DRAFT MINUTES OF

THE 12th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF

EQUINET

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

Wednesday 11th October 2017

Brussels, Belgium

Attendance

Equinet Members' representatives

Please refer to the attendance list attached (Annex 1)

Attending Board Members (mandate 2015-2017)

Evelyn Collins (Chair)

Sarah Benichou

Patrick Charlier

Sandra Konstatzky

Kalliopi Lykovardi

Kirsi Pimiä

Petr Polák

Tena Šimonović Einwalter

Apologies Board Members:

Anna Błaszczak

Expert advisor to the Board

Niall Crowley

Equinet Secretariat

Sarah Cooke O'Dowd (Communication Officer)

Anne Gaspard (Executive Director)

Yannick Godin (Administration and Finance Officer)

Tamás Kádár (Head Policy and Legal team)

Jessica Machacova (Membership and Policy Officer)

Katrine Steinfeld (Policy Officer, Gender Equality)

Mathew Augusteyns (Trainee)

Floriane Charles (Trainee)

Minutes:

Jessica Machacova, Equinet Secretariat

Venue

SQUARE (Brussels Meeting Centre)

Rue Ravenstein 2

1000 Brussels

Belgium

Quorum

On 11 October 2017, thirty five (35) Equinet Member Organisations out of the total forty-six (46) had a voting representative attending the twelfth Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) and five (5) Equinet Members delegated their voting rights to a representative of another Member attending the meeting (proxy vote), therefore counting for a total of forty (40) possible votes for the items put to the vote during the morning session.

Therefore, the mandatory quorum of half the Members attending was obtained and the validity of the decisions adopted by the General Assembly of Members gathered at the Equinet Annual General Meeting 2017 held on 11 October 2017 in Brussels is established.

Programme

Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) Wednesday 11th October 2017

	•	els Meeting Centre), Brussels, Be enstein 2, 1000 Brussels, Belgiur	_	
09.00 - 09.30	Registration			
09.30 - 09.40	Welcome and introduction Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland			
	Session 1 – Equinet gover	rnance, 2017 review and plans f	orward	
09.40 - 10:15	 Report on Equinet activities Report on 2017 Work Plan Presentation of proposed 2018 Work Plan Report and update on Equinet Finances Q & A – Members' discussion 			
10:15 - 11.00	 2017 Board Elections: Introduction and presentation of candidates Steps and procedure for the closed ballot vote Personal introduction of candidates (2 min) 			
		MEMBERS VOTE ON		
11:00 – 11:15	AMENDMENT OF THE EQUINET STATUTES	EQUINET WORK PLAN AND BUDGET 2018	MINUTES AGM 2016 ACCOUNTS 2016	
11:15 – 11:40	Coffee Break (Opening Of Closed Ballot Vote – Equinet Board Elections)			
Session 2 – "Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies": Learning and future prospects for the work of national equality bodies across Europe				
11.40 – 12.00	 'Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies' - Preliminary findings of the Equinet research paper Presentation of preliminary findings by Jean-Pierre Gauci, Director, The People for Change Foundation (contracted expert) 			

12:00 – 13:00	Parallel discussion groups focused on 'Infor equality bodies' Exchange and feedback on prelim Discussion in 3 groups		
13:00 – 14:00	Networking Lunch (End Of Closed Ballot Vote – Equinet Boa	rd Elections)	
Session 3 – Fron	m 10 to 20 year old: Future opportunities bodies	and challenges for Equinet and equality	
14:00 – 14:30	 Introduction by Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equinet Executive Board and Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Equality bodies under pressure in a challenging environment: Discussion and case studies on network's and members' support 		
14:30 – 15:20	Parallel discussions – Towards preparing Equinet future Strategic Plan • Preliminary discussion in 3 groups		
	Session 4 – Closing AGM	Session	
	Sharing views and conclusions emerging from group discussions on research "Investing in Equality" by Jean-Pierre Gauci		
15.20 – 15.45	Announcement of Elections results for Equinet Board mandate 2017-2019		
	Conclusion and closing remarks	Anne Gaspard , Equinet Executive Director	
15.45	Farewell and departure of participants		

16:00 – 17:00 Board Meeting with newly elected Board Members

Nomination of the Chair of the Executive Board 2017-2019

WELCOME SESSION

On 11 October 2017, Dr Evelyn Collins, Chair of the Equinet Board of Directors (the Board) and Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, delivered a welcome address and declared the **twelfth Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM)** open at 09:30.

SESSION 1 (See Annex 2 attached)

Equinet Governance, 2017 review and plans forward

Report on Equinet activities

On behalf of the Equinet Board, Dr Evelyn Collins, Chair, gave a comprehensive report on **Equinet activities for 2017**.

Dr Collins then also presented the main highlights of the proposed **Equinet Work Plan for the year 2018** and its budget.

With further input of Mr Patrick Charlier (Equinet Treasurer), an **overview of the financial situation for 2017** was introduced to the Members.

Dr Collins and Mr Charlier's power point presentation is available on the Equinet internal website.

2017 Board Elections: Introduction and presentation of candidates

The procedure for the election of the new Equinet Executive Board (two-year mandate 2017-2019) was introduced by the Equinet Secretariat, and all eleven candidates¹ standing for election to the Equinet Executive Board were invited to introduce themselves.

Ms Rhoda Garland, Executive Director of the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability in Malta and candidate to the Equinet Executive Board 2017-2019, could not attend the AGM due to force majeure. She introduced herself through a video message.

¹ Laurence BOND (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)), Patrick CHARLIER, (Unia, Belgium), Valérie FONTAINE (Defender of Rights, France), Kirsi PIMIÄ (Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, France), Rhoda GARLAND (Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta), Sandra KONSTATZKY (Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria), Petr POLÁK (Public Defender of Rights, Malta), Sylwia SPUREK (Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland), Jasminka DŽUMHUR (Human Rights Ombudsman, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Kalliopi LYKOVARDI (Greek Ombudsman, Greece), Tena ŠIMONOVIĆ EINWALTER (Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia)

Votes

Before proceeding to the votes as foreseen in the AGM agenda, Dr Collins and Tamás Kádár (Equinet Head Policy and Legal Team) explained the **objectives and rationale of the proposed amendment to the Equinet statutes.**

The amendment aims to clarify the geographical scope of potential Equinet membership following a number of recent inquiries from equality bodies in Eastern Partnership countries. It concerns Article 3 of the Equinet statutes, in Title I, on "Denomination, Headquarters, Objective and Duration".

It opens the possibility of membership for "other European countries that have approximated their legislation to EU equality and anti-discrimination legislation". The proposed amendment is in line with Article 5 (describing the members of Equinet), already explicitly allowing Equinet to admit equality bodies from other countries if it is deemed to be in the interest of the Network. It would therefore correct the current text of the Equinet Statutes that inconsistently refers to 'ERA' (instead of EEA, standing for European Economic Area) and separately to Norway, even though it is a member of the EEA. Instead of a reference to the EEA, it proposes reference to EFTA, keeping the door open for the potential accession of an equality body from Switzerland.

Current text

Article 3

The INFPA does not have a commercial goal and pursues not-for-profit goals of international utility:

Equinet is a network: that is to say a group of organisations which are active in all the countries of the European Union and the ERA, as well as in the countries which are in the process of joining and in Norway, which have a similar mandate and profile, which share the same interests, which pursue the same objectives on a European level, which benefit from the existing cooperation within the network, but which also make their own contribution. (...)

Proposed text (amendments in bold, deletions marked with strikethrough)

Article 3

The INFPA does not have a commercial goal and pursues not-for-profit goals of international utility:

Equinet is a network: that is to say a group of organisations which are active in all the countries of the European Union and the ERA European Free Trade Association Member EUcandidate and States, potential candidate countries as well as **other** European countries that have approximated their legislation to EU equality and antidiscrimination legislation in the countries which are in the process of joining and in Norway, which have a similar mandate and profile, which share the same interests, which pursue the same objectives on a European level, which benefit from the existing cooperation within the network, but which also make their own contribution. (...)

Tamás Kádár also recalled the **specific procedure governing any changes of the Equinet statutes**. According to the article 16 of the Equinet Statutes, "the general meeting can only validly deliberate the proposition for modifying the statutes or the proposition for dissolution if two thirds of the effective members are present or represented. A decision will only be reached if it receives four fifths of the vote of the effective members who are present or represented."

As foreseen in the AGM agenda and on the basis of voting documents previously sent to Equinet Members, Dr Collins invited Equinet Members to cast their votes on the amendment of the Equinet Statutes, Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2018 and the minutes of the Equinet AGM 2016 and accounts 2016.

- 1. The amendment of the Equinet statutes was unanimously adopted (40 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
- 2. The Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2018 were unanimously adopted (40 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
- 3. The Accounts for the year 2016 were unanimously adopted (40 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.

Before proceeding to the vote of the Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2016, Dr Evelyn Collins explained that National Commission for the Promotion of Equality of Malta (NCPE) sent an amendment as the name of the last year's representative, Stephanie Borg Bonaci, was forgotten in the list of participants.

- 4. The amendment to the Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2016 was unanimously adopted (40 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
- 5. The Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2016 were unanimously adopted (40 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.

The 40 voting representatives were asked to cast their votes on the candidates standing for election to the Equinet Executive Board for the mandate 2017-2019 during the coffee break, session 2 and networking lunch.

SESSION 2

"Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies"

Learning and future prospects for the work of national equality bodies across Europe

Presentation of the preliminary findings of the Equinet research paper

Jean-Pierre Gauci, Director of the People for Change Foundation, was contracted by Equinet to deliver a research paper on "Investing in Equality: a decade of change for equality bodies" as part of the deliverables of the Equinet 2017 Work Plan. He was invited to present the preliminary findings of the research paper to the AGM.

Jean-Pierre Gauci gave an overview of the literature review undertaken at the beginning of the paper. He highlighted that equality bodies themselves often refer to national legislation rather than international legislation, even though they are often mentioned indirectly or directly in international instruments. The role of equality bodies as mediators between civil society organisations and governments is sometimes well developed. In other cases, they can be in a difficult position with pressure from both sides.

Several challenges were raised by equality bodies throughout the research, including underreporting, addressing intersectional discrimination, impact of financial crisis, impact of equality bodies.

Jean-Pierre Gauci explained that results of the research so far show a general tendency for mandates to increase, which equality bodies generally consider to be an opportunity, even if adequate financial resources continue to be a concern. However, 29% of respondents fear budget cuts in the future.

Parallel group discussions

Three parallel group discussions were held with participants to exchange on the preliminary findings of the research paper. The outcomes of the group discussions were shared by in plenary before the concluding session.

AGM NETWORKING LUNCH FROM 13:00 to 14:00

SESSION 3

From 10 to 20 year old: Future opportunities and challenges for Equinet and equality

bodies

Equality bodies under pressure in a challenging environment: case studies

Equinet Chair, Dr Evelyn Collins, introduced the context and objectives of the session. She reminded the

Equinet members of the upcoming discussions around the future Equinet Strategic Plan (starting from 2019).

She then gave the floor to Sylwia Spurek, Deputy Human Rights Commissioner (responsible for equal

treatment issues), Poland, and Miha Lobnik, Advocate for the Principle of Equality, Slovenia. They were invited

to present a case study of challenges and pressures encountered by their equality body at national level in

order to inform the parallel discussions of Equinet members on preparing Equinet future Strategic Plan.

Sylwia Spurek started her presentation by presenting the legal nature and mandate of the Commissioner for

Human Rights of Poland. She explained that the budget of her equality body depends on the Polish Parliament.

She then highlighted that, in the past two years, the Commissioner focused on issues such as the rule of law

and access to justice as a result of the political situation. Some issues such as women's rights and LGBTI

equality are considered more controversial than others. As a result, the Commissioner was subjected to attacks

from public media and government. They also experienced budget cuts and their resources went back to 2011

levels.

Sylwia Spurek concluded her presentation by highlighting the valuable capacity-building events organised for

the equality body's staff members and the support they received from the Network after they faced budget

cuts and political attacks. She suggested each equality body to code cooperation within Equinet into their DNA,

and ensuring each equality body's department could benefit from exchanges with Equinet.

Miha Lobnik explained that the existence of his equality body was blocked on a financial level, even though the

Slovenian legislation foresees an extensive mandate.

He underlined that Equinet was the biggest ally of the equality body outside Slovenia during its first year of

existence. The support brought by Equinet in terms of content and networking opportunities was key and also

provided moral support. Overall, international support from organisations such as the Council of Europe also

helped to secure extra budget for the functioning of the equality body.

Parallel discussions: Towards preparing Equinet future Strategic Plan

AGM participants were invited to participate in three discussion groups issues related to upcoming European

and national challenges and opportunities in order to support and inform the preparation of the next Equinet

Strategic Plan (from 2019).

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SESSION 4

Closing AGM Session

Sharing views and conclusions emerging from group discussions on research "Investing in equality" by Jean-Pierre Gauci

Jean-Pierre Gauci shared in plenary the conclusions of the group discussions which took place during the session 2. The learnings of the discussions will be used to finalise the research and plan its dissemination.

The results of the elections for the Equinet Board were then announced.

OFFICIAL RESULTS OF THE BOARD ELECTIONS HELD AT THE AGM 2017

Have been elected to the Equinet Board for a mandate of two years (end 2017 – end 2019):

- Laurence Bond, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland (38 votes)
- Patrick Charlier, Unia, Belgium (35 votes)
- Valérie Fontaine, Defender of Rights, France (33 votes)
- Kirsi Pimiä, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland (37 votes)
- Sandra Konstatzky, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria (29 votes)
- Petr Polák, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic (29 votes)
- Sylwia Spurek, Human Rights Defender, Poland (25 votes)
- Kalliopi Lykovardi, Greek Ombudsman, Greece (25 votes)
- Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia (29 votes)

CLOSING

Ms Anne Gaspard, Equinet Executive Director, gave the closing address and thanked all participants, in particular the Equinet Chair and Board Members and the facilitators of the discussion groups for their valuable contributions. She reminded Members' representatives of their forthcoming duties and opportunities to engage through the range of Equinet activities and events planned throughout 2018.

== The twelfth Annual General Meeting of Equinet was officially closed at 15:45 on 11th October 2017 ==

ANNEX 1

EQUINET ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

11 OCTOBER 2017

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

First name	Family name	Country	Organisation	Position
Jovan	Ananiev	Macedonia FYROM	Commission for Protection against Discrimination	Member
Mathew	Augusteyns		Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies	Finance & communication intern
Irma	Baraku	Albania	Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination	Commissioner
Sarah	Benichou	France	Defender of Rights	Cheffe de l'unité accès aux droits et discriminations
Laurence	Bond	Ireland	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Director
Floriane	Charles		Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies	Policy & communication intern
Patrick	Charlier	Belgium	Unia	Director

Evelyn	Collins	UK Northern Ireland	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	Chief executive
Sarah	Cooke O'Dowd		Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies	Communication officer
Niall	Crowley		Independent expert	Expert Advisor to the Board
Aleksandar	Dashtevski	Macedonia FYROM	Commission for Protection against Discrimination	President of the commission
Jasminka	Dzumhur	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman	Ombudsperson
Susanne	Fischer	Denmark	Board of Equal Treatment	Head of secretariat
Valérie	Fontaine	France	Defender of Rights	Advisor for partnerships and public relations
Anne	Gaspard		Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies	Executive director
Yannick	Godin		Equinet - European Network of Equality Bodies	Finance & administration officer
Lígia	Gonçalves	Portugal	Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment	Law officer
Katalin	Gregor	Hungary	Equal Treatment Authority	Head of legal department
Søren	Gyldenhof Schilder	Denmark	Board of Equal Treatment	Head of secretariat

Ardiana	Hala	Albania	Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination	Director
Hansjörg	Hofer	Austria	Austria Disability Ombudsman	Austrian disability ombudsman
Niklas	Hofmann	Germany	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA)	Policy officer
Ágnes	Honecz	Hungary	Equal Treatment Authority	President
Mario	Huberty	Luxembourg	CET (Centre for Equal Treatment)	President
Anete	Ilves	Latvia	Ombudsman's Office	Legal counsellor
Brankica	Jankovic	Serbia	Commissioner for Protection of Equality	Commissioner for the protection of equality
Juris	Jansons	Latvia	Ombudsman's Office	Ombudsman
Kerstin	Jansson	Sweden	Diskrimineringsombudsmann en	International coordinator
Tatjana	Jokanovic	Serbia	Commissioner for Protection of Equality	Assistant commissioner for the protection of equality
Darijo	Jurisic	Croatia	Office of the Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities	Deputy ombudsman

Tamas	Kadar		Equinet- European Network of Equality Bodies	Head of legal & policy unit
Despina	Koni	Cyprus	Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights	Officer
Sandra	Konstatzky	Austria	Ombud for Equal Treatment	Deputy director
Renee	Laiviera	Malta	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)	Commissioner
Miko	Lempinen	Finland	Ombudsman for Equality	Senior officer
Maria v.	Liisberg	Denmark	Danish Institute for Human Rights	Department director, equality
Miha	Lobnik	Slovenia	Advocate of the Principle of Equality	Advocate of the principle of equality
Emily	Logan	Ireland	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Chief commissioner
Jan-peter	Loof	Netherlands	Netherlands Institute for Human Rights	Vice president
Kalliopi	Lykovardi	Greece	Greek Ombudsman	Deputy ombudsman for equal treatment
Jessica	Machacova		Equinet - European Network	Membership & policy officer

			of Equality Bodies	
Carla	Marini	Italy	National Office against Discrimination (UNAR)	Employee
Thierry	Maroit	Belgium	Freelance Photographer	
Rosario	Maseda	Spain	Council for the Elimination of Ethnic and Racial Discrimination	Technical advisor
Branka	Meic Salie	Croatia	Office of the Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities	Advisor of the ombudswoman
Martin	Mörk	Sweden	Diskrimineringsombudsmann en	Deputy ombudsman
Ucha	Nanuashvili	Georgia	Office of the Public Defender (ombudsman)	Public defender of Georgia
Rebecca	Newsome	UK Great Britain	Equality and Human Rights Commission	International policy senior associate
Ingrid	Nikolay-leitner	Austria	Ombud for Equal Treatment	Director
Liisa	Pakosta	Estonia	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioners Office	Commissioner
Zuzana	Pavlíčková	Slovakia	Slovak National Centre for	Head of office of the

			Human Rights	executive director
Lauren	Payne	UK Great Britain	Equality and Human Rights Commission	Brexit manager
Kirsi	Pimiä	Finland	Ombudsman for Non-	Non-discrimination
, 6.			Discrimination	ombudsman
Petr	Polák	Czech Republic	Public Defender of Rights	Head of division of equal
			, and a special specia	treatment
Eduardo	Qua	Portugal	High Commission for	Head of international
2000,00		. crugu	Migration	relations unit
Ketevan	Shubashvili	Georgia	Office of the Public Defender	Head of the equality
Recevan	<i></i>	Ccorgia	(ombudsman)	department
Tena	Šimonović Einwalter	Croatia	Office of the ombudsman	Deputy ombudswoman
Sylwia	Spurek	Poland	Office of the Commissioner	Deputy human rights
Sylwid	Sparen	1 Olana	for Human Rights	commissioner
Katrine	Steinfeld		Equinet - European Network	Policy officer (gender
Katine	Stemjera		of Equality Bodies	equality)
			Office of the Commissioner	
Maria	Stylianou	Cyprus	for Administration and	Commissioner
			Human Rights	
Laima	Vengale-dits	Lithuania	Office of the Equal	Senior advisor, legal division

			Opportunities Ombudsperson	
Milla	Vidina	Bulgaria	Commission for Protection	Chief specialist
Willia	Viania	Buigaria	against Discrimination	Ciliej specialist
Lora	Vidović	Croatia	Office of the Ombudsman	Ombudswoman