	<p>Equality impact assessment based approaches Eileen Lavery and Lisa King, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Support and guidance to duty bearers Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia</p>	<p>Employment & education equality focused approaches Kirsi Pimiä, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland</p>	<p>Mainstreaming duties, Carine Joly, Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men</p>
15:30 – 16:00	Sharing of results from workshops by facilitators in plenary			
16:00 – 16:30	Reflections on discussion by Claire Lesko and Johanna Kumlin Q&A			
16:30	End of day			

