



EQUINET
European Network
of Equality Bodies

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HIGHLIGHTS 2022



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FOREWORD

We are pleased to introduce the highlights of Equinet's work in 2022, which shines a light on Equinet's pan-European work with its Members, National Equality Bodies, and the Network's pivotal role in building a more equal Europe. Equinet does this by supporting and ensuring stronger and better-equipped National Equality Bodies, who work tirelessly to promote and protect equality and non-discrimination across the continent. Last year, the capacity-building focus supported their national level work to provide assistance to victims, or develop their advice and policy, prevention and promotion, or communication work. In 2022, this included capacity-building initiatives amongst others on Artificial Intelligence, disability and mental health, racism and Roma discrimination, gender equality and pay transparency, or preventing and reacting to discrimination through sanctions and remedies.

2022 marked a significant breakthrough on Equinet's long-standing goal to strengthen the institutional capacity, powers, independence and effectiveness of Equality Bodies. Equinet Members provided an evidence-based and substantial support to the preparatory works of legally binding EU standards for Equality Bodies, which culminated in the European Commission's release of legislative proposals in December 2022.

These proposed Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies provide a crucial framework for ensuring that our Members can operate effectively and independently in the future. The support of all European institutions and partners, supported by Equinet and Equality Bodies, will be crucial in the period ahead to ensure the swift adoption and implementation of these Directives, to achieve effective progress towards equality for all in Europe.

In 2022, we also developed and adopted a four-years roadmap for our Network, with a new *Strategic Plan 2023-2026*. It will guide Equinet's continued commitment to support National Equality Bodies in their vital work, promote diversity and inclusion, combat discrimination, advance social justice, and strive toward more equality for all in Europe.

The Equinet Highlights 2022 showcase some of the main achievements of Equinet and its Members in the past year, together with key partners and stakeholders. We are proud of the impact and progress achieved together in promoting equality and non-discrimination in Europe and look forward to pursuing hard work and shared priorities ahead.

This collaborative effort is more important than ever as we navigate the challenges of multiple crises in Europe and beyond, with growing inequalities in societies, the rise in populist and extremist discourse and movements, conflicts combined with the pandemic and the global environmental crisis.

Despite these challenges, with Members' expertise, combined with that of our dedicated team in the Equinet Secretariat, we have solid foundations for future achievements. We thank the Executive Board for their guidance and the entire Secretariat staff for their continuous hard work, enthusiasm and professionalism.

Finally, Equinet is very grateful to the European Commission for its invaluable support through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme and for its ongoing commitment to enable the potential of Equinet and support stronger National Equality Bodies. Moving forward, we count on consolidating our close cooperation with our Members and partners, as well as pursuing new avenues to work together to achieve equality for all in Europe.



Anne Gaspard
Co-Director



Tamás Kádár
Co-Director



Tena Šimonović Einwalter
Chair of Executive Board



WHAT IS EQUINET?

Equinet is the European Network of Equality Bodies, a membership organisation of 47 National Equality Bodies. By strengthening and supporting National Equality Bodies, Equinet works towards achieving equality and ensuring non-discrimination for everyone in Europe, in all aspects of their lives.

Equality Bodies are public organisations that assist victims of discrimination. They monitor and report on discrimination issues and promote equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all of the grounds of discrimination covered by European Union law – gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability.



Based on Equinet's [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) developed over the course of 2022 after an extensive evaluation and impact assessment, our main objectives are:

→ Strengthen and support Equality Bodies to achieve equality for all

- Strengthen Equality Bodies as the cornerstones of national equality infrastructures
- Support Equality Bodies through knowledge, capacity-building and skills sharing for the enforcement of their mandate

→ Act as an expert voice of Equality Bodies in Europe on equality and non-discrimination

- Advance the equality agenda in Europe through strategic engagement and communication
- Maintain Equinet's position as a research and knowledge hub drawing on Equality Bodies' experience of equality and non-discrimination

→ Maintain and improve Equinet's capacity as a strong, resilient, and innovative Network

- Ensure an enriching membership experience in Equinet, by tailoring activities and engaging all Members
- Develop and sustain Equinet's resources and accountability to better respond to Members' needs



EQUINET: AT A GLANCE

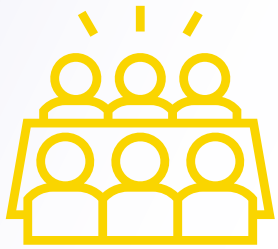
The Equinet Highlights 2022 zooms in on Equinet's work of ensuring stronger and more equipped National Equality Bodies and a more equal Europe. With the strategic vision of the Executive Board and the peer-to-peer exchange and information sharing among Members, the Secretariat was able to deliver a wide range of activities throughout the year.

- [+](#) 2022 IN NUMBERS
- [+](#) 2022 MEMBER LEADERSHIP
- [+](#) 2022 TEAM



EQUINET: AT A GLANCE

2022 IN NUMBERS



49

[MEETINGS AND EVENTS](#)

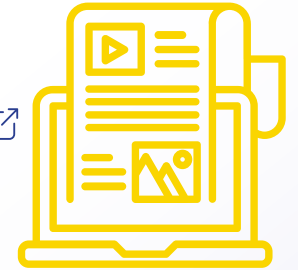
13



[PUBLICATIONS](#)

8

[BLOG POSTS](#)



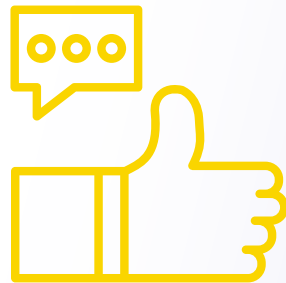
81000+

[WEBSITE VISITORS](#)



2486

[NEW FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA](#)



57

[SPEAKING ROLES AT EXTERNAL EVENTS](#)



EQUINET: AT A GLANCE

2022 MEMBER LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Equality Bodies	Board Members
Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia	Tena Šimonović Einwalter (Chair) - <i>Ombudswoman</i>
The Equality Ombudsman, Sweden	Lars Arrhenius - <i>Ombudsman</i>
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Ireland	Laurence Bond (Chair & Board member until September 2022)
Defender of Rights, France	Valérie Fontaine - <i>Adviser for Partnership & Public Relations</i>
Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, Albania	Robert Gajda - <i>Commissioner</i>
Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, Malta	Rhoda Garland (Treasurer) - <i>Executive Director</i>
Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Finland	Rainer Hiltunen - <i>Head of Office</i>
Greek Ombudsman, Greece	Kalliopi Lykovardi (since September 2022) - <i>Deputy Ombudsperson for Equal Treatment</i>
Advocate of the Principle of Equality, Slovenia	Miha Lobnik - <i>Head of the Institution</i>
National Centre for Human Rights, Slovakia	Silvia Porubánová - <i>Executive Director</i>

EXPERT GROUPS

Expert Groups	Moderators
Working Group: Communication Strategies and Practices	Mintautė Jurkutė, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Lithuania; Ana Tretnjak, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia
Working Group: Equality Law in Practice	Imane El-Morabet, Unia, Belgium
Working Group: Gender Equality	Aleksandra Szczerba, Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland
Working Group: Policy Formation	Monika Cavlovic, Office of the Ombudswoman, Croatia
Working Group: Research and Data Collection	Bogdan Banjac, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Serbia
Project: Standards for Equality Bodies	Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Ombudswoman, Croatia
Cluster: Equality mainstreaming	Ketevan Shubashvili, Public Defender, Georgia
Cluster: Age	
Cluster: Artificial Intelligence	
Cluster: Disability	
Cluster: Equality and socio-economic rights	
Cluster: Rainbow families on the move	



EQUINET: AT A GLANCE

2022 TEAM

SECRETARIAT

Staff member	Position
Anne Gaspard	Co-Director Network Strategic Engagement
Tamás Kádár	Co-Director Operations, Policy & Legal
Sarah Cooke O’Dowd	Head of Communication & Membership
Yannick Godin	Administration & Finance Officer
Moana Genevey	Policy Officer (Gender Equality)
Jone Elizondo-Urrestarazu	Legal & Policy Officer
Milla Vidina	Policy Officer
Daris J. Lewis Recio	Legal & Policy Officer
Teresa Pedreira	Communication & Member Engagement Officer
Sophie Hale	Membership & Network Development Officer (until August 2022)

TRAINEES

Trainee	Position
Albi Veizi	Administration & Membership Trainee (June 2021 – February 2022)
Therese Keil	Assistant on Artificial Intelligence (September 2021 – February 2022)
Margi Marchetti	Communication Trainee (February – June 2022)
Mariam Rechchad	Policy & Legal Trainee (February – August 2022)
Alizé Larguier	Policy & Legal Trainee (September 2022 – February 2023)
Chiara D’Agni	Communication Trainee (September 2022 – June 2023)
Miroslav Mitras	Finance & Administration Trainee (September 2022 – June 2023)
Martina Rota	Membership & Network Development Trainee (September 2022 – March 2023)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING EQUALITY BODIES: STANDARDS FOR EQUALITY BODIES

Strengthening the institutional capacity and effectiveness of Equality Bodies has always been a key objective for Equinet. In 2022, we were able to contribute Equinet Members' expertise and experience to the preparatory works of legally binding EU standards for Equality Bodies through our Project on Standards for Equality Bodies. This work included continuous exchanges with the European Commission and contributions to expert seminars. In December 2022, [the European Commission adopted two Proposals for Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies](#).

- **Raising awareness:** Realising the need for a concise explanation of the work of Equality Bodies and their needs, Equinet produced a ['Frequently Asked Questions' paper on Equality Bodies](#) and promoted it widely.
- **Conference on strengthening Equality Bodies:** Equinet organised a [conference dedicated to the growing role of Equality Bodies in ensuring gender equality](#), looking at what standards and guarantees are necessary for them to play this role most effectively.
- **Key elements of Standards for Equality Bodies:** Throughout the year, Equinet consistently underlined the main areas where Equality Bodies need strong guarantees to perform all their functions most effectively. These include their independence, resources, mandate, powers, and accessibility.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

Beyond working to strengthen Equality Bodies institutionally, Equinet continued building the capacity of staff members and promoting their work. This was done mainly through actions that focus on the powers and activities of Equality Bodies in three main areas: assistance to victims, advice and policy work, prevention and promotion.

1. ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

Assistance to victims of discrimination lies at the core of Equality Bodies' mandates. This may entail legal assistance, taking cases of discrimination to court, ensuring redress, or fostering dialogue with rights-holders to understand the needs of the discriminated communities. In 2022, our capacity-building actions focused, among others, on the new challenges posed to equality by the increasing use of digital automation technologies, the limited system of sanctions and remedies that is in place in Europe for equality legislation, and the possible ways to support persons with mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities.

Sanctions and remedies

The Equinet report *Preventing and Reacting to Discrimination through Sanctions and Remedies* provides an in-depth analysis of the kind of sanctions and remedies offered to discrimination victims across Europe, including their compliance with the EU Equality Directives. The report considers whether redress is attained for victims in light of sanctions':

- **Effectiveness:** Effective sanctions must strengthen the overall enforcement of the underlying rules, including a collective interest in their proper implementation.
- **Proportionality:** The social and collective effects of an infringement must be considered when assessing its impact and determining the quality and intensity of the remedy, including financial possibilities.
- **Disuasiveness:** Sanctions and remedies should be considered as such by assessing the likelihood of being imposed, as well as the costs and incentives for victims or the effects of the remedy on individual or multi-offensive infringements.



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

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Artificial intelligence and algorithmic discrimination

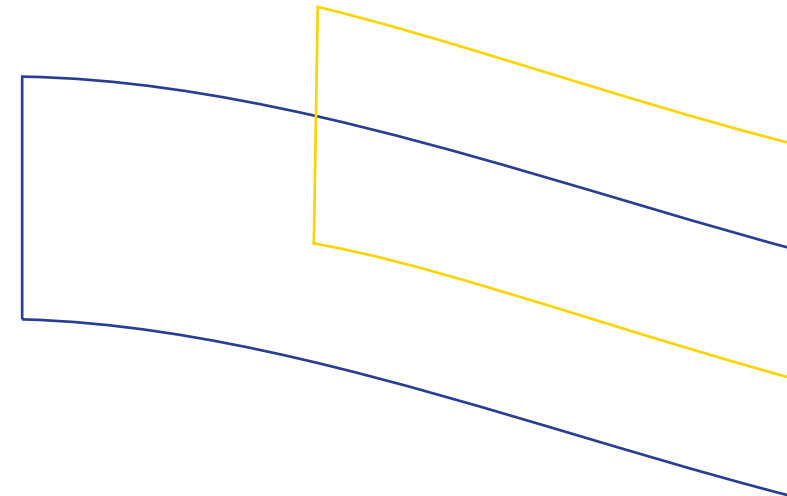
The rapid increase in the use of digital automation technologies, including AI systems, across borders and across different areas of life, presents specific challenges for Equality Bodies to effectively provide assistance to victims of discrimination.

- **Assisting victims through legal casework:** The extent to which the existing discrimination law is fit for purpose and could be applied to assess real cases of algorithm discrimination presents a challenge for Equality Bodies. [Equinet's AI Legal Advice Clinic](#) provided a practical demonstration on how to do that. With a practical focus on litigation, this training developed legal analysis and proposed possible litigation strategies for 2 specific legal cases brought by 2 National Equality Bodies.
- **Addressing underreporting through the proactive identification of cases:** The difficulty of identifying cases of AI discrimination is another significant obstacle for assisting victims, and the training [Finding Cases of Algorithmic Discrimination](#) suggested different tools and partners that can enable Equality Bodies in this regard.

Mental health and psychosocial disabilities

Equinet co-organised with Mental Health Europe and the European Disability Forum the webinar series [Equality Bodies Building their Capacity on Psychosocial Disabilities and Mental Health Issues](#). The series explored issues raised by both Equality Bodies and rights holders as key to being better allies and supporting persons experiencing discrimination due to mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities, including:

- **Putting people at the heart of the matter:** Rights holders must be put at the centre of our focus to understand their reality and experience.
- **Inclusion in practice:** Workplace accessibility should be a priority, including putting reasonable accommodation measures in place to ensure inclusion in the workplace.
- **Understanding legal capacity and political participation of persons with psychosocial disabilities:** The right to legal capacity and political participation exists for persons with mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities, and Member States must ensure that these rights can be enjoyed in practice.



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

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2. ADVICE AND POLICY WORK

Equality Bodies are central to the national equality infrastructure. They can play an important role in highlighting equality in national policy discussions through consultations on law and policy-making processes. In 2022, Equinet supported its Members, among others, in accessing the tools and strategies to advocate for the extension of protected grounds of discrimination at the national level, sharpening their knowledge on pay discrimination and the proposed Pay Transparency Directive, and building their capacity and their network in order to participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of EU Equality Strategies to combat racism.

Expanding anti-discrimination protection in the EU

Equinet's report and roundtable [*Expanding the List of Protected Grounds within Anti-Discrimination Law in the EU*](#) discusses whether and how the addition of various grounds (beyond the six grounds enshrined in Article 19 of the TFEU) could strengthen the effectiveness of equality law. The Report provides Equality Bodies with specific arguments to use in their policy and legal advice to governments on why adopting new protected

grounds is essential to ensuring effective non-discrimination protection, including:

- **Socio-economic status ground:** Should be recognised as a protected ground of discrimination in order to break the cycle of perpetuating poverty and socio-economic disadvantage, and because there is no other proxy ground to ensure protection.
- **Health status ground:** Despite overlaps with disability, health status should be recognized as a ground on its own, since the disability ground does not cover all instances of health issues on the basis of which discrimination is likely to occur.
- **Grounds of gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics:** These should be explicitly recognized in anti-discrimination law to increase the visibility of certain minority groups, avoid mischaracterization, and ensure comprehensive legal protection.



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

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Pay Transparency

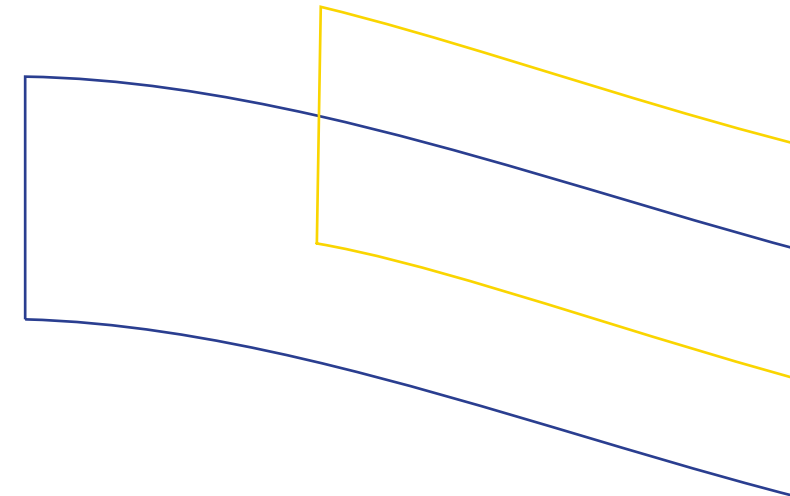
The taskforce on Pay Transparency, composed of members of the Gender Equality Working Group, shaped Equinet's vision and position on the proposed Pay Transparency Directive by drafting the report *Equality Bodies and the Pay Transparency Directive: Impacts and Opportunities*. The *Pay Transparency seminar* allowed staff from Equality Bodies to sharpen their skills and knowledge on the very technical, but essential topic of pay transparency.

- **Policy Advice:** The taskforce met with MEP Kira-Marie Peter-Hensen, the rapporteur for the Pay Transparency Directive, to exchange views on the content of the text.
- **Capacity-Building:** During the seminar on Pay Transparency, several workshops were organised with experts from academia, trade unions, and international organisations to unpack key challenges faced by Equality Bodies when working on equal pay cases.

Equality Bodies contributing to EU equality strategies – *NAPAR & Roma, Muslims, Antisemitism, People of African Descent*

This series of workshops explored the expressions of racism and discrimination experienced by racialised people in Europe, as well as the existing challenges and solutions of Equality Bodies and CSOs to address them. Participants were able to discuss potential opportunities of cooperation between Equality Bodies and CSOs to address discrimination and foster social change.

- **Cooperation:** The workshops highlighted the need for knowledge exchange between Equality Bodies and other actors in order to design adequate policies. This can only happen when stakeholders trust each other.
- **Communication:** These events highlighted the importance of enforcing positive content creation against hate.
- **Equality data:** The workshops also highlighted the importance of equality data for developing and measuring the implementation and outcomes of national plans and strategies against discrimination.



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

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3. PREVENTION AND PROMOTION

Equality Bodies' work entails promoting more equal societies and preventing cases of discrimination. They do that, for instance, by collecting data and conducting research on equality, supporting the implementation of equality plans and projects, as well as raising awareness on equality and rights. In 2022, Equinet supported Members in their prevention and promotion actions, among others, by capacity-building on engaging with hard-to-reach groups for research and data collection, monitoring the implementation of EU Funds, and improving the online presence of Equality Bodies.

Hard-to-reach groups' engagement

Engaging diverse groups in research is crucial for the representativeness of equality data, which is fundamental to portraying a truthful picture of the status of equality at the national level. The training *Engaging with Hard-to-Reach Groups in the Context of Research* provided Equality Bodies' research staff with tools to better develop effective strategies to engage with hard-to-reach groups in the context of research and data collection.

- **Methodology:** Participants exchanged insights on how to carry out background research and preparation using methods to include hard-to-reach groups in surveys.
- **Safeguards and awareness:** Participants got a better understanding of the challenges, and how to reach out to respondents, in addition to tailoring the data collection in a way to avoiding bias. In addition, they learnt tools to put in place safety, privacy and data protection measures.



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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF EQUALITY BODIES

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Investing in equality

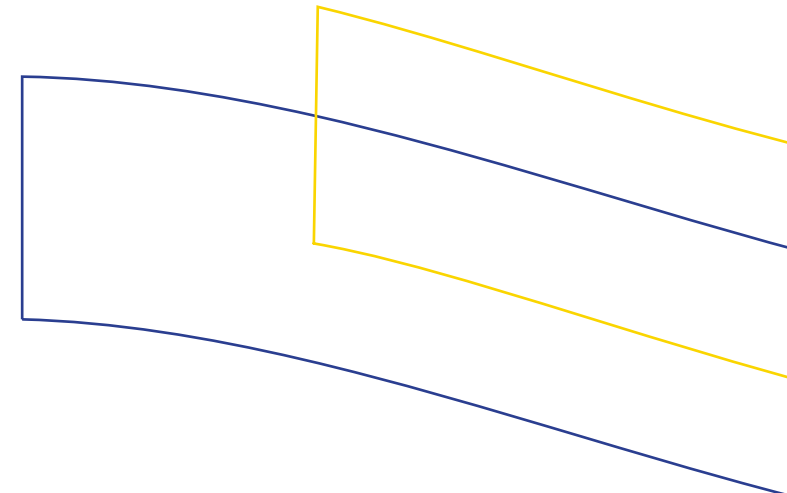
Monitoring the implementation of EU Funds from an equality perspective is a great opportunity for Equality Bodies to promote equality in a very concrete way and on various types of EU-funded projects. The [*Mini-workshop series: Investing in Equality – A Practical Guide into EU Funds*](#) helped Equality Body staff better understand their potential role in monitoring EU Funds and provided them with tools, answers, and solutions to the challenges they face when trying to engage in the field.

- **Learning:** Participants learned about misuse of EU Funds and how to make complaints to the European Commission.
- **Methodology:** The short format of the online workshops allowed participants to have in-depth interaction with one expert at a time, allowing for better understanding of the issues at stake.

Promoting Equality Bodies' work

The training [*Online Presence of Equality Bodies*](#) provided Equality Body communication staff with tools to improve their organisations' online presence. Participants were able to apply these in the re-design of their websites and social media strategies, increasing their reach and evidencing the work of their institutions.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools:** Participants learned how to write compelling content structured to maximize web search engines results.
- **Social media marketing:** The training provided insight into the best ways to utilize different social media channels, using metric tools to evaluate efficacy and apply improvements to increase engagement.



EQUINET MEMBERS

Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, **Albania** | Austrian Disability Ombudsman, **Austria** | Ombud for Equal Treatment, **Austria** | Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities), **Belgium** | Institute for Equality between Women and Men, **Belgium** | Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** | Commission for Protection against Discrimination, **Bulgaria** | Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, **Croatia** | Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, **Croatia** | Ombudswoman for Persons with Disabilities, **Croatia** | Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman), **Cyprus** | Office of the Public Defender of Rights, **Czech Republic** | Danish Institute for Human Rights, **Denmark** | Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, **Estonia** | Ombudsman for Equality, **Finland** | Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, **Finland** | Defender of Rights, **France** | Public Defender (Ombudsman), **Georgia** | Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, **Germany** | Greek Ombudsman, **Greece** | Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, **Hungary** | Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, **Ireland** | National Office Against Racial Discrimination, **Italy** | Ombudsperson Institution, **Kosovo*** | Office of the Ombudsman, **Latvia** | Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, **Lithuania** | Centre for Equal Treatment, **Luxembourg** | National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, **Malta** | Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, **Malta** | Council on Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, **Moldova** | The Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman), **Montenegro** | Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, **Netherlands** | Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, **North Macedonia** | Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, **Norway** | Commissioner for Human Rights, **Poland** | Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, **Portugal** | Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment, **Portugal** | High Commission for Migration, **Portugal** | National Council for Combating Discrimination, **Romania** | Commissioner for Protection of Equality, **Serbia** | National Centre for Human Rights, **Slovakia** | Advocate of the Principle of Equality, **Slovenia** | Council for the Elimination of Ethnic or Racial Discrimination, **Spain** | Institute of Women, **Spain** | Equality Ombudsman, **Sweden** | Equality and Human Rights Commission, **UK – Great Britain** | Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, **UK – Northern Ireland**

**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.*



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

Photos/Artwork: © Pronoia @AdobeStock, Alexia Souvalioti for Fine Acts, Maqué Studio for Equinet Calendar 2022 and Equinet Calendar 2023.

ISBN 978-92-95112-74-2
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The publication has been produced with the financial support 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.



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