

Equinet Seminar

Climate Change and its Equality Implications in Focus: Tools for Equality Bodies

20/11/2024, 09:30 – 16:00, CET, Brussels and Online

21/11/2024, 09:30 – 12:00, CET, Brussels and Online

CONCEPT NOTE

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges of our time. Its impact is far-reaching, encompassing ecosystems and societies worldwide. However, such universal impact is not distributed equally. Vulnerable groups often bear the brunt of the climate crisis, which exacerbates existing inequalities. Addressing climate change is thus not only an environmental necessity but also a matter of social justice and a guarantee of equality for all.

The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), established in 1992 as the cornerstone of international climate change law, emphasizes the need for equity when addressing climate change, recognizing the differentiated responsibilities and capabilities of developed and developing countries through the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR). Building on the UNFCCC, the [Paris Agreement](#) (2015) reiterates the importance of equity and the CBDR principle. It sets out a framework for global climate action, with a specific focus on balancing efforts to limit temperature increases with measures aimed to ensure that climate resilience and adaptation efforts truly benefit all, being "country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent, taking into consideration vulnerable groups" (Art. 7). The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (2015-2030) also emphasizes the need for inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies, recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate-related disasters on vulnerable groups and advocating, *inter alia*, for the protection and empowerment of "women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction" (Priority 4, para. 32). Overall, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation ([Goal 13](#)) with the broader goal of reducing inequality ([Goal 10](#)). Indeed, the SDGs advocate for inclusive approaches addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, ensuring that climate actions do not exacerbate existing inequalities but instead contribute to sustainable and equitable development for all.

Within the EU context, the [European Green Deal](#) is the EU's roadmap for making the Union sustainable and aims to ensure a just and inclusive transition, by addressing social inequalities. The Deal includes measures such as the [Just Transition Mechanism](#), which supports regions and workers that are most affected by the transition to a green economy. The [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) (2020-2024) includes climate change as a key area, promoting policies that address its impact on human rights and ensuring that vulnerable populations are protected by "continue(ing) to strengthen the links between human rights,



including gender equality, security, environmental degradation and climate change” (Priority 2, point 2.4, letter c). The [Directive \(EU\) 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources](#) (Recast Renewable Energy Directive) emphasizes the need for a just transition to renewable energy, ensuring that the shift to a green economy benefits all societal groups, including the “low-income or vulnerable households”.

Moreover, while not specific to climate change, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ensures that all policies, including those related to climate, uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as well as the European Social Pillar, which sets out principles for fair and inclusive social policies, which can be applied to ensure that climate policies do not exacerbate existing inequalities.

Given this global, growing acknowledgement of the link between climate change and equality considerations and the need to bridge the gap between these different disciplines, in 2022, Equinet commissioned a research project on the link between climate change and equality, with a focus on the role Equality Bodies (can) play. More precisely, the report titled [Preliminary Assessment of the EU Green Deal’s Impact on Equality. Survey of Current Practices and Needs of European Equality Bodies](#) analyses several specific aspects of the EU Green Deal from an equality perspective and explores the equality aspect of policy domains such as fisheries, energy and transportation. The report discusses the potential role of Equality Bodies when engaging with these specific policies and legislation. As stated in the report, while few Equality Bodies had experience in this field, many of them indicated that they would be interested in building their capacity on issues related to climate change, environmental policies and their impact on equality.

In September 2023, Equinet organized an online roundtable titled [The EU Green Deal’s Impact on Equality. Exploring the Role and Potential of Equality Bodies](#) to launch the report and discuss the findings with the authors and multiple stakeholders, highlighting the specific impact of climate change and policy on individuals based on various grounds of discrimination, including gender, race, disability and socio-economic status.

Given the growing interest and urgency to address this topical issue, this two-day-long seminar aims to continue developing and enhancing the knowledge and understanding of Equality Bodies regarding climate change and its impact on equality, discussing avenues to prevent and mitigate climate and social inequality, and fostering dialogue among Equality Bodies, policymakers, experts, and civil society to promote climate justice.

OBJECTIVES

This seminar is aimed to further build awareness and capacity of Equality Bodies regarding the link between climate change and equality policies and issues as well as to develop avenues of action for Equality Bodies in the field of mitigating the climate crisis.

PARTICIPANTS

The target audience of this seminar is Equality Bodies staff members who are already familiar with or are planning to work on the climate/equality nexus. Other than around 20 Equality Bodies representatives, the seminar also aims to welcome international, EU, and national policy-makers, experts and other relevant stakeholders working in the field, such as academics, NGOs, CSOs, among others.



METHODS

This event takes the form of a 2-day-long seminar – comprised of presentations and panel discussions as well as interactive sessions – aimed at further sharpening the knowledge and capacity of the network in the field and to stimulate reflection and discussion on the ways forward.

