

CONFERENCE DRAFT AGENDA

Investing in Equality

1 June 2018

(09:15 – 15:30)

LOCATION: Brussels, exact venue TBC

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Equality, together with respect for human dignity and for human rights, non-discrimination, tolerance, and gender equality, is a founding value of the European Union. One of the six substantive chapters of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU is dedicated to equality. The Union has legislative powers to advance equality and non-discrimination and these values are powerfully expressed in EU equality legislation and most recently in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Importantly, the EU is currently devising its new Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), defining its budget for the next decade.

Equality and non-discrimination are also at the core of the international human rights framework. Freedom from discrimination is the only right set out in all nine of the core UN human rights treaties. Similarly, non-discrimination is a horizontal requirement in the Council of Europe's treaties.

Unfortunately, the reality on the ground does not fulfil the aspirations and guarantees of these international treaties. In fact, levels of inequality, intolerance and discrimination are on the rise amidst a populist discourse that is often hostile to these fundamental values and challenges these values and their supporters as expressions of disingenuous political correctness. This is despite the fact that equality and non-discrimination are part of the declared constitutional traditions of most, if not all, countries.

Equality bodies are statutory institutions set up pursuant to the EU's Race Directive in all EU Member States to promote equality and combat discrimination. They are part and parcel of the national infrastructure for equality, together with strong civil society. Equality bodies have a demonstrated potential in triggering positive change at societal, institutional and individual levels, but only if they are vested with independence, adequate powers and resources. This is unfortunately not the case in all European countries.

This conference is convened to address the challenges to equality, discuss European-level solutions and identify the role equality bodies can play in these. It targets equality bodies, European institutions, international organisations, national authorities and civil society working on equality.

OBJECTIVES

This conference therefore aims to:

- Discuss the place of equality and non-discrimination as fundamental horizontal values in the next EU MFF and the contribution of EU funds to equality and non-discrimination;
- Discuss ways to ensure political commitment to equality and non-discrimination at all levels;
- Discuss the role of equality legislation, ways to ensure optimal implementation of existing legislation and the need for completing the legal framework for equality
- Discuss the role of strong, independent equality bodies in safeguarding the value of equality

The conference is supported by the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) Regional Office for Europe



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

DRAFT AGENDA	
08:45 – 09:15	Welcome & Registration
OPENING SESSION	
09:15 – 09:45	Tena Šimonović Einwalter , Chair of the Equinet Executive Board Birgit Van Hout , Regional Representative for Europe, United Nations Human Rights Office
KEYNOTE ADDRESS	
09:45 – 10:05	Věra Jourová , Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality
10:05 – 10:25	Didier Reynders , Minister of Foreign Affairs, Belgium (tbc)
10:25 – 10:40	Q&A
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee break
SESSION 1 The state of (in)equality Chair: TBC	
This session aims to identify some of the key inequalities and challenges to ensuring equality in Europe.	
11:00 – 12:20	Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos , EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) UN OHCHR Equality body
12:20 – 12:45	Q&A
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break
SESSION 2 PANEL DEBATE Investing in equality. The role of political and financial capital Chair: TBC	
This session aims to identify ways forward for action at European level to ensure the necessary conditions for equality and non-discrimination. It will reflect on the role of equality bodies in these actions.	
13:45 – 15:15	Equality body European Commission DG JUST European Parliament Member State representative UN OHCHR Wolfram Bechtel , European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Israel Butler , Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
Concluding Session	
15:15 – 15:30	Equinet & UN OHCHR

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