

DRAFT MINUTES OF

THE 13th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF

EQUINET

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

Wednesday, 7 November 2018

Brussels, Belgium

Attendance

Equinet Members' representatives

Please refer to the attendance list attached (**Annex 1**)

Attending Board Members (mandate 2017 - 2019)

Tena Šimonović Einwalter (Chair)

Laurence Bond

Patrick Charlier (Treasurer)

Valérie Fontaine

Sandra Konstatzky

Kirsi Pimiä

Petr Polák

Sylwia Spurek

Apologies Board Members:

Kalliopi Lykovardi

Equinet Secretariat

Sarah Cooke O'Dowd (Communication Officer)

Anne Gaspard (Executive Director)

Moana Genevey (Policy Officer/Gender Equality)

Yannick Godin (Administration and Finance Officer)

Bram Feyaerts (Administration and Events Assistant – Trainee)

Mher Hakobyan (Assistant Officer)

Tamás Kádár (Head Policy and Legal team)

Axel Ruppert (Event Coordinator)

Tanja Sheikhi (Policy and Communication Assistant – Trainee)

Apologies Board Members:

Milla Vidina (Policy Officer)

Minutes:

Mher Hakobyan, Equinet Secretariat

Venue

Bedford Hotel & Congress Centre

Rue du Midi 135

1000 Brussels, Belgium

Quorum

On 7 November 2018, **thirty three (33)** Equinet Member Organisations out of the total **forty-six (46)** had a voting representative attending the thirteenth Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM) and **eleven (11)** Equinet Members delegated their voting rights to a representative of another Member attending the meeting (proxy vote), therefore counting for a total of **forty-four (44)** possible votes for the items put to the vote (Equinet Accounts 2017; Minutes of AGM 2017; Ratification of three new members) during the first part of the morning session. In addition, **two (2)** candidate equality bodies to Equinet Membership had a voting representative present, while **one (1)** delegated their voting rights to a representative of an Equinet Member attending the AGM through a proxy vote, therefore counting a total of **forty-seven (47)** possible votes for the items put forward following ratification of new Members (Equinet Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022, Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2019).

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 2018 held on 7 November in Brussels is established.

AGENDA

Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Wednesday 7 November 2018

*Venue: Bedford Hotel & Congress Centre
Rue du Midi 135, 1000 Brussels, Belgium*

08:30 - 09.00	Registration		
09.00 - 10.40	Session 1 – Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies <i>Open to Equinet Members and Observer Equality Bodies only</i> Chair: Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair - Equinet Executive Board		
09.00 - 09.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and introduction 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on Equinet by Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair - Equinet Executive Board Report on Work Plan 2018 Funding & Finance – Patrick Charlier, Treasurer (Equinet Board Member) Update on Equinet Membership		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A – Members’ discussion 		
	VOTE ON	Accounts 2017	Minutes AGM 2017
09.40 – 10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratification of new Equinet membership Introduction by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nino Lomjaria, Public Defender, Office of Public Defender, Georgia • Ian Feldman, Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Republic of Moldova • Ana Lite, Senior Adviser, Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, Spain 		
	VOTE ON	Ratification of candidates for membership	
10.00 - 10.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of Equinet Strategic Plan 2019-2022 • Introduction of Equinet Work Plan 2019 • Development of Equinet’s new Website • Q&A – Members’ discussion 		
	VOTE ON	Equinet Strategic Plan 2019-2022	
	VOTE ON	Work Plan and Budget 2019	
10.40 - 11.00	Coffee Break		

11.00 - 12.45	Session 2 - Together for an Equal Europe – ensuring a strong institutional framework for equality Chair: Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair - Equinet Executive Board		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction – Equinet perspective, Petr Polák, Moderator of Equinet Working Group Policy Formation and Board Member, Czech Republic • Keynote speaker - Irena Moozova, Director for Equality and Union Citizenship, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission - EU priorities on equality and non-discrimination • Equality and the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia: Cost of Non-Europe Report – Wouter Van Ballegooij, European Parliament Research Service • Equality agenda of the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) - Birgit Van Hout, UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe, UN OHCHR • Council of Europe promoting equality - Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (video message) Q&A		
12.45 - 14.00	Networking Lunch		
14.00 - 15.45	Session 3 – Group Discussion <i>Open to Equinet Members and Observer Equality Bodies only</i> <i>Participants will have the opportunity to discuss in smaller groups. They should attend two of the following three sessions.</i>		
14.00 – 14.50	National level visibility and implementation of Standards for Equality Bodies <i>(Facilitator: Dorothea Staes/ Zuzana Dorazilova, DG JUST, European Commission)</i>	Priorities for Equality Bodies in 2019 Brainstorming on Equinet priorities for Work Plan 2020 <i>(Facilitator: Equinet Board Member/Secretariat)</i>	Equality bodies supporting strong equality focus under 2020 Rights and Values Programme <i>(Facilitator: Equinet Board Member/Secretariat)</i>
14.55 – 15.45			
15.45 - 16.00	Final remarks and closing of the AGM Anne Gaspard, Equinet Executive Director		
19.30 – 22.00	Networking Dinner with Equality Bodies <i>Restaurant La Manufacture, Rue Notre Dame du Sommeil 12-20, 1000 Brussels</i>		

Session 1 – Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies

Chair: Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair - Equinet Executive Board

Welcome and introduction

On 7 November 2018, Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair of the Equinet Board of Directors (the Board) and Deputy Ombudswoman of Croatia, delivered a welcome address and declared the **thirteenth Equinet Annual General Meeting (AGM)** open at 09:00.

Report on Equinet Work Plan 2018; Funding & Finance; Update on Equinet Membership

On behalf of the Equinet Board, Equinet Chair Tena Šimonović Einwalter, gave a comprehensive report on **Equinet activities for 2018**.

With further input of Mr Patrick Charlier (Equinet Treasurer), an **overview of the financial situation for 2018** was introduced to the Members.

Developments within Equinet Membership in the past year were also presented, including mentioning of any new appointments of equality body leadership.

Votes

As foreseen in the AGM agenda and on the basis of voting documents previously sent to Equinet Members, the Chair invited Equinet Members **to cast their votes on the minutes of the Equinet AGM 2017 and accounts 2017**. However, before proceeding to the vote of the Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2017, Ms Einwalter explained that the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality of Malta (NCPE) pointed out to a mistake in the country name for Petr POLÁK, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic (country was mistakenly noted as ‘Malta’). Since it was rather a correction to the minutes rather than a substantial amendment, it was agreed with the NCPE to notify the Members of this edit and invite them to vote on the amended Draft Minutes of last year’s AGM.

- 1. The Minutes of the Equinet AGM 2017 were adopted** (41 votes in favour; 1 abstention) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
- 2. The Accounts for the year 2017 were unanimously adopted** (42 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.

Ratification of new Equinet membership

Three new Members were endorsed and proposed by the Board for the approval of the General Assembly of Members at the AGM. These were:

- The [Office of Public Defender, Georgia](#)
- [Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Republic of Moldova](#)
- [Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, Spain](#)

Representatives of these equality bodies were invited to briefly present their organisations to the Members before proceeding to the actual voting. Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities was presented by staff member of Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (Spain), as the representative of the Institute was absent due to force majeure.

Votes

Again, as foreseen in the AGM agenda and on the basis of voting documents previously sent to Equinet Members, the Chair invited Equinet Members **to cast their votes on the ratification of the three candidates to Equinet Membership.**

1. **The candidacy of the Office of Public Defender, Georgia was unanimously approved** (42 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
2. **The candidacy of the Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Republic of Moldova was unanimously approved** (42 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
3. **The candidacy of the Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, Spain was unanimously approved** (42 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.

Upon ratification of their candidacies, the three abovementioned equality bodies became full Members of the Network, thus acquiring voting rights for the next items put forward for voting by the General Assembly of Members.

Presentation of Equinet Strategic Plan 2019-2022

Equinet's Chair Tena Šimonović Einwalter presented the innovations and structure of the new Strategic Plan, including the three main Strategic Objectives and respective Action Areas and expected Outcomes under these strands. She also briefly summarised the process of the Strategic Planning and noted that Equinet had aimed to make it as inclusive and participatory as possible to make sure everyone's voice within Membership was heard. The Chair also highlighted that Equinet will set up a monitoring and evaluation framework to be able to track the progress of the Network

and its work towards positive societal change. In this way, the Network will ensure that our shared vision and mission are better reflected and advanced in our day-to-day work.

The draft of the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 put forward for voting by the Members can be found on the [Equinet website](#).

Introduction of Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2019

On behalf of the Equinet Board, Equinet Chair Tena Šimonović Einwalter, gave a comprehensive overview of activities planned within the **Equinet Work Plan 2019**, while Equinet Treasurer Patrick Charlier presented the **budget proposal for 2019**.

Draft Work Plan and Budget 2019 put forward for Members' vote can be found on the [Equinet website](#).

Votes

Last important items, as foreseen in the AGM agenda and on the basis of voting documents previously sent to Equinet Members that were put forward by the Chair to Equinet Members for voting were the proposals for the **Equinet Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022** and **Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2019**.

1. **Proposed Equinet Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 was unanimously approved** (47 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.
2. **Proposed Equinet Work Plan and Budget 2019 was unanimously approved** (47 votes in favour) by the General Assembly of Equinet Members.

Development of Equinet's new Website

At the end of Session 1, Members had the chance to consider and *informally* indicate their preference of the new branding for Equinet proposed by "Old Continent", which was selected to develop the new Equinet Website to be launched in early 2019. Four sample logos were presented and two were favoured by majority of Members. The Secretariat considered this preference for final decision on Equinet's new branding.

For a summary of Session 2 & 3, please refer to Annex 2 to this document.

== The thirteenth Annual General Meeting of Equinet was officially closed at 16:00 on 7 November 2018 ==

List of Participants

National Equality Bodies (Equinet Members & Observers)

First name	Family name	Organisation	Country	Position
Laurence	Bond	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Ireland	Director
Sinisa	Bjekovic	Ombudsman of Montenegro	Montenegro	Deputy Ombudsman
Erling	Brandstrup	The Board of Equal Treatment	Denmark	Head of Department
Patrick	Charlier	Unia	Belgium	Director
David	Coulter	Equality and Human Rights Commission, Great Britain	United Kingdom	Senior Associate, International Affairs
Alexandar	Dashtevski	Commission for the Protection against Discrimination	Macedonia	President of the Commission
Melanie	Field	Equality & Human Rights Commission	United Kingdom	Executive Director, Corporate Strategy & Policy & Wales
Valérie	Fontaine	Defender of Rights	France	Adviser for partnerships and public relations
Robert	Gajda	Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination	Albania	Commissioner
Magdalena	Hahn	Anwalt für Gleichbehandlungsfragen für Menschen mit Behinderungen	Austria	Staff Member
Niklas	Hofmann	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency	Germany	Policy Officer
Kristel	Hook	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner's office	Estonia	Advisor
Zdenka	Jagarinec	The Advocate of the Principle of Equality	Slovenia	Head of PR
Brankica	Jankovic	Commissioner for the Protection of Equality	Serbia	Commissioner
Juris	Jansons	Ombudsman's Office of the Republic of Latvia	Latvia	Ombudsman
Kerstin	Jansson	Diskrimineringsombudsmannen	Sweden	International Coordinator
Nives	Jukić	The Human Rights Ombudsperson Institution of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Sandra	Konstatzky	Ombud for Equal Treatment	Austria	Head of the ombud for Equal Treatment
Jelena	Kotevic	Commissioner for the Protection of Equality	Serbia	Senior Advisor

Kyriakos	Kyriakou	Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman)	Cyprus	Officer
Miha	Lobnik	Advocate of the Principle of Equality	Slovenia	Head of the institution
Jan-Peter	Loof	College voor de Rechten van de Mens	Netherlands	Vice-President
Ana	Lite Mateo	Institute of Women and For Equal Opportunities	Spain	Senior Adviser
Stephanie	Magro Gazzano	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE)	Malta	Senior Manager (Policy & Administration)
Vasco	Malta	High Commission for Migration	Portugal	Deputy High Commissioner for Migration
Rosario	Maseda	General Direction for Equal Treatment & Diversity	Spain	Technical Adviser
Veronika	Molnár	Equal Treatment Authority	Hungary	Legal Officer
Martin	Mörk	Diskrimineringsombudsmannen	Sweden	Deputy Ombudsman
Liisa	Pakosta	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioners Office	Estonia	Commissioner
Zuzana	Pavlickova	Slovak National Centre for Human Rights	Slovakia	Head of Office of the Executive Director
Nadan	Petrovic	UNAR	Italy	Expert/International relations
Kirsi	Pimiä	Non-Discrimination Ombudsman	Finland	Ombud
Petr	Polák	Public Defender of Rights	Czech Republic	Head of Equality Department
Anita	Sares	Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego - CITE	Portugal	Senior Officer
Tena	Simonovic Einwalter	Ombudsman	Croatia	Deputy Ombudswoman
Sylwia	Spurek	Commissioner for Human Rights	Poland	Deputy Commissioner
Liesbeth	Stevens	Institute for the Equality of Women and Men	Belgium	Deputy Director of the Institute
Martina	Strunjak	Ombudsperson for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia	Croatia	Expert Associate
Laima	Vengale-Dits	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson	Lithuania	Senior Adviser, Law division
Maria	Voutsinou	Greek Ombudsman	Greece	Senior Investigator/Lawyer
Ian	Feldman	Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality	Moldova	President
Nino	Lomjaria	Office of Public Defender	Georgia	Public Defender

Ketevan	Shubashwili	Office of Public Defencer	Georgia	Head of Equality Department
Ekaterine	Skhiladzw	Office of the Public Defender	Georgia	

EXTERNAL SPEAKERS			
FIRST NAME	FAMILY NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Dunja	Mijatović	Council of Europe	Commissioner for Human Rights
Irena	Moozova	European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers	Director for Equality
Wouter	van Ballegooij	European Parliament	Policy Analyst
Birgit	Van Hout	UN OHCHR	UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe

STAKEHOLDERS			
FIRST NAME	FAMILY NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Marie-Hélène	Boulanger	European Commission, Union citizenship rights and free movement Unit	Head of Unit
George-Konstantinos	Charonis	European Youth Forum	Policy Officer, Youth Rights
Cecilia	de Armas	ENNHRI	Human Rights Policy Trainee
Stefan	Hopf	AGE Platform Europe	Junior Policy Officer
Natasa	Kokic	European Network on Independent Living	Campaign Coordinator
Robertas	Lukasevicius	European Commission	Legal Assistance
Geraldine	Mattioli-Zeltner	Council of Europe	Adviser to the Commissioner for Human Rights
Katrien	Meuwissen	ENNHRI	Senior Human Rights Officer
Marina	Monaco	European Trade Union Confederation	Adviser
Julia	Pober	Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU/ Federal Chancellery	Chair of ADHWP Rights and Values
Valentina	Santin	Regione Lombardia	Legal Affairs

Melina Szabolcs	Sastre Schmidt	European Commission	Trainee
		European Commission, Non-discrimination and Roma Coordination Unit	Head of Unit
Alyna	Smith	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants	Advocacy Officer
Dorothea	Staes	European Commission	Legal and Policy Assistant
Katrine	Steinfeld	FMO	Bilateral Officer

EQUINET TEAM

FIRST NAME	FAMILY NAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION
Sarah	Cooke O'Dowd	Equinet-European Network of Equality Bodies	Communication Officer
Bram	Feyaerts		Administration and Event Assistant (Trainee)
Anne	Gaspard		Executive Director
Moana	Genevey		Policy Officer
Yannick	Godin		Administration and Finance Officer
Mher	Hakobyan		Assistant Officer
Tamás	Kádár		Head of Legal and Policy team
Axel	Ruppert		Event Coordinator – Seminar on Ethnic Profiling
Tanja	Sheikhi		Policy and Communication Assistant (Trainee)
Milla	Vidina		Policy Officer

Summary of Session 2 and Session 3

Session 2 - Together for an Equal Europe – ensuring a strong institutional framework for equality

Chair: Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair - Equinet Executive Board

Introduction – Equinet perspective, Petr Polák, Moderator of Equinet Working Group Policy Formation and Board Member, Czech Republic

With the invitation of Chair, Mr Petr Polák, Equinet Board Member and Moderator of Equinet Working Group Policy Formation, opened the session by providing Equinet's perspective on the policy and political developments and priorities as regards non-discrimination and equality at European level. His presentation, following welcoming of speakers, external stakeholders and members, and a brief introduction of Equinet and equality bodies, focused on **Standards** for equality bodies, especially highlighting the need for promoting their implementation, equality bodies' involvement in the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and the relevance of SDGs for EBs, the urgent necessity to counter **hate speech** and the growing work of equality bodies on the topic ([Equinet seminar on Hate Speech](#) mentioned), the challenges and opportunities presented by the **European Parliament** elections (May 2019), and finally the importance of strong financial mechanisms in support of equality promotion in Europe (**Rights and Values Programme, MFF 2020+**).

Keynote speaker - Irena Moozova, Director for Equality and Union Citizenship, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission - EU priorities on equality and non-discrimination

Keynote speaker Irena Moozova, Director for Equality and Union Citizenship of European Commission's DG Justice and Consumers highlighted the Commission's current and upcoming priorities on equality and non-discrimination. She echoed many of the points mentioned by Mr Polák, including the promotion of **Standards** in the Council working party on social questions and Commission's High Level Group on non-discrimination, rising **hate speech** and importance of effectively tackling it, the **European Elections** as a crucial moment for setting the equality agenda for

the coming years and Commission's and Equinet's shared responsibility to mobilise voting and promote equality, and finally Equinet's explicit first time mentioning in the **2020+ MFF Rights and Values Programme**, as recognition of the Network's and EBs' crucial role in Member States, as well as the vitality of their support at national level during the negotiation process on the MFF to ensure endorsement at Council level.

Other priority highlights included Commission's aim to fill the gap in non-discrimination legislation. To that end, EC expressed regret about the **Horizontal Directive** still being blocked in the Council, noting that "cost of inequality is having a cost on our economies".

Ms Moozova also raised the issue of **equality data collection**, mentioning the upcoming publication of guidelines on equality data collection by HL Subgroup on equality data. In relation to the latter, the importance of equality bodies' contribution was highlighted.

The publication of the new Eurobarometer on **Work Life Balance (WLB)** was noted, as well as the expectation of the **WLB Directive** to be adopted by the end of the year. In relation to this, Equinet was thanked for the organisation of the [Dismissal Protection Seminar](#) in cooperation with the Commission.

With the **gender pay gap being 16% and gender pension gap - 40%**, Ms Moozova noted the **Gender Recast Directive** and the plan of the Commission to look into targeted amendments to this, therefore asking for input from equality bodies. In addition, as strategic engagement on gender equality finishes in 2019, the Commission is currently taking stock and looking forward to the **gender equality next strategy**. Equinet was credited for being represented on the Advisory Council to support this important strategic priority of the Commission.

On **Roma inclusion**, Ms Moozova noted that National Roma Strategies currently exist in almost all MS (except 1), and contact points are also working well. Evaluation of framework shows that there are still gaps to be met (e.g. insufficient attention to fighting anti-gypsyism). Progress in education (increase of kids in school and reduction in early school leavers) is visible, while at the same time NEET are growing amongst Roma.

In relation to **LGBTI rights**, the ECJ judgement on freedom of movement of spouses was applauded and Ms Moozova expressed hope that equality bodies continue their work on the topic and support the Commission.

Finally, Ms Moozova noted that **EU Accessibility Act** was under discussion but hoped that it will be agreed under the Austrian Presidency by the end of 2018.

Equality and the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia: Cost of Non-Europe Report – Wouter Van Ballegooij, European Parliament Research Service

Mr Wouter Van Ballegooij from the European Parliament Research Service presented the recent report on the 'cost of non-Europe' which shows the impact on fundamental rights by not moving ahead with the EU.

The report demonstrates the serious impact of discrimination at individual (e.g. denial of rights to equal treatment and non-discrimination; material and immaterial damage, poorer health status, lower educational achievement, risk of assault, poorer housing conditions, loss of earnings), and societal level with immediate and long-term consequences, in different sectors of life.

Mr Ballegooij's presentation is available on the [Equinet AGM website](#).

Equality agenda of the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) - Birgit Van Hout, UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe, UN OHCHR

Ms Birgit Van Hout, UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe highlighted the **70th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**.

She noted that inequality threatens development, human rights, peace and security, therefore **combatting inequality is at heart of 2030 SDGs**. The SDGs Report 2018 findings show that progress is not fast enough to ensure that no one is left behind. Ms Van Hout also emphasized the need for moving toward formal and substantive equality for all groups.

She also mentioned the 10 December meeting in Marrakech to promote equality for migrants (**UN migration pact**), as well as the **EP meeting** taking place on 7 November on **VAW in politics and online**.

Other priorities for the UN OHCHR include supporting progress of **Roma** and **LGBTI rights**, including **freedom of movement**, strengthening of socio-economic and cultural rights, including related to **access to adequate housing** and looking at MS policies on criminalisation of homelessness and affordable housing, as well as UN OHCHR Brussels Office's long standing area of work on **rights of people with disabilities** to ensure their equal participation in society.

Ms Van Hout closed her presentation by stating that UN OHCHR depends on partnerships for advancing human rights and that Equinet and equality bodies are a cornerstone of their protection strategy, therefore the Office looks forward to further cooperation.

Council of Europe promoting equality - Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (video message)

Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the AGM 2018 participants through a pre-recorded video message.

She opened her speech by warning that progressive values shared by equality and human rights actors are increasingly under attack, while populist, nationalist, far-right ideologies are gaining stronger ground. At the same time European societies are facing increasing levels of inequalities, fear and polarisation.

Ms Mijatović emphasized that equality, freedom and dignity are for everyone and that organisations working for human rights and equality should stand together to achieve their mission.

The Commissioner sees her role in being the voice for the most vulnerable people to ensure that no one is left behind. She noted that equal rights should be ensured for everyone regardless of status, ground or background.

She further pointed to the opportunities but also potential human rights implications of new technological and digital advancements that are transforming the world.

The Commissioner sees equality bodies uniquely placed to face challenges, and work towards more open, inclusive, respectful societies. This can be done through complaints mandates to redress individual instances of injustice, by tackling systematic inequalities and discrimination to foster social change in MS, by equipping themselves to ensure that prejudices, discrimination, inequalities are not magnified through the use of algorithms. Ms Mijatović noted that fighting for equality is good for all and equality bodies are well placed to convey that messages.

She closed her message by expressing strong will to work together to martial shared values to overcome division and hatred.

CoE HR Commissioner's video address to the Equinet AGM 2018 participants can be found [here](#).

Q & A Session

Following speaker presentations, the Q&A Session provided AGM participants the opportunity to raise questions to the above panellists and make comments generating a fruitful discussion on a number of national and European issues, including the implementation of Standards for equality bodies, the halted Equal treatment directive, developments related to national equality legislation, sanctions, among other issues.

AGM NETWORKING LUNCH FROM 12:45 to 14:00

SESSION 3 - Group Discussions

Following the Networking Lunch, members of equality bodies (joined by colleagues from selected European partners) had the chance to explore the below three topics in more detail in parallel group discussions:

- **National level visibility and implementation of Standards for Equality Bodies**
- **Priorities for Equality Bodies in 2019 & Brainstorming on Equinet priorities for Work Plan 2020**
- **Equality bodies supporting strong equality focus under 2020 Rights and Values Programme**

Each topic discussion was divided into two 50 minute sessions to allow the participation of as many representatives of equality bodies as possible. Each session welcomed from 15 to 20 participants.

Final remarks and closing of the AGM

Ms Anne Gaspard, Equinet Executive Director, delivered the closing remarks and thanked everyone for their active engagement during the AGM, noting that exchanged views and ideas are well noted and taken into account for Equinet's forthcoming work.

She further highlighted the need to proceed with promoting the effective implementation of the European Commission Recommendation on Standards for equality bodies, and the importance of the input provided by equality bodies during the group discussions on the subject.

Ms Gaspard also expressed hope that the open plenary with stakeholders proved useful and inspiring for the coming work of equality bodies at national level, as the AGM is an important opportunity for strategic engagement with each other as equality bodies but also with European partners.

She emphasized that this year AGM had a particular importance with the adoption of the new strategic plan for 2019 - 2022 and work plan for 2019, and with the extension of the Network to three new members. She extended a warm welcome to them and expressed confidence that the cooperation will bring added value to everyone.

Finally, Ms Gaspard expressed appreciation of the support from Equinet's European and international partners, including the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of the EU, Council of Europe, UN OHCHR, and ENNHRI, among others.