

# National Equality Bodies : Champions of Equality and Non-Discrimination

## WHAT ARE NATIONAL EQUALITY BODIES?

Equality Bodies are national, publicly funded institutions set up across Europe to promote equality and tackle discrimination. They facilitate effective access to justice and play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of Europe.

In all EU Member States and many countries in wider Europe, Equality Bodies are set up based on an obligation in **EU equal treatment legislation** (*Race Equality Directive*\* and the Gender Equality Directives in *employment*, *self-employment* and access to *goods and services*\*\*). Many Member States have gone beyond these requirements to work on race and gender, and Equality Bodies in most countries also work on other grounds for discrimination, such as age, disability, gender identity, health status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and many more. In some countries there is no fixed or closed list of discrimination grounds for Equality Bodies to work on.

## WHAT DO EQUALITY BODIES DO?

Equality Bodies have the expertise and powers that serve to promote more equal societies and fight discrimination. Among others, Equality Bodies may:

- **Take complaints** from anyone who experiences discrimination;
- **Provide legal assistance** to those who experience discrimination, in many cases including taking cases to court or deciding the case in their administrative procedure;
- **Collect data** on equality;
- **Conduct research** on equality in society;
- **Make recommendations** to policy makers and legislators;
- **Raise awareness** and communicate about equality and rights;
- **Engage** with employers, service providers, other public bodies, and civil society organisations to help them put in place good equality plans and practices.

## DOES MY COUNTRY HAVE AN EQUALITY BODY?

All 27 EU Member States have at least one Equality Body (most of which are members of Equinet). In addition, Equinet has member Equality Bodies in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo\*\*\*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and the United Kingdom – non-EU countries that have accepted to harmonise their legislation with EU equality laws. Equality Bodies that aren't members of Equinet may also exist in other European countries.

The majority of countries have only one National Equality Body, but in some there are two or three, usually to protect different discriminated groups (e.g. persons with disabilities or persons discriminated due to their gender). Additional Equality Bodies may exist at the sub-national level, for example in a province or region. Such sub-national Equality Bodies are not members of Equinet, but in many countries co-operate with their national bodies in some form.

For a complete list of Equinet members, see the inside of this brochure, or find more information on the online European Directory of Equality Bodies: [www.equineteurope.org/european-directory-of-equality-bodies/](http://www.equineteurope.org/european-directory-of-equality-bodies/)

\* Directive 2000/43/EC

\*\* Directives 2010/41, 2006/54, 2004/113

\*\*\* 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.







