

# Standards for equality bodies: The purpose and use of standards

**Evelyn Collins**

Chair of Equinet

*and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland*

ECRI's seminar with national Specialised Bodies

Strasbourg, 23-24 May 2017



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship  
Programme of the European Union

[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)



**Equinet**  
European Network  
of Equality Bodies

# Equinet

- **Established in 2007** as the European Network of Specialised Equality Bodies
- **Network of National Equality Bodies** (46 members from 34 European countries)
- Specialised equality bodies on the basis of **EU Equal Treatment Directives (2000/43/EC; 2004/113/EC; 2006/54/EC)**
- **Diversity among national equality bodies** in terms of size, mandate, grounds, structure and experience



# Functions of Equality Bodies

## Functions laid down in EU Directives:

- Independent assistance to victims of discrimination
- Independent surveys and reports concerning discrimination
- Recommendations on discrimination issues
- Exchange of information with European bodies

## Wider functions taken on by Equality Bodies:

- Awareness raising
- Promotion of good practices



# Objectives of Equinet

**Building capacity and peer support for equality bodies**

(staff and organizational capacity)

**Contributing to the European Equality Agenda**

(through communicating the learning from the work of equality bodies)

**Serving as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment**

**Consolidating the network and the position of its members**



# Standards – ECRI GPR No. 2.

- Current GPR already important for equality body standards
- Usefully updated reference to ‘**equality bodies**’ instead of specialised bodies
- **High level of ambition** and ECRI’s support strengthening the role, standing and capacity of equality bodies
- **Clear guidelines for all important conditions** that are necessary to enable the effective functioning of equality bodies
- Useful **emphasis on the functions and operations** of equality bodies
- **Focus on the prevention of discrimination** among the functions



# Standards for equality bodies – Equinet work

## Equinet's Working Paper on Developing Standards for Equality Bodies (15 June 2016)

### Goals:

- Assist Governments in **establishing and creating suitable conditions** for equality bodies
- Empower equality bodies with an **authority and standing**
- Ensure that equality bodies can implement all of their functions and powers to a scale that can **achieve an impact**
- Protect them from being **undermined or diminished** in the exercise of their functions



# Four key pillars

Mandate

Complete  
Independence

Effectiveness

Institutional  
Architecture



# Mandate

- Equality, diversity and non-discrimination
- Public and private sectors in the fields of employment, vocational training, goods and services, education, housing, social protection and social advantages
- All treaty grounds covered under Article 19 TFEU and Article 21 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including multiple discrimination





# Complete independence

- **Own legal personality and stand-alone structure**
- **A governance structure reflecting diversity**
- **Systems of accountability ensuring independence**
- **Absence of external pressure and undue interference**



# Effectiveness

- Adequate **financial, staff and physical resources**
- **General powers**
- Specific powers to underpin **promotional-type functions**
- Specific powers to underpin **tribunal-type functions**
- **Expansions of mandate** should be **coherent** with original mandate and based on **adequate resources**



# Institutional architecture

- **Coherence** if several equality bodies are established in one country
- **Tribunal-type** and **promotional-type** functions
- Coherent **legal bases** and **adequate resources** if mandates of equality bodies are combined with other bodies
- Accessible and coherent **pathways for access to justice**
- Lead and support the **wider infrastructure** to promote equality



# Way forward

- The key challenge: monitoring and implementation of the GPR and standards for equality bodies
- Reference complementing, inspiring and strengthening other European and international standards





**Thank you for your  
attention!**

**Any questions?**



**EquinetEurope**

**EQUINET SECRETARIAT**  
138 Rue Royale / Koningsstraat  
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 (0)2 212 3182  
[info@equineteurope.org](mailto:info@equineteurope.org)



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship  
Programme of the European Union

[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)



**Equinet**  
**European Network**  
**of Equality Bodies**