



EQUINET **HIGHLIGHTS** 2019

www.equineteurope.org

Equinet at a Glance

Equinet is the European Network of Equality Bodies, a membership organisation bringing together 49 equality bodies from across Europe. Equinet promotes equality in Europe by supporting and enabling the work of national equality bodies. It supports equality bodies to be independent and effective as valuable catalysts for more equal societies.

Equality bodies are champions for the core EU value of equality and defenders of the right to non-discrimination. They are public organisations assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and contributing to an awareness of rights and a societal valuing of equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all of the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union (EU) law – gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.

Equinet aims to enhance the strategic capacity of its member organisations and to strengthen the skills and competences of their staff. Equinet contributes to the European equality agenda by conveying an expert voice of equality bodies drawn from the learnings of their work on the

ground, and enhances their recognition and strategic positioning in relation to all stakeholders at European level. Finally, Equinet serves as a knowledge and communication hub on equal treatment.

To achieve these aims, Equinet organises regular training events and seminars for staff members of equality bodies, as well as working groups to support capacity building and the exchange of information, data and expertise among equality bodies. Equinet engages closely with policy makers and partners at EU and international level, and promotes the work of equality bodies through relevant publications, as well as participation at conferences and other meetings. Equinet communicates widely on relevant themes relating to the work of equality bodies and developments in the field of equality and non-discrimination in Europe.

The highest decision-making forum within Equinet is the Annual General Assembly of Equinet members. Every two years, the General Assembly elects an Executive Board responsible for the overall management and the strategic leadership of the Network. The operational structure consists of thematic working groups bringing together equality bodies' experts and a small Brussels-based Secretariat.

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→ | Foreword

It is a great pleasure to present the highlights of Equinet activities in 2019. Looking back at our work in the past year allows us to showcase the broad spectrum of support to national equality bodies and the collective efforts made to promote equality across Europe.

Recent years brought opportunities but also various challenges and threats to equality as a value as well as to equality bodies, underlining the need for ambitious implementation of European standards for strong, effective and independent equality bodies to enforce non-discrimination and rights in practice.

2019 was the kick-off year of a new Equinet Strategic Plan 2019-2022, with strategic aims at its core, focusing on notably strengthening and supporting equality bodies to achieve equality for all, acting as the expert voice of equality bodies to advance equality in Europe, and sustaining a resilient, engaged and innovative Network.

Guided by these strategic aims, Equinet highlighted the importance of Equality Bodies for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by publishing a position paper, by taking part in two major forums on SDGs, and by publishing a Declaration on the Role of Equality Bodies regarding the 2030 Agenda. The Declaration lists the ways in which equality bodies can practically engage with the SDGs.

The election of the new European Parliament was a major political event during 2019 in Europe. Recognising this, Equinet published its Recommendation on combatting discrimination and hate speech in election campaigns, which focuses on the general principle of equality, the prohibition of discrimination, tackling hate speech, addressing sensitive topics and promoting equal representation on electoral lists.

Equinet welcomes the first female President of the European Commission and the first

Commissioner with responsibility and dedicated portfolio to equality. We look forward to working closely together to ensure Europe lives up to its fundamental founding values of equality, rights and democracy, and promotes the key values of our societies.

Equinet continues to be a dynamic pan-European Network working to support its members, benefitting from their engagement, leadership and ownership of the Network. Their expertise, combined with that of our dedicated team in the Equinet Secretariat, provide the foundations for all of our achievements. Sincere thanks are due to the wonderful staff and the members of the Executive Board for their hard work with continuous enthusiasm and professionalism, and welcoming a newly elected Board for next two years until 2021.

We greatly appreciate the fruitful and dynamic cooperation with all our partners. Equinet is particularly grateful to the European Commission, for its invaluable support through the EC Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and for its ongoing commitment to enable the potential of Equinet and national equality bodies. We look forward to pursuing and consolidating the close cooperation with our members and partners working together to achieve equality for all in Europe in the coming year.



Anne Gaspard
Executive Director



**Tena Šimonović
Einwalter**
*Chair of Executive
Board*

→ Who We Are & What We Do



OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

We believe in an equal Europe: where equality is a reality for everyone, diversity is valued, and all forms of discrimination have been eliminated.

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Equality bodies are champions for the core EU value of equality and defenders of

the right to non-discrimination. They are public organisations assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and contributing to an awareness of rights and a societal valuing of equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all of the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union (EU) law – gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.



OUR APPROACH



Support - Equinet provides capacity-building activities with and for equality body staff, as well as offers support to equality bodies in need of solidarity, including because of undue challenges to their independence or effectiveness.



Networking - Equinet encourages and facilitates knowledge exchange, sharing of good practices and peer-to-peer support among equality bodies, as well as with equality stakeholders at European and international level.



Research & Knowledge Hub - Equinet carries out legal and policy research to inform European policy and legislative developments, and provides relevant knowledge to those interested in equality and non-discrimination in Europe.



Expert Advice - Equinet contributes to the European equality agenda by offering expert advice on equality and non-discrimination policy and legislation, based on the experience of equality bodies.



Promotion - Equinet promotes equality as a European value and seeks to advance diversity and solidarity in Europe.



Strengthen and support equality bodies to achieve equality for all

Equinet, as a network, seeks to support the crucial role of equality bodies. We do so by facilitating the development of expert and institutional capacities of our members, promoting the full implementation of European legislation and standards for equality bodies at national level, and providing opportunities for good practice exchange and peer-to-peer support.

Act as the expert voice of equality bodies to advance equality in Europe

As a network, we convey to the European level the practical experience of equality bodies in promoting equality and combatting discrimination on the ground. With a bottom-up and evidence-based approach, we raise awareness on the importance of equality and diversity, and strengthen the appreciation and fulfilment of these across Europe. We act as the expert voice of equality bodies, maintaining deep and sustained relationships with European and international partners to promote equality and advance equal treatment legislation.

Sustain a resilient, engaged and innovative Network

Equinet is a network of and for its members. Sustained network resilience is essential for the successful delivery of the first two objectives. Therefore, we strive to provide a supportive and collaborative environment for the substantial contribution and benefit of members through knowledge-sharing, peer-exchange and support. Active membership engagement is a vital prerequisite for ensuring the development, innovation and strengthening of the Network to achieve its mission of promoting equality for all more effectively.

→ | Key Achievements



HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF EQUALITY BODIES FOR THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global plan for change, divided in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and led by the United Nations, which has the ambition to “leave no one behind”. Equality is a core value of this agenda. In fact, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities is an underpinning and central Goal of Agenda 2030. 2019 was a crucial year for Equinet to engage with the SDGs because Goal 10 was under review during the annual conference on Agenda 2030, the High Level Political Forum.

Equinet started its engagement with SDGs by publishing a position paper: Equality Bodies Contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The position paper demonstrates the extent to which Agenda 2030 promotes equality, not only through dedicated Goals (such as Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10) but also by mainstreaming equality issues in many other Goals. The position paper also shows that equality bodies are central actors for achieving Agenda 2030, and are particularly well suited to implement Goal 10.

Equinet continued its engagement by taking part in two major forums on SDGs. In March 2019, a side event of the UNECE Regional Forum on SDGs was organised with FRA, the Danish Institute of Human Rights, OHCHR and ENNHRI. The event focused on the collection of disaggregated data and promoting a human rights-based approach to SDGs. In July 2019, Equinet was invited to take part in the High Level Political Forum by three major SDG actors. Our

member, the Danish Institute of Human Rights, covered our travel to New York so we could take active part in their Training and Learning Event on “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality through human rights”. It was an opportunity for Equinet to present equality bodies and their potential to an audience of various stakeholders working to achieve Agenda 2030. With the Danish Institute (but also FRA, OHCHR and GANHRI), Equinet also co-organised a side event on “Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda”. Two stakeholder groups also invited Equinet to participate in their official side events: the Stakeholder Group on Ageing, and the Stakeholder Group on Disability. This shows the prevalence of equality and marginalized groups in Agenda 2030 and its organisational structures. This also demonstrates the relevance of equality bodies for achieving SDGs.

Finally, Equinet published a Declaration on the Role of Equality Bodies regarding the 2030 Agenda. The Declaration is a concrete document which lists the ways in which equality bodies can practically engage with the SDGs. For instance, they can provide policy advice on equality issues within Agenda 2030 or they can contribute to enhance the collection of equality data.





RECOMMENDATION ON COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION AND HATE SPEECH IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS *

Ahead of European Parliament elections in 2019, as well as continuous elections happening at local, regional and national level around Europe, Equinet developed a Recommendation to be considered by political parties, candidates and media outlets (including social media) which focuses on the general principle of equality, prohibition of discrimination, tackling hate speech, addressing sensitive topics and promoting equal representation on electoral lists. This grew out of the realisation that pre-election periods are always, and increasingly, characterised by hate speech and discriminatory statements that equality bodies are bound to react to and condemn. A set of recommendations from the European network can be used to good effect in supporting statements and actions of equality bodies to such events.

The Recommendation received wide support from equality bodies across Europe, was translated into 17 languages and used extensively to promote fair discussions around elections. It was accompanied by an online campaign regarding Good Leadership, where staff from equality bodies, as well as leaders in the field of equality, were asked to describe what makes a good leader, in their opinion. This values-based focus aimed to get people thinking about the positive aspects of leadership, which can generally be agreed to by people across the political spectrum.

** <http://equineteurope.org/2019/05/14/combating-discrimination-and-hate-speech-in-election-campaigns/>*





Equality is a founding value of the European Union and the work of independent and effective national equality bodies plays a central role in ensuring this becomes more than a declaration: a Europe characterized by equality for all. Both the [European Commission](#) and the Council of Europe's [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (ECRI) published standards for equality bodies in 2018 in order to ensure a wide mandate for and the independence and effectiveness of national equality bodies. The effective implementation of these standards is crucial to enable equality bodies to fulfill their potential.

In the framework of an Equinet Project on Standards for Equality Bodies, we have set ourselves the ambitious goal of moving towards defining indicators for measuring ourselves against the European standards. Equinet members had constructive discussions on the mandate and functions of equality bodies, resulting in a set of indicators.

In 2019 Equinet also continued its engagement on the topic with the European Commission, including by actively participating at a good practice exchange seminar organised for the Commission's High Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity. The Commission's upcoming report on the Race Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive (expected in 2020) with its planned focus on equality bodies provides a further good opportunity to improve the status and situation of equality bodies. We also had the chance to underline the importance of standards for equality bodies in presentations to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council of the EU as well as to the Council's Working Parties on Social Questions (SQWP), on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP), and on Human Rights (COHOM).



EQUALITY BODIES TACKLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

All over Europe, equality bodies are essential institutions for tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. They are central actors for assisting victims, but also to conduct surveys on the topic, creating codes of conduct, training professionals or advising policy-makers to improve laws and remedies.

Two years after the international outburst of #MeToo, it was essential to remind policy-makers that sexual harassment in the workplace still needs to be combatted, and that it can be done efficiently with the active involvement of equality bodies. Therefore, Equinet piloted three initiatives:

- A **roundtable on the post-#MeToo era in Europe**, in partnership with the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe. Over 150 people participated in our joint roundtable, which gathered eminent speakers from trade unions, civil society, the private sector and the UN institutions.
- A **conference on equality bodies combatting sexual harassment at work**, also organized in partnership with the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe. The conference highlighted the work of equality bodies on the topic, as well as inspiring testimonies from victims and activists.
- A **poster exhibition on good practices by equality bodies**, which displayed the work done in 11 equality bodies all over Europe on tackling sexual harassment. This included for instance acting as a media buffer for some victims or creating video clips on sexual harassment.





TACKLING AGEISM & AGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OLDER PEOPLE

Building upon [Equinet's 2018 publication on age discrimination](#) as well as our strategic involvement within the framework of the 10th Session of the [UN Open-ended Working Group on Aging that took place in New York from 15-18 April](#), in the summer of 2019 Equinet co-organized, jointly with the Age Platform Europe, a seminar entitled "Tackling Age Discrimination against Older Persons: Building Bridges between Equality Bodies & Older Persons' Organisations". This fruitful and engaging event that enabled equality bodies to meet organizations representing older persons from across Europe was hosted by the German equality body, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency.

By introducing the topic and exploring how to define age discrimination against older people and the term 'ageism' more specifically, the participants got a better idea of the existing legal framework, concepts and discovered possible gaps and opportunities.

Specific issues in different fields of life were also discussed during the seminar. Intersectionality was recurrent in the discussions, particularly relating to older women and older persons with disabilities. Engaging exchanges on discrimination of older people in employment, goods and services and health and long-term care took place, with organisations representing older people sharing their experience on the field, while equality bodies brought their insight on the legal frameworks.

The participants elaborated on ways national equality bodies and organisations representing older people can work together both on national level and in relation to broader topics on EU and international level. Concrete ways to collaborate were thus developed and summarized in an engagement toolkit that was shared with the participants, as part of the follow-up to the seminar.



DEVELOPING SKILLS ON NARRATIVE BUILDING & STORY TELLING *

As champions of equality and defenders of the right to equal treatment, equality bodies are well positioned to tell impactful stories, based on common values such as respect, equality and justice, to inspire positive change. On 11-12 March, a training on narrative building and storytelling gave communication experts from equality bodies across Europe the tools they need to be able to tell interesting stories that will inspire positive change across our societies.

Participants from across Europe were brought on a journey of creativity, to:

- identify the values they and their organisations hold dear,

* <http://equineteurope.org/2019/04/02/key-learning-on-narrative-building-and-story-telling/>

- understand the stories that we need to debunk as they hold back our vision of a more equitable world, and
- learn how to motivate people to take action on equality and non-discrimination.

They learned about a number of storytelling tools to tell personal stories that unite the heart, head and hands of people. They developed story maps to help better understand their organisational stories. They got 15 useful tips on how to be a better story teller, as well as 10 steps to preach beyond the choir. Hope-based communication, where we move from a problem to a solution, was also practiced.

→ Achievements from around the Network: Equality Bodies' Success Stories

The role of national equality bodies is defined in accordance with EU equal treatment legislation requiring Member States to set up equality bodies to combat discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, as well as gender. Many Member States have gone beyond these requirements and

ensured that equality bodies can also deal with discrimination based on other grounds.

These bodies have a distinct role from national governments and civil society organisations. They promote equality and ensure that equal treatment legislation is applied by:



Investigating cases of discrimination



Building a culture that values equality



Providing information and in some cases legal support to potential victims



Monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues



Conducting research and providing policy recommendations



Engaging with public bodies, employers and NGOs to foster non-discriminatory practices and ensure awareness and compliance with equal treatment legislation

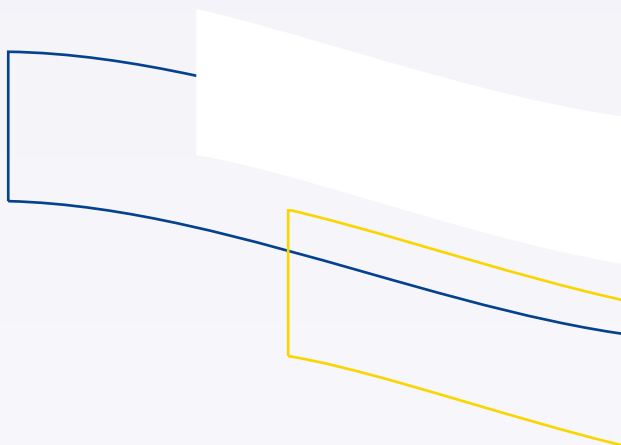
In order to illustrate the wide variety of work done by equality bodies, we asked our members for their proudest moments this year. The following few examples are but a taster of their achievements for ensuring equality in our societies.

FERTILITY TREATMENT TO SAME-SEX COUPLES FINALLY POSSIBLE

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman,
Finland

A long process came to an end this year, when the Helsinki University Hospital finally announced that it will start to provide fertility treatment with donor cells as part of public health care. The other big university hospitals said they will soon follow. **The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has fought for this issue since 2015, when they requested the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal to examine a case in which a woman was denied access to assisted reproductive care in public health care because her partner is female.** The Tribunal stated that the doctor who denied the care discriminated the client based on her sexual orientation.

The Act on Assisted Reproductive Treatment which took effect in 2007 confirmed the right of female couples and individual women to get treatment. In practice however, no such treatment has been given in public health care. Now, many years later, hospitals are finally changing their policy. This means that **single women and lesbian couples will have the same rights to get fertility treatment from public health care as others.**



MORE INFO:

- https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/court_refusal_to_provide_fertility_treatment_to_same-sex_couples_discriminatory/10676653
- <https://www.yvtltk.fi/en/index/tiedotteet/2016/12/non-discriminationandequalitytribunaldisriminationoffemalecouplesinassistedreproductivetreatmentprovidedbypublichealth-careservicesisprohibited.html>
- <https://www.syrjinta.fi/web/en/-/access-to-fertility-treatment-has-to-be-granted-on-an-equal-basis-also-in-public-health-care-denying-service-provision-due-to-sexual-orientation-violated>
- https://www.hus.fi/en/medical-care/medical-services/Gynecology/Infertility_treatment/Pages/default.aspx

EDUCATION MATTERS: CAREER GUIDANCE SESSIONS

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, Malta

In September 2018, NCPE launched an EU co-financed project called 'Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence' (PGEI), which will run until August 2020. **PGEI focuses on addressing gender gaps over the life-cycle.**

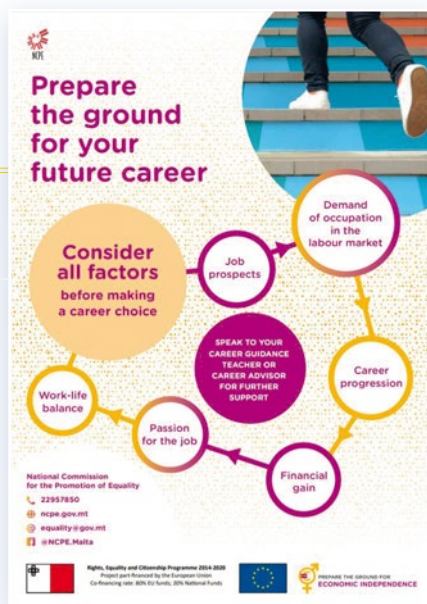
One of the activities in the framework of the PGEI project was the training to career guidance teachers, trainee career advisors and career advisors. Two train-the-trainers courses were held for the career guidance teachers, while the course for the trainee career advisors and career advisors were split in three sessions. In total, 67 participants from state schools in Malta and Gozo, attended.

On a daily basis, career guidance teachers and career advisors help young students to choose their study subjects which eventually lead them to their career. In this context, during the sessions, **discussion focused on gender segregation in the education sector and how this inevitably translates in gender segregation in the labour market**, where it is noted that women tend to take up occupations which offer lower wages. The participants engaged in the discussion about gender stereotypes and gender roles in education and employment. They shared their experiences and discussed ways of how they can empower students by adopting a holistic approach to choosing their subjects in order to build successful careers. The topic of **gender-sensitive career guidance** was brought up, where the participants highlighted the "choices" of boys and girls, and how they, as guidance teachers, can foster critical thinking among their students. The training was well-received and the participants gave positive feedback about the sessions.

Figure 1.

In line with this activity, a poster was created with the aim of reminding students to consider all factors when planning their future career.

This poster was disseminated to all state, church, and independent secondary schools in Malta and Gozo for it to be placed on each school's noticeboard, as well as on their website and social media.





CHANGING THE LAW: MATERNITY BENEFITS FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Greek Ombudsman, Greece

A large number of substitute teachers, from 2018 onwards, submitted **complaints to the Greek Ombudsman concerning the huge inequality that exists between them and their fellow permanent teachers in regards to the issue of paid maternity leave**. Substitute teachers in Greece, despite the fact that they are hired in order to meet temporary educational needs, systematically cover part of the lasting and continuing educational requirements in the country, through the successive renewal of their contracts. However, they often remain under the “substitute teacher” status for a very long time (sometimes longer than 15 years). This means that while in essence they are working as if they were permanent educational staff, they do not obtain any of the maternity benefits, such as child-rearing leave and pregnancy leave.

The complainants requested the Ombudsman’s intervention so that the level of maternity protection enjoyed by their fellow permanent colleagues is extended to them or, at least, the gap between them is bridged. This would have been the right thing to do, first in order to eradicate unequal treatment on the basis of the type of service they provide and second, as part of the overall goal of achieving maternity protection and of reconciliation of work and family life.

The Greek Ombudsman had already intervened on the issue in the year 2010, submitting a proposal to the central administration for its resolution. The government had since not acted on that proposal. Thus, on the occasion of the new complaints submitted, the equality body forwarded a renewed, concrete, proposal for the handling of the issue to the Minister and the General Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In addition, the deputy Ombudsman for Equal Treatment and senior investigators dealing with this issue met with the General Secretary of the Ministry, in an effort to have the Ombudsman’s proposal adopted and implemented. The Ombudsman followed the whole procedure of the development of the draft of the pertinent legislation closely, until the final bill was tabled in the parliament. In the explanatory/introductory report to the law, specific reference is made to the input of the Ombudsman. At last, **the Ombudsman’s proposal for granting three and a half months paid maternity leave to substitute teachers was adopted and is now included in the Law 4599/2019 (article 26)**.

INQUIRY INTO STAFF AND STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL HARASSMENT IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC),
UK – Great Britain

The EHRC found that racial harassment is a common experience for a wide range of students and staff at universities across Britain. Around a quarter of students from an ethnic minority background (24%), said they had experienced racial harassment since starting their course. Racial harassment can have a profound impact on an individual's mental health, educational outcomes and career. Around 1 in 20 students said they left their studies, and around 3 in 20 staff said they left their jobs, due to racial harassment. However, most students and staff did not report racial harassment and universities were overconfident in the effectiveness of their complaint handling processes. EHRC findings show that the higher education sector does not fully understand racial harassment and university staff lack confidence in dealing with race issues.

The **EHRC's recommendations** focus on: **improved protections, transparency and scrutiny; effective redress; and a change in university culture.** It has been encouraging to see universities and the wider higher education sector acknowledge the scale and urgency of the problem. Universities UK has set up an advisory group to develop new guidance and to work with the sector to address the problem. Regulators and funding bodies have also committed to implement key recommendations. The EHRC will be evaluating the progress made by the sector in tackling racial harassment.

Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission



<https://youtu.be/aUakuG7vNGw>

#GIVEME1MINUTE: SCHOOL CONTEST REACHES MORE THAN 100 SCHOOLS

Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium

Unia invited high school students from all around the country to join the contest #GiveMe1minute. The assignment was simple: **“Speak out against racism in a video of 1 minute.”** More than a hundred classes took up the challenge. They shared their original and strong messages on YouTube. After the success encountered in 2018, Unia decided to launch a second edition of the contest in 2019.

By joining the contest, classes get the chance to win 3.000 euros for their school. This prize should help the school to build up a project that promotes diversity, human rights or the fight against racism. Read more about this contest on www.geefme1minuut.be or www.donnemoi1minute.be.



EQUAL.DOC: VIDEO COMPETITION

Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic

It has been 10 years since the Czech Anti-Discrimination Act entered into force. For this occasion, the Ombudswoman organized a student documentary film competition called Equal.doc. The aim of the competition was to find out how young people view the issues of equality and discrimination.

Students aged fifteen to nineteen from all around the country were asked to produce a short (maximum 10 minutes) documentary film about equality or discrimination. The main prize was screening of the winning documentary at the Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště and the awards ceremony itself at the Office of the Ombudswoman. The competition was held under the auspices of the UN Czech Republic and Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies.

The expert jury selected the winning film “Diskriminace” (Discrimination) from the authors Ema Ostřížková and Karolína Žáková from Ostrava.

You can watch the winning film using this link (with Czech or English subtitles):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBg6l-oyAW4>



BREAKING THE GENDER STEREOTYPES WITH CROSS-MEDIA TV-SERIES - WHY NOT?!

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia

In 2019, the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner of Estonia had a focus on Breaking gender stereotypes.

The main output was a 10 episode fictional

TV-series is called "Miks Mitte?!/Why Not?!" combined with a wide variety of cross-media actions. The **TV series focuses on youngsters and their everyday fight against (gender-based) stereotypes and prejudices**. In the series, young people are confronted with different restrictive stereotypes in their daily lives with a touch of humour. The script was based on stories from complaints to the Commissioner.

"Why not?!" was aired on Estonian Public Broadcast. Our greatest fear was that the series won't get positive feedback, because the topic of gender stereotypes in a country with the highest gender pay gap is not so popular. But the result was the opposite, "Why not?!" became one of the most viewed youth series in Estonia, which was watched live by 926 000 people and rebroadcasted by 212 000 people (total population of Estonia is less than 1,3 million). The series was nominated in several television and entertainment awards and won the title of Best TV Show Scenario. The screenwriter thanked the Equality Commissioner at the annual film gala for all the lessons learned. In addition the series was introduced as one of the best examples of the year at a global teleconference INPUT 2019 in Bangkok. "Why not?!" was ranked among the top 12 youth series and television shows of the year out of nearly 200 nominations by different countries in the world.

The project showed us that **telling serious stories in an everyday environment and with a touch of comedy is a good way to raise people's awareness and this approach received huge positive response**. The TV-series was a part of a wider cross-media project, with an aim to raise awareness of stereotypical thinking among young people aged 13-30. The main topics were gender stereotypical career choices; gender discrimination in the labour market; gender, age and nationality affecting possibilities in the labour market; gender pay gap; gender roles in family; clothing, fashion and stereotypes. Besides the TV series, these topics were brought to young people through school visits by actors and Commissioner's staff, a photo exhibition, radio shows and social media, study materials and training courses. In addition to being aired in Estonia, the series also aired in Iceland and Lithuania. The episodes with English subtitles are available here: <https://bre-ak.eu/en/1/>

This cross-media project "BREAK" was implemented together with very valuable partners from Lithuania (The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson) and Iceland (The Centre for Gender Equality) and backed up with wide research from Tallinn University. The project was co-financed by European Commission, Directorate-General Justice and Consumers.



NEW COMMISSION FOR THE MONITORING OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Office of the Equal Opportunities,
Lithuania

Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson Agneta Skardžiuvienė in July approved the composition of the newly established commission on the rights of persons with disabilities.

The five-member Commission for the Monitoring of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman will oversee the implementation in Lithuania of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The members of the Commission will make recommendations, prepare and publish reports, and consider other matters related to the implementation of the Convention. They will also have the right to call upon experts, to suggest to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson the initiation of investigations into breaches of equal opportunities, and to provide opinions and comments on the compliance of existing legislation or its drafts with the Convention.



ADVOCATE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY RECOMMENDATION TO THE MINISTRY WHICH LED TO A NEW ACT THAT ABOLISHED DISCRIMINATION REGARDING MOBILITY OF STUDENTS

Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Slovenia

In 2019, the Advocate of the Principle of Equality addressed two issues regarding mobility of students.

In the first case, analysed by the Advocate, the issue was criteria for the access to the subsidized public transport. After receiving an individual complaint and following the legal procedure set in the Protection Against Discrimination Act the Advocate concluded that a provision of the Road Transport Act was discriminatory. The reason was that the law limited the right to the subsidized public transport (access to subsidies or reduced price of tickets) for students to maximum age of 32 years.

The Advocate estimated the case as unequal treatment - as the age limitation up to 32 years did not pursue a legitimate objective and the means of attaining such objective were not appropriate, necessary and proportional. There is no upper age limit for being a student in the Republic of Slovenia in public universities, which provide tertiary education free of charge, so there was no reason to limit the right of students to subsidized public transport on the personal ground of age, so the Advocate found this law restriction discriminatory.

The Advocate made further analysis of the position of students with disabilities and particularly their access to mobility. The Advocate concluded that students with disabilities are – on the personal ground of their residence location and consequently poor accessibility of transport - often not able to equally access tertiary education because of a lack of adequate transportation options. Problems of inaccessible public transport and poor links to universities can also contribute to social isolation, by preventing students with disabilities a full participation in these life-enhancing opportunities. In the Advocate's opinion the accessibility to public transport for students with disabilities was not regulated properly and was found discriminatory.

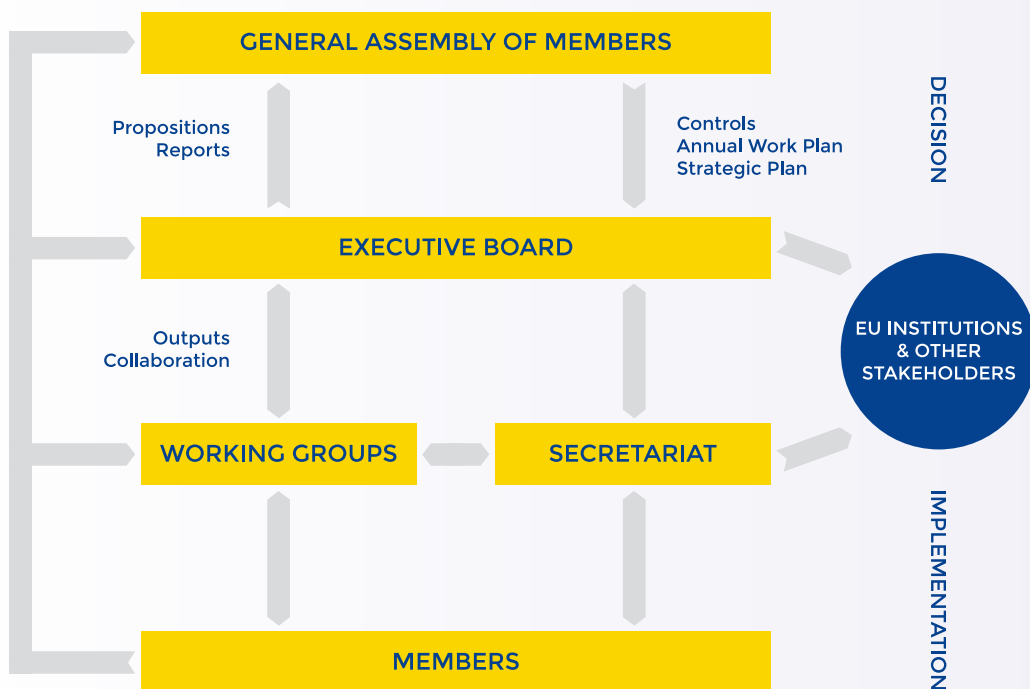
These two cases led to a recommendation of the Advocate to the Ministry of Infrastructure. The Ministry was proposed to prepare a legislation to dismantle such discrimination. It indeed prepared a draft law which was backed by the Government and the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia consequently adopted a legislation that abolished the discriminatory age restrictions. It also introduced a new legal basis for arranging subsidised or even cost-free transportation for students with disabilities, for a small group of children with physical impairments attending special education institutions and for student who are categorized athletes (new eligibility for subsidized ticket from the place of residence to the place of training).



→ Our Operations



GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



The main decisions concerning the general steering of Equinet are taken by the General Assembly of Members (GA) that is made up of all the current members of the Network and is convened at least once a year for an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The GA:

- Ratifies new members into the Network;
- Elects representatives on the Executive Board every two years;
- Takes decisions on the strategic direction of the Network by participating in the development, reviewing and voting on the annual Work Plan for the next year prepared and proposed by the Executive Board;

- Is entitled to amend the statutes of the organisation and to approve budgets and accounts.

During the course of the year, the GA delegates the management and the administration of the Network to the Executive Board. The latter devises the strategy for implementing the work plan for the year, ensures that the means are in place to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of the Network and acts in the best interest of the Network and its members throughout the year. All of the Executive Board members execute their tasks pro bono.



MEMBERSHIP OF THE NETWORK

During the 2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Brussels on 23 October, the General Assembly of Equinet Members voted on and supported the ratification of one candidate member:

- [Ombudsperson Institution](#), Kosovo*

One of our Italian members, the National Equality Councillor, had asked to leave the Network, thus the end of 2019 will see us with 49 equality bodies from across Europe. See the list of members on the next page.



WORKPLAN 2020

At the AGM, we adopted our Work Plan for 2020, which will see the Network work on a broad range of topics including:

- Implementing European Standards for Equality Bodies
- Promoting a strong and comprehensive legal framework for equality in Europe
- Artificial Intelligence and Equality
- Monitoring discrimination cases at the European Court of Human Rights
- Equality Data
- Supporting equality bodies' interaction with UN mechanisms
- Engaging young people on equality
- Ensuring the implementation of existing rights of people with disabilities
- Engaging a reflection on women in poverty from an intersectional perspective
- Tackling antigypsyism and working for Roma equality
- Tackling discrimination and intolerance against Muslims
- Building capacities of equality bodies on rights and equality of trans and intersex persons
- Freedom of Movement of EU workers

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

→ | Our People



EQUINET MEMBERS

ALBANIA

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination
www.kmd.al

AUSTRIA

Austrian Disability Ombudsman
www.behindertenanwalt.gv.at

AUSTRIA

Ombud for Equal Treatment
www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at

BELGIUM

Institute for the Equality of Women and Men
www.igvm-iefh.belgium.be

BELGIUM

Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities)
www.unia.be

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina
www.ombudsmen.gov.ba

BULGARIA

Commission for Protection against Discrimination
www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com

CROATIA

Office of the Ombudsman
www.ombudsman.hr

CROATIA

Ombudsperson for Gender Equality
www.prs.hr

CROATIA

Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities
www.posi.hr

CYPRUS

Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)
www.ombudsman.gov.cy

CZECH REPUBLIC

Public Defender of Rights
www.ochrance.cz

DENMARK

Board of Equal Treatment
www.ast.dk

DENMARK

Danish Institute for Human Rights
www.humanrights.dk

ESTONIA

Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner
www.volinik.ee

FINLAND

Non-Discrimination Ombudsman
www.syrjinta.fi

FINLAND

Ombudsman for Equality
www.tasa-arvo.fi

FRANCE

Defender of Rights
www.defenseurdesdroits.fr

GEORGIA

Public Defender of Georgia (Ombudsman)
www.ombudsman.ge

GERMANY

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency
www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

GREECE

Greek Ombudsman
www.synigoros.gr

HUNGARY

Equal Treatment Authority
www.egyenlobanasmod.hu

HUNGARY

Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights
www.ajbh.hu

IRELAND

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
www.ihrec.ie

ITALY

National Office against Racial Discrimination - UNAR
www.unar.it

KOSOVO*

Ombudsperson Institution
www.oik-rks.org

LATVIA

Office of the Ombudsman
www.tiesibsargs.lv

LITHUANIA

Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson
www.lygybe.lt

LUXEMBURG

Centre for Equal Treatment
www.cet.lu

MALTA

Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
www.crpdp.org.mt

MALTA

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
www.equality.gov.mt

MOLDOVA

Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality
www.egalitate.md

MONTENEGRO

Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)
www.ombudsman.co.me

NETHERLANDS

Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
www.mensenrechten.nl

NORTH MACEDONIA

Commission for the Protection against Discrimination
www.kzd.mk

NORWAY

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud
www.ldo.no

POLAND

Commissioner for Human Rights
www.rpo.gov.pl

PORTUGAL

Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality
www.cig.gov.pt

PORTUGAL

Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment
www.cite.gov.pt

PORTUGAL

High Commission for Migration
www.acm.gov.pt

ROMANIA

National Council for Combating Discrimination
www.cncd.org.ro

SERBIA

Commissioner for Protection of Equality
www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs

SLOVAKIA

Slovak National Centre for Human Rights
www.snspl.sk

SLOVENIA

Advocate of the Principle of Equality
www.zagovornik.si

SPAIN

Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination
www.igualdadynodiscriminacion.msssi.es

SPAIN

Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities
www.inmujer.es

SWEDEN

Equality Ombudsman
www.do.se

UNITED KINGDOM - GREAT BRITAIN

Equality and Human Rights Commission
www.equalityhumanrights.com

UNITED KINGDOM - NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
www.equalityni.org



2019 - 2021

- **Tena Šimonović Einwalter (Chair)**, Deputy Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia
- **Laurence Bond**, Director, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland
- **Patrick Charlier**, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium
- **Valérie Fontaine**, Advisor for partnerships and public relations, Defender of Rights, France
- **Rhoda Garland**, Executive Director, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta
- **Sandra Konstatzky**, Director, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
- **Miha Lobnik**, Head, Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Slovenia
- **Konstantinos Bartzeliotis**, Senior Investigator, Greek Ombudsman, Greece
- **Kirsi Pimiä**, Ombudswoman, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland (until February 2020)
- **Rainer Hiltunen**, Head of Office, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland (since February 2020)

2017 - 2019

- **Tena Šimonović Einwalter (Chair)**, Deputy Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia
- **Laurence Bond**, Director, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland
- **Patrick Charlier (Treasurer)**, Co-Director, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Belgium
- **Valérie Fontaine**, Advisor for partnerships and public relations, Defender of Rights, France
- **Rhoda Garland**, Executive Director, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta
- **Sandra Konstatzky**, Director, Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria
- **Kalliopi Lykovardi**, Deputy Ombudsman for Equal Treatment, Greek Ombudsman, Greece
- **Kirsi Pimiä**, Ombudswoman, Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland
- **Petr Polák**, Head of Division of Equal Treatment, Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic



WORKING GROUPS

The Equinet Working Groups are essential parts of the inner functioning of the Network. Composed of staff experts from member organisations, they are the central platforms for effective cooperation and sharing of expertise amongst member equality bodies and their staff, alongside the Equinet training events and seminars. Each group is headed by a Moderator from a national equality body who, assisted by the Equinet Secretariat, is responsible for the organisation and the implementation of the work as planned in the annual Work Plans.

The Working Groups in 2019 were:

- **Communication Strategies and Practices**
Moderator: Mintautė Jurkutė, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Lithuania
- **Equality Law in Practice**
Moderator: Veronika Bazalová, Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic
- **Gender Equality**
Moderator: Nathalie Schlenzka, Federal Anti-discrimination Agency, Germany
- **Policy Formation**
Moderator: Petr Polák, Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Czech Republic
- **Research and Data Collection**
Moderator: still to be appointed

In 2019, we also focused on the following topics:

- Cluster - Freedom of Movement: Article 4 Bodies under the 2014 Directive
- Project – Implementation of Standards for Equality Bodies



The Secretariat assists the Executive Board in implementing the annual work plan of the organisation. It is responsible for organising and managing the daily activities of the Network and assists individual members and stakeholders with their requests. It supports and coordinates the work of the Equinet thematic Working Groups. The Secretariat regularly reports on the status of its activities to the Executive Board throughout the year.

In 2019 the Secretariat team included:

- **Anne Gaspard** – Executive Director
- **Tamás Kádár** – Deputy Director (Head of Legal and Policy Team)
- **Sarah Cooke O'Dowd** – Communication Officer
- **Levente Kollár** – Communication Officer replacement (December 2019 - May 2020)
- **Yannick Godin** – Administration & Finance Officer
- **Moana Genevey** – Policy officer (Gender Equality)
- **Milla Vidina** – Policy Officer
- **Tanja Sheikhi** – Policy and Communication Assistant (September 2018 - April 2019)
- **Antoine Gibert** – Policy and Communication Assistant (March - October 2019)
- **Theodora Nguyen** – Policy and Communication Assistant (October 2019 - January 2020)
- **Bram Feyaerts** – Administration and Events Assistant (September 2018 - April 2019)
- **Evelin Rizzo** – Organization Management Assistant (June - October 2019)



From left to right – Levente Kollár, Yannick Godin, Milla Vidina, Tamás Kádár, Theodora Nyguen, Antoine Gibert, Evelin Rizzo, Moana Geneve, Sarah Cooke O'Dowd, Anne Gaspard.

→ List of Activities



4
Capacity-
building events



1
Project



1
Cluster



10
Working Group
meetings



3
Board Meetings



1
Conference



1
AGM



10
Equality Today
(External Newsletter)



5
Equinet
@ Work

4
Equality News

... AND MANY MORE MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS, STAKEHOLDERS,
TRAVELS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN AGENDA

** A warm **thank you** to all equality bodies that have contributed to the realisation of our activities by hosting and/or co-organising different events during this time.*

CONFERENCES

- **Two Years after #MeToo, what next? Equality bodies combating sexual harassment at work**, co-organized with the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe, Brussels, 24 October

ROUNDTABLE

- **The post-#MeToo era in Europe**, co-organized with the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe, Brussels, 23 October

SEMINAR

- **Tackling age discrimination and age discrimination against older people**, co-organized with AGE Platform Europe, in partnership with the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Germany), Berlin, 27-28 June

TRAINING SESSION

- **Narrative building and storytelling**, trainer from Dancing Fox, in partnership with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (Bulgaria), Sofia, 11-12 March
- **Responding to unlawful profiling**, co-organised with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, Nicosia, 9 October



Staff from national equality bodies and organisations of older people participated in our joint seminar on fighting ageism with AGE-Platform Europe, Berlin, June 2019

WORKING GROUPS

- **Communication Strategies and Practices**, hosted by the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (Bulgaria), Sofia, 13 March; hosted by the Office of Ombudsman (Latvia), Riga, 19 September
- **Equality Law**, hosted by Unia (Belgium), Brussels, 24 April; hosted by the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Cyprus), Nicosia, 8 October
- **Gender Equality**, hosted by the Commission for the Protection from Discrimination (Portugal), Lisbon, 2 April; hosted by Danish Institute for Human Rights (Denmark), Copenhagen, 10-11 October
- **Policy Formation**, hosted by Unia (Belgium), Brussels, 26 March and in Brussels on 19-20 November
- **Research and Data Collection**, hosted by Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (Portugal), Lisbon, 23 May and in Brussels on 19-20 November



Dubravka Šimonovic (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences) addresses participants at our joint conference with the Office of the UN Human Rights Regional Representative for Europe on 'Tackling Sexual Harassment at Work', Brussels, October 2019

CLUSTERS

- **Freedom of Movement**, hosted by Public Defender of Rights (Czech Republic), Prague, 5 April and Unia (Belgium), Brussels, 12 December

PROJECT

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETINGS: WORK PLAN 2020

COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET COOPERATION PLATFORM MEETINGS

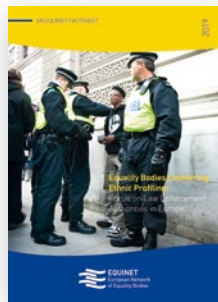
- **Implementing standards for equality bodies**, in Antwerp, 8 May; hosted by the Defender of Rights (France), Paris, 25 September
- Hosted by Unia (Belgium), Brussels, 27 March
- Hosted by Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Germany), Berlin, 26 June
- Hosted by Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman (Czech Republic), Prague, 2 October
- **Consultation meetings with Stakeholders**, 2 July, Brussels
- **6th Meeting of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE)**, hosted by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava, 14-15 May
- **6th Meeting of the Platform on Economic and Social Rights**, hosted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Belfast, 16 May
- **A multidimensional approach to guarantee the right to housing in Europe: designing effective tools and concrete ways forward**, hosted by the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 28 November



Diversity is Tasty! Chef Freddy Benjamin from the Multi Kulti Collective shares his tips on making delicious Iraqi food after our training on Story-telling and Positive Narratives, Sofia, March 2019

→ Publications

FACTSHEET & COMPENDIUM

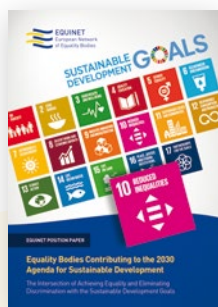


Equality Bodies Countering Ethnic Profiling: Focus on Law Enforcement Authorities in Europe



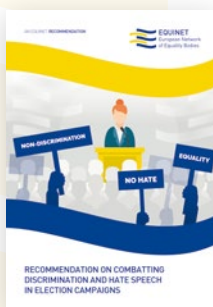
Compendium of Promising Practices on Ethnic Profiling

POSITION PAPER



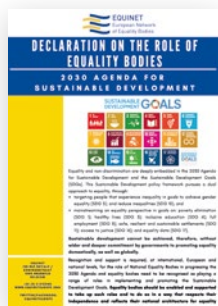
Equality bodies contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

RECOMMENDATION



Combating discrimination and hate speech in election campaigns

DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF EQUALITY BODIES




2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

EQUALITY BODIES' CONTRIBUTION



Tackling Violence against Women and Gender-based Violence



Photos: © Equality and Human Rights Commission, Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), Office of the Public Defender of Rights, Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissione, Office of the Equal Opportunities, Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Gregor Fischer, Thierry Maroit.



EQUINET

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF EQUALITY BODIES

138 Rue Royale/Koningsstraat
1000 Brussels, Belgium

T : +32 (0) 2 212 3182

F : +32 (0) 2 212 3030

E : info@equineteurope.org

W : www.equineteurope.org

Equinet is an International Not-for-Profit
Association (AISBL)

ISBN 978-92-95112-29-2

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This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Equinet, European network of equality bodies and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



*Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and
Citizenship Programme of the European
Union 2014-2020*

www.equineteurope.org