

Equinet Conference

Equality Bodies and Gender Equality – A Growing Role

3 June 2022

The adoption of Directive 2002/73/EC, the Gender Goods and Services Directive (2004) and the Gender Recast Directive (2006) generalised the set-up of equality bodies promoting gender equality in the EU. The two Directives granted equality bodies the possibility to tackle gender-based discrimination in employment and access to and supply of goods and services, as well as gender-based harassment and sexual harassment, pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination and gender-based pay discrimination.

Since then, the 2010 Self-Employment Directive expanded the mandate of equality bodies to cover gender-based discrimination faced by self-employed workers. The proposed Women on Board Directive (2012) also offers to grant equality bodies with competences to promote, analyse, monitor and support gender balance on the boards of some companies. The 2019 Work-Life Balance Directive granted equality bodies a mandate to tackle discrimination related to parenthood, paternity and carers' responsibilities. In 2021, the proposed Directive on Pay Transparency foresees new functions for equality bodies, including representing workers in court for equal pay cases and enhancing their access to pay data. In 2022, the proposed Directive on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence also foresees a new role for equality bodies: they could be given an additional mandate to assist victims of violence against women and to issue independent reports and recommendations on this issue.

While a proposal for new EU legislation dedicated to strengthening the role of equality bodies is expected in the autumn of 2022, their role on gender equality has already been gradually strengthened over the years. It highlights their great potential for driving the change towards more gender equal societies at the EU level. It is now necessary to reflect on this evolution and to ensure equality bodies can carry out these new functions and responsibilities adequately. Raising standards for equality bodies will allow for a better implementation of EU law on gender equality, and therefore, a better protection against gender-based discrimination all over the EU. Strengthening equality bodies on gender equality can also contribute to strengthen equality in general and enhance protection against discrimination on all grounds.

Objectives

This event aims to:

- Raise awareness on the potential of equality bodies for tackling gender discrimination and promoting gender equality



- Identify the barriers facing equality bodies to effectively achieve gender equality and the solutions required to overcome these.

Participants

The conference is aimed at policy-makers at the EU and national level and equality body staff.

Agenda

Welcome

8:30 - 9:00

Welcome of participants

The conference is moderated by *Ms. Sophie Robin-Olivier*

Session 1 – Setting the scene

09:00 - Welcome address – *Laurence Bond, Equinet*

09:05 - Welcome address – *Claire Hédon (TBC)*

09:15 - The European Union and Gender Equality – *Carlien Scheele, EIGE Director*

09: 25 - Equality bodies and gender equality: an academic perspective – (TBC)

09:45 – Q&A

10:00 – BREAK

Session 2 – Equality Bodies & Gender Equality – Exploring the Potential

10:15 : Dialogue 1 – Equality bodies and Work-Life Balance

- **Dialogue between an equality body** (*Liesbet Stevens, Belgian Institute for Equality of Women and Men*) **and the European Commission** (*Ms. Irena Moozova, TBC*) **on the Work-Life Balance Directive and the role of equality bodies (20 minutes)**
- **Discussant** – *Aline Brüser, European Trade Union Confederation (5 minutes)*
- **Q&A (5 minutes)**

10:45: Dialogue 2 – Equality bodies and Pay Transparency

- **Dialogue between an equality body** (*Sandra Konstatzky, Austrian Ombud for Equal Treatment*) **and MEP (TBC) (20 minutes)**



- **Discussant** – *Dina Vardaramatou, European Women’s Lobby (5 minutes)*
- **Q&A (5 minutes)**

11:15: Dialogue 3 – Equality bodies and Violence Against Women

- **Dialogue between a the Polish Equality Body** (*Aleksandra Szczerba, Polish Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights*) **and a national authority (15 minutes)**
- **Discussant** – *Council of Europe (TBC) (5 minutes)*
- **Q&A (5 minutes)**

11:50 – BREAK

Session 3 – Equality Bodies & Gender Equality – A Need for Standards

12:00 - Panel discussion: Moving towards stronger equality bodies for a better protection against gender-based discrimination in the EU

Panel 1. Strengthening independence of equality bodies

- *Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield (TBC)*
- *Laurence Bond, Equinet*
- *Dina Vardaramatou, European Women’s Lobby*
- *Council of Europe (TBC)*

Panel 2. Strengthening powers & resources of equality bodies

- *European Commission (TBC)*
- *Liesbet Stevens, Belgian Institute for Equality of Women and Men*
- *National Authority (TBC)*

Concluding session

13:15 – Concluding words

Claire Hédon

Equinet

