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High-Level Conference:

# Addressing the need for Common Standards for Equality Bodies

Peer-to-peer Workshop:

# Advocacy learnings for and from Equality Bodies at the national level

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14-15 December 2023, Berlin



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## Concept note

### Background

#### Equinet and Equality Bodies

Equinet is the only European Network of Equality Bodies that facilitates the representation, promotion and protection of its members' interests at European level. Currently, Equinet has 48 members in 38 countries including all the EU countries as well as some non-EU members. The main objective of this network is to strengthen the position and reputation of Equality Bodies to achieve equality for all and to create knowledge that tackles discrimination, particularly on the grounds of age, racial or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability and the intersection of these social backgrounds. National Equality Bodies are independent public institutions promoting equality and combating discrimination in their countries. Every Member State, and several other countries around Europe, have an obligation under existing EU Equal Treatment Directives to designate an Equality Body or Bodies to promote equality and combat discrimination. However, the current provisions on Equality Bodies leave a large discretion to the Member States as to the mandate, powers, independence, and resources of these bodies. Differences between the Member States in the structure and functioning of Equality Bodies result in unequal protection against discrimination across the EU and an inadequate implementation of the EU's equal treatment legislation. In 2018, the Commission published a Recommendation on standards for Equality Bodies. While it isn't a legally binding document, it was a strong signal for Member States to strengthen their Equality Bodies. It came shortly after a revised recommendation from the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, setting out clear and comprehensive standards for Equality Bodies.

#### Legislative proposals on standards for Equality Bodies

In 2021, the Commission published a report on the application of the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive. The report looked into the implementation of the Commission's 2018



Recommendation and was accompanied by a more detailed Staff Working Document on Equality Bodies. The report highlighted that Equality Bodies have emerged as necessary and valuable institutions for change at the level of individuals, institutions and society at large. However, most of the issues that the Recommendation aimed to address remained unresolved, hindering some Equality Bodies in carrying out their role in an effective way. This showed that the Recommendation was not sufficient and in December 2022, led to the Commission proposing legislation to strengthen the role of Equality Bodies.

As the Commission put it, 'Equality bodies are essential in assisting victims of discrimination and making sure that EU law on non-discrimination is implemented on the ground. This new legislation will ensure that equality bodies can achieve their full potential. It will better protect victims of discrimination and contribute to the prevention of discrimination.' Such legally binding standards have the potential to make Equality Bodies more independent, effective, respected and accessible. These standards will allow them to play their role as the cornerstones of national equality infrastructures even more effectively, in close cooperation with other important actors, such as NHRIs, Ombud institutions, civil society organisations, trade unions and other public bodies such as education and labor inspectorates.

## **The project**

Against this backdrop, the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) is implementing a project in 2023-24, funded by the German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA). This project aims to contribute to reaching an effective legislation on Standards for Equality Bodies in all EU countries, thanks to a strong involvement of Equality Bodies and the recognition among all stakeholders of the importance of common Standards for efficient Equality Bodies.

The project aims to increase Equinet Members' capacity to accompany and advise their national authorities on the Directives and their transposition and implementation at national level while raising the awareness among national and European authorities and stakeholders about the importance of safeguarding the full potential of these Directives both during the legislative review process and at national implementation phase.



## Participation and objectives of the conference and workshop

The conference and workshop are organised in the frame of the EQUINET-FADA project. The objective of this joint event is two-fold. First, it aims at increasing awareness and understanding amongst decision makers about Equality Bodies. Second, it aims at increasing the capacity amongst Equinet Members to advocate for an optimal national transposition and implementation of the Standards directives.

### Specifically, the objectives of the conference on Day 1 are to:

- Raise awareness and improve understanding of the new Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies and of Equality Bodies themselves and to reflect and exchange on how the implementation phase at national level should be managed in each country, presenting potential good practices.
- Allow participants to meet and network in view of creating links between European countries and foster international cooperation and common approaches to the national transposition phase.

### And the objectives for the workshop on Day 2 are:

- To reinforce Equality Bodies' capacity to engage with national stakeholders and make the case for supporting the Standards directives
- To ensure Equality Bodies' sound understanding of Standards and their implications for their respective National Equality Body.
- Support exchanging good practices on what they need to put in place at their national level to follow and influence the national legislative transposition process.

The conference will gather Heads of Policy participants from Equality Bodies, Civil Society Organisations, government representatives, representatives from the European Commission, and other European, international and German institutions. The advocacy workshop on Day 2 will gather senior policy representatives from Equinet Members.



# Agenda

14 December 2023, 9:00 – 17:00 CET, JW Marriott Hotel, Berlin

15 December 2023, 8:30 – 16:00 CET, JW Marriott Hotel, Berlin

## Day 1 – 14 December

Salon 21, JW Marriott Hotel Berlin. Interpretation: DE/ENG

**Host:** Evelyn Collins, Chair of Equal Rights Trust, Honorary Professor at Belfast School of Law, former CE of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

**08:30 – 09:00**      **Registration & welcome coffee** served in Foyer Salons (Second Floor)

**09:00 – 09:20**      **Opening remarks**

- **Patrick Charlier**, Equinet Chair & Director of Unia, Belgium
- **Ferda Ataman**, Independent Federal Commissioner for Anti-discrimination and Head of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany

**09:20 – 09:45**      **Keynote speech**

- **Sandra Konstatzky**, Equinet Board Member & Director of the Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria

**09:45 – 10:30**      **Presentation – Equality Bodies and the upcoming legislation at the European level**

- **Niall Crowley**, Independent equality and diversity expert

**10:30 – 11:00**      **Coffee break**

Served in Foyer Salons (Second Floor)

**11:00 – 12:30**      **Panel I – Society's perception and expectations for National Equality Bodies**

- **Michaela Moua** (video), European Commission Coordinator on Anti-Racism
- **Romeo Franz**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Brankica Jankovic**, Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Commission for the Protection of Equality in Serbia





- **Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos**, Scientific Advisor EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- **Tena Šimonovic Einwalter**, Member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) & Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia
- **Younesse Kaddour Djebbar**, Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Government of Belgium
- **Nadiye Ünsal**, Communication Officer, Anti-Discrimination Association Germany (ADVD)
- **Francesca Sanders**, Senior Policy Officer and Policy Team Lead, Transgender Europe (TGEU)

**12:00 – 14:00**

### **Lunch**

Served in the Marriott restaurant on the first floor

**14:00 – 15:00**

### **Panel II – National Equality Bodies’ potential for achieving equal societies**

- **Tamás Kádár**, Co-Director - Operations, Policy & Legal, Equinet
- **Nathalie Schlenzka**, Head of Research and Policy, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany
- **Dmytro Lubinets**, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Dr Jan-Peter Loof**, former Vice President of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
- **Lars Arrhenius**, Equinet Board Member & Equality Ombudsman, Sweden

**15:00 – 15:30**

### **Coffee break**

Served in Foyer Salons (Second Floor)

**15:30 – 16:30**

### **Panel III – Ways forward to stronger and more effective Equality Bodies**

#### **Amendment of the General Equal Treatment Law (Germany)**

- **State Secretary Margit Gottstein**, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth





- **Ferda Ataman**, Independent Federal Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination and Head of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany

#### **Indicators to measure compliance with standards for Equality Bodies**

- **Patrick Charlier**, Equinet Chair & Director of Unia, Belgium

**16:30 – 17:00**

#### **Closing remarks**

- **Christian Veske**, Equinet Board Member & Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, Estonia

**17:00 – 19:00**

#### **Networking reception**

At Marriott Bar 26 (ground floor). It includes food and beverages.

## **Day 2 – 15 December 2023**

**Salon 21, JW Marriott Hotel Berlin**

**Moderators:** **Niklas Hofmann**, Policy Officer, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany & **Jone Elizondo Urrestarazu**, Senior Legal & Policy Officer, Equinet

**08:30 – 09:20**

#### **Opening remarks**

- **Anne Gaspard**, Co-Director - Network Strategic Engagement, Equinet
- **Ferda Ataman**, Independent Federal Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination and Head of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany

**09:00 – 10:15**

#### **Session I – Successful awareness-raising and advising strategies at national and EU level**

- **Tamás Kádár**, Co-Director - Operations, Policy & Legal, Equinet
- **Patrick Charlier**, Equinet Chair & Director of Unia, Belgium
- **Néphéli Yatropoulos**, European and International Affairs Advisor, Defender of Rights, France
- **Ian Feldman**, President, Equality Council, Moldova

**10:15 – 10:30**

#### **Coffee break**

Served in Foyer Salons (Second Floor)



**10:30 – 11:45**

## **Session II – Common standards for Equality Bodies**

Participants will take part in group discussions on standards-related issues that are of interest to their institution. A facilitator and a note-taker/rapporteur will be designated to support the group discussions (1 of each per group).

Participants will walk from one group discussion to another and will be notified of the time left to switch to a different group. The common standards that will be discussed are:

- **Mandate** (covering all relevant grounds and fields)
- **Powers** (legal, data collection, awareness raising)
- **Independence** (free from interference)
- **Resources and accessibility for victims**

**11:45 – 12:45**

## **Session III – Lessons learned from the transposition of the GDPR and EU protection law**

Bjørn Erik Thon, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, Norway

**12:45 – 13:45**

### **Lunch**

Served in the Marriott restaurant on the first floor

**13:45 – 15:00**

## **Session IV – Applying lessons learned**

This session is meant for participants to apply the knowledge gained during the day. Participants will need to prepare an advocacy strategy for the effective transposition of the directives, based on a case study that they will choose to work on in groups. The strategies will be presented and discussed in plenary.

**15:00 – 15:15**

### **Coffee break**

Served in Foyer Salons (Second Floor)

**15:15 – 16:00**

## **Session V – Closing**

In this informal session, members will have space to bring up anything related to the standards that they have not had a chance to discuss yet. The focus shall stay in the realm of advocacy and the common standards for Equality Bodies.



Participants will also reflect together on potential next steps and follow-up actions to build on the momentum.

**Closing remark**

**Tamás Kádár**, Co-Director - Operations, Policy & Legal, Equinet

## Our speakers

### Evelyn Collins

Chair of Equal Rights Trust, Honorary Professor at Belfast School of Law, former CE of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland



Professor Evelyn Collins CBE is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Equal Rights Trust and was previously Chair of the Equinet Board, the European Network of Equality Bodies, from October 2013 to October 2017. She is also currently a Trustee on the Board of the Abraham Initiatives UK.

Evelyn was Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, an organization with a wide remit under Northern Ireland's equality laws, from March 2000 to February 2023.

In May 2023, Queen's University Belfast conferred on Evelyn the title of Honorary Professor of Practice, and she has been contributing to the work of its School of Law since then. Evelyn is a law graduate of Sheffield University, and has Masters' degrees from the University of Toronto (Criminology) and Queen's University Belfast (Human Rights and Discrimination Law).

Evelyn has worked on equality issues since the 1980s, mostly in Northern Ireland and also as a national expert working on gender equality in the European Commission in Brussels and more widely through her engagement with Equinet and various EU projects. Evelyn was a member of the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men from 1992 to 2020, serving as its President in 2005. Evelyn also served on the Board of the Chief Executives' Forum in Northern Ireland from 2014 – 2020 and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Evelyn was awarded the CBE in 2008, for services to the public in Northern Ireland. In July 2014, the University of Ulster awarded Evelyn the



honorary degree of Doctor of Law (LLD) for her contribution to the promotion of equality and good relations.

## **Patrick Charlier (He/him)**

Equinet Chair and Director of Unia, Belgium



Patrick Charlier is a lawyer by training. He worked at the Human Rights League, first as legal advisor (1992 to 1996), then as director (1996 to 2001). Since his arrival to Unia in 2001, he has held various positions in the racism department at the Migration Observatory before becoming coordinator of the Discrimination department and finally director.

He is also a former member of the management board of FRA, and currently serves as the Chair of Equinet Executive Board and as an

alternate member of the Central Prison Supervision Council.

## **Ferda Ataman (She/her)**

Federal Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination and Head of Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany



Ferda Ataman is the independent federal commissioner for anti-discrimination and head of the federal anti-discrimination agency.

As a political scientist, she previously worked as a business consultant with respect to diversity and anti-discrimination as well as a journalist.

In her career, she looks back on some significant positions, such as managing director of the Diversity Kartell Agency, speechwriter for the ministry of Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration

in Nordrhein-Westfalen, head of Mediendienst Integration and editor for Spiegel Online

and Tagesspiegel. In 2019, her book "Hört auf zu fragen. Ich bin von hier" was released and published by S. Fischer Verlag about belonging in Germany.



## Sandra Konstatzky (She/her)

Equinet Board Member & Head of the Ombud for Equal Treatment, Austria



Sandra Konstatzky has been Director of the Ombud for Equal Treatment at the Federal Chancellery in Austria since 2018. She was previously Deputy Director and Legal advisor at the same Equality Body. She is a Lawyer by training and holds a master's degree in law with a specialty in Legal Gender Studies.

She performs trainings at the European Law Academy and lectures at the Law University of Vienna. Additionally, Sandra is an Equinet Board member since 2015, as well as Board member of the Austrian Women Lawyers' Association.

## Niall Crowley (He/him)

Independent Equality and Diversity Expert



Niall Crowley is an independent equality and diversity expert. He has worked on research, policy, evaluation, and strategy development projects at a European level with the European Commission, EIGE, and the Council of Europe and in a wide range of European countries. Prior to this he was Chief Executive of the Equality Authority in Ireland, an Equality Body that worked on nine different grounds including gender in the fields of employment and of goods and services. Previously he worked on rights issues in the NGO sector. He is author of 'Empty Promises: Bringing the Equality Authority to Heel' published by A&A Farmar in 2010 and 'An Ambition for Equality' published by Irish Academic Press in 2006. He is also the author of many of Equinet's publications on equality policy.



## Michaela Moua

### European Commission Coordinator on Anti-Racism



Michaela Moua is the first EU Anti-Racism Coordinator. She held a number of senior roles in NGOs in her native Finland combatting racism and discrimination. For the last few years, she has worked at the Non-discrimination Ombudsman's office and at the Ministry of Justice in Finland. She has extensive experience and expertise in anti-racism and non-discrimination policy making as well as in advancing and promoting equity, equal and diverse societies on the local and member state level. In addition, she is a solution-focused brief therapist, and her expertise is on the effects of racism and discrimination on mental health.

## Romeo Franz

### Member of the European Parliament (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Germany)



Romeo Franz joined the European Parliament as a member in 2018 and was re-elected in 2019, being the first Sinto from Germany elected in the European Parliament. Mr. Franz is the first vice chair of the Culture and Education Committee, substitute member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. Since 2014, he has been Managing Director of the Hildegard Lagrenne Foundation and has been involved in civil rights work for more than 20 years and he is on a voluntarily basis the secretary general of the Bundesvereinigung der Sinti und Roma E.V. in Berlin. He is the first Romani MEP who developed a resolution asking for an EU Law for the Equality Inclusion and Participation of Romani People and Combating antigypsyism. The resolution was passed by the European Parliament on 17th September 2020 with a majority of 545 votes.





## Brankica Janković

### Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Commission for the Protection of Equality in Serbia



Brankica Janković, master lawyer, was elected Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia for the first time in May 2015 and for the second time in November 2020 by the National Assembly. Prior to the election, she held the position of the State Secretary in the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy from 2012-2014 and was the Director of the Gerontology Center Belgrade from 2006-2012. She graduated at the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade, completed her master studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Novi Sad and is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Security in Belgrade. She speaks English and Russian.

Her academic contributions extend to teaching master studies on Multicultural Social Work – Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, as well as at the Higher Security Studies of the School of National Defense of the Army of the Republic of Serbia, as a guest lecturer. Brankica is also a dedicated mentor in the Share Your Knowledge regional program and holds membership in various professional and peer associations related to social protection, as well as numerous humanitarian associations and foundations.

She has taken the initiative to establish and participate in several regional platforms fostering collaboration between women and human rights institutions. Throughout her professional journey, Brankica has actively contributed to the development of various national strategic and legal documents. Additionally, she has authored numerous professional papers and publications, showcasing her dedication to advancing knowledge and expertise in her field.

Recognised for her outstanding contributions, she has received numerous awards, including the OSCE "2017 Person of the Year," the "Petar Manojlović" award for contribution to the improvement of the position of the elderly, and the "Golden Wheel" award for her efforts in the protection of human rights of the members of the Roma national minority, awarded by the National Council of Roma in Serbia.





## **Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos**

Scientific Advisor of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)



Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos is the Scientific Advisor of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). His areas of expertise include issues of equality and non-discrimination, Roma inclusion, the rights of the child and socio-economic rights. He studied sociology in the UK and since the mid-1980s he worked in academic institutions, where he lectured and conducted or coordinated national and transnational research projects. Since 2003, when he started working for the Agency, he has been heading its research and was responsible for several of its major research projects and publications.

## **Tena Šimonović Einwalter (She/her)**

Ombudswoman, Office of the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia



Tena Šimonović Einwalter is the Ombudswoman of Croatia. She is the head of a national multi-mandate institution with 5 mandates – that of the ombudsman, national human rights institution (NHRI), equality body, NPM and whistle-blower protection. She was elected by the Croatian Parliament as a Deputy Ombudswoman in 2013 and elected as the Ombudswoman in 2021. She has been the Chair of Equinet (2017-2021 and 2022-2023).



## Younesse Kaddour Djebbar

Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, Government of Belgium



Younesse Kaddour Djebbar serves as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Budgetary Advisor to the Belgian Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Opportunities, and Diversity. As a dedicated member of the Belgian Green Party, Younesse brings a wealth of professional experience gained from diverse roles in public offices and ministries. His expertise spans various aspects of governance and administration. Younesse holds a degree in political science and international relations, reflecting his commitment to understanding and addressing complex socio-political issues. Hailing from Charleroi, his family history is deeply rooted in the city, with his grandfather having immigrated from Algeria 60 years ago to work in the local mines.

## Nadiye Ünsal

Communication Officer, Anti-Discrimination Association Germany (ADVD)



Nadiye Ünsal is the Communication Officer of the Anti-Discrimination Association Germany (ADVD) . She coordinates the civil society alliance "AGG Reform - Jetzt!" that advocates for 11 demands regarding the reform of the General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG). Additionally, she is involved in self-organized community initiatives related to racism, intersectional discrimination, human rights, and migration. Furthermore, she is a PhD-student at Goethe University Frankfurt focusing her research on the coloniality of international refugee and migration law.



## Francesca Sanders (They/she)

Senior Policy Officer and Policy Team Lead, Transgender Europe (TGEU)



Francesca Sanders (they/she) is Senior Policy Officer and Policy Team Lead at TGEU where they lead on TGEU's policy work related to equality and non-discrimination, combating anti-trans violence, and the protection and inclusion of trans people in the labour market, always from an intersectional perspective and centering the needs of further marginalised trans communities. Originally from Australia and now based in Berlin, Francesca previously worked on international development policy, gender equality in the labour market, and the Australian government's engagement with international financial institutions. She holds a Master of International Economics from the Berlin School of Economics and Law, and a Bachelor of Economics and a Bachelor of Japanese Studies from the Australian National University.

## Tamás Kádár (He/him)

Co-Director - Operations, Policy & Legal, Equinet



Tamás Kádár is Co-Director (Head of Legal and Policy) at Equinet. Tamás worked previously at the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority as a legal officer, investigating discrimination cases on all grounds and drafting decisions of the Authority. He graduated from the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest as a Doctor in Law. Tamás also holds a Master of Economic Science degree from University College Dublin in Ireland. Tamás has published articles on equality and non-discrimination, spoken at numerous international conferences and acted as a trainer and expert in various EU, Council of Europe, OSCE and USAID-funded projects.



## Nathalie Schlenzka

Head of Research and Policy, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany



Nathalie Schlenzka is head of the department of research and general affairs at the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), the German Equality Body. She is working with FADA since 2011. The department of research and general affairs is among other tasks responsible for the improvement of equality and antidiscrimination data. In recent years Nathalie Schlenzka has worked on questions of discrimination in the field of work, higher education and automated decision making as well as on institutional discrimination. Previously, she worked for many years as a research associate in the field of migration and integration research at the Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research / European Migration Center and the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. She obtained her Diploma in Political Science from the Free University Berlin and the University of Sussex.

## Dmytro Lubinets (He/him)

Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Ukraine



Dmytro Lubinets was appointed the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) in June 2022. Dmytro holds a PhD in Political Science from Mariupol State University as well as a specialization in Law and International Relations. He started working in 1996 as a manager in the corporate field. He was then elected as a member of the Volnovakha City Council and afterwards of the National Parliament and, in 2019, he was a non-affiliated MP for the Ukrainian 60<sup>th</sup> District. He was also appointed as Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights.



## Lars Arrhenius (He/him)

### Equinet Board Member & Equality Ombudsman, Sweden



Lars Arrhenius is the Equality Ombudsman of Sweden since December 2020 and a board member of Equinet since 2021. He holds several years of experience working with fundamental rights issues, which includes being appointed as the first Ombudsman for Children and Students by the Government in 2006 as well as being the Inquiry chair to the Swedish Government established inquiry tasked with analysing the rules governing religious aspects in the education system. Lars also has several years of experience as chair and member of boards in various organisations, including the UNICEF Sweden Board.

## Margit Gottstein

### State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth



Margit Gottstein is the German State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Gottstein studied political science and German philology, as well as political science. In 2006 she also obtained a certificate as mediator.

She started her career in the field of refugees' and asylum seekers' welfare and counseling. From 1989 to 1995, Gottstein was a research associate at Freie Universität Berlin, Department of Political Science, teaching and researching in the field of migration and refugee studies. From 1995 to 2000, she was research associate for two Members of the German Bundestag of the Greens parliamentary group and continued working with the group until 2004 in different roles. From 2004 to 2011, she was Head of the Division for General Issues of Integration Policy at the Office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration.





From 2011 to 2016, she served as State Secretary at the Ministry for Integration, Family Affairs, Children, Youth and Women in Rhineland-Palatinate, and then from 2016 to 2021, as State Secretary for Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination at the Berlin Senate Department for Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination.

## **Christian Veske (He/him)**

Equinet Board Member & Gender Equality and Equal Treatment  
Commissioner, Estonia



Veske has previously worked in various positions at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), including in senior positions since 2017 and as the institute's liaison officer in Brussels since the start of this year. He first entered the field as chief specialist of gender equality at the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2009.

He has earned a bachelor's degree from Tallinn University (TLÜ) Haapsalu College as well as master's degree in sociology from TLÜ.

## **Niklas Hofmann (He/him)**

Policy Officer, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA), Germany



Niklas Hofmann is Policy Officer in the Commissioner's Office and Coordinator for International Affairs at the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency.

Mr. Hofmann studied communication, political science and history at LMU Munich University. He is a graduate of the German School of Journalism (DJS). Before joining the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency in 2014, he worked as a free-lance journalist for, among others, ZDF

television and Süddeutsche Zeitung.



## **Jone Elizondo Urrestarazu (She/her)**

Senior Legal and Policy Officer, Equinet



Jone Elizondo-Urrestarazu works as a Senior Legal and Policy Officer at Equinet where she focuses on legal files as coordinator of the Equality Law in Practice Working group. Likewise, Jone works on other issues and is part of different Equinet expert groups, such as the Standards for Equality Bodies project or both the Disability and Mainstreaming clusters.

Jone has a law and Economics background and holds a PhD in Law by 3 Spanish Universities (Universidad de Deusto, Universidad Ramon Lull and Universidad Pontificia de Comillas) thanks to her thesis focusing on multiple and intersectional discrimination and EU law. Her working experience is varied, covering academia and national CSOs, as well as pan European organisations including the EU Fundamental Rights Agency or the Migration Policy Group where she has coordinated and authored several publications on equality and non-discrimination & spoken at numerous webinars and conferences. More recently, she was one of the co-drafters of the proposal for a new Equality Law in her natal Basque Country, which will create a new Equality Body.

## **Anne Gaspard (She/her)**

Co-Director - Network Strategic Engagement, Equinet



Anne grew up in France (Paris and Normandy) and later moved and completed her school curriculum at the French Lycée in London. Anne has been active and involved in the field of equality and non-discrimination at a European level since the very start of her professional career, following her Bachelors graduation in European studies and political science from University College London (UK) and Berlin Humboldt University (Germany). Starting work in Brussels with the Campaign of the European Year against Racism in 1997 for the European Parliament and a subsequent stage experience within the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) at the Council





of Europe, in Strasbourg, Anne then joined and managed the UK London-based secretariat supporting the first Chair of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), predecessor institution to the now Fundamental Rights Agency based in Vienna, from 1998 to 2000. Anne was then responsible for the implementation of various pan-European equality and anti-discrimination projects for a European diversity management consultancy heading and leading its European office in Brussels for seven years (2000-2007) until her appointment to the position of Executive Director of Equinet Secretariat in February 2008.

## Néphèli Yatropoulos

### European and International Affairs Advisor, Defender of Rights, France



Néphèli Yatropoulos is graduated from Sciences-Po Paris where she also obtained an MA in political sciences, she worked two years in Brussels in the EU institutions and 4 years in Greece in the Ministry of Employment for the European project EQUAL. She worked at the French National Equality Body, the HALDE (2005-2011) and since 2011 she is Advisor on European and International affairs in the Cabinet of the Defender of Rights. She was member of the Equinet Board during 3 mandates.

## Ian Feldman

### President, Equality Council, Moldova



Ian Feldman was appointed by Moldovan Parliament as a Member of the Council in 2013 and elected as a President of the Council in 2015. In 2014, he was one of the three candidates proposed by the UN Human Rights Council Consultative Group for the position of Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

For over 17 years Mr. Feldman has led a professional career in the field of counter-trafficking, international human rights and development as a clinical psychologist, national, regional and international expert, consultant and advisor. He worked in 11 countries, on 3 continents, for more than 50 projects, advising various UN, intergovernmental,



governmental and non-governmental organizations and got wide operational experience, including experience in security challenged regions. He trained and consulted professionals from 28 countries coming from different regions of the world: Western and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Middle East, North-Eastern Africa, Horn of Africa, South-East Asia.

In December 2015, Equality Council, led by Mr. Feldman, got annual UN Human Rights Award for the efforts in combating discrimination and ensuring equality in the Republic of Moldova.

## **Bjørn Erik Thon (He/him)**

### Ombudsman of Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination, Norway



Bjørn Erik Thon (born 1964) was appointed equality and discrimination ombud in February 2022 for a period of six years. He holds a law degree from the University of Oslo (1989), and has previously, among other things, served as a consumer ombud (from 2000 to 2010) and Commissioner in the Norwegian Data Protection Authority (from 2010 to 2022). In addition, he has held several positions in the Liberal Party, amongst other serving as a political adviser to former Minister of Justice

Odd Einar Dørum. Bjørn Erik has also written three crime books, a biography of Olga Wilson (The American President's Norwegian Daughter) and a book about consumer rights (The consumer jungle book). He is married to Monica, lives in Oslo, has two adult sons and a granddaughter.



## Further reading and useful resources

- [Equinet webpage on Standards for Equality Bodies](#)
- [Equinet Brochure and Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Equinet Position Paper “Moving forward the European Commission’s proposals for Directives strengthening Equality Bodies”](#)

## The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA)

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency is an independent federal agency promoting equal treatment at work and in everyday life. The agency, which was established in 2006 on the basis of the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, has 35 employees. The Act protects people from discrimination on racist grounds or on grounds of ethnic origin, religion or ideology, sexual orientation, gender, age or a disability in the areas of employment and work as well as in daily affairs such as shopping, banking transactions, restaurant visits or when looking for a flat. One of our main tasks is to offer counselling for people who have experienced or observed discrimination. We provide initial legal advice to people who have been discriminated against.

For more information, [please see our website](#).

## Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies

Equinet is a membership organisation bringing together 48 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. By engaging closely with policy makers and partners at EU and international level, Equinet promotes the work of equality bodies through relevant publications, as well as participation at conferences and other meetings.

**For more information, please see our website: [www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)**

**Check the directory of Equality Bodies for a list of Equinet members: <https://equineteurope.org/what-are-equality-bodies/european-directory-of-equality-bodies/>**

