



**CALENDAR 2025**





**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 life.

Equality Bodies are public organisations that assist victims of discrimination, monitor, and report on discrimination issues, and promote equality. They are legally required to do so in relation to one, some, or all the grounds of discrimination covered by the European Union law – gender, racial or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability. Most of them promote equality beyond the required grounds of discrimination, for instance, addressing discrimination based on gender identity or nationality, or tackling multiple or intersectional discrimination. Equality Bodies also promote inclusion and diversity and ensure equality and non-discrimination in the context of contemporary challenges such as algorithmic discrimination and climate change. From equal access to employment and services to healthcare, education, and sports, Equality Bodies actively contribute to shaping truly inclusive societies.

This calendar serves as a testament to the profound influence of Equality Bodies. It collects 12 stories from Equinet members and showcases how **Equality Bodies make a tangible difference in the lives of everyone throughout Europe.**

The stories presented here are based on real-life cases, but all names have been changed to preserve individuals' privacy.



# January

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**4** World Braille Day

**27** International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

## UNIA - INTERFEDERAL CENTRE FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, BELGIUM

**Equality Bodies are essential in fostering inclusive societies by combating hate speech and holding those who spread discrimination accountable.**

A Flemish TV documentary exposed the youth movement Schild & Vrienden, led by a former member of the extreme right Vlaams Belang party. The investigation revealed racist content and Holocaust denial shared in closed Facebook and Discord channels. Unia joined the legal proceedings as a plaintiff, contributing to the case against the movement.

Recently, the court convicted the group's leader and six others for inciting discrimination, hatred, and violence, emphasizing that the leader had promoted a culture enabling harmful ideologies. The court rejected the defendants' argument that their posts were mere "jokes," ruling that such humor normalized racism.

While the judgement has been appealed and the case will be reassessed, this ruling already marked important progress in addressing hate speech.



# February

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**1** World Hijab Day

**6** International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

**11** International Day of Women and Girls in Science/Safer Internet Day

**20** International Day for Social Justice

**21** International Mother Language Day

**22** European Day for Victims of Crime

## COMMISSIONER FOR PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION, ALBANIA

Equality Bodies play a key role in fostering inclusion and combating discrimination by supporting initiatives that empower vulnerable groups. Through sports, they can create opportunities to break down barriers, promote understanding, and showcase the abilities of persons with disabilities and other marginalized communities.

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) in Albania has partnered with the National Club of Parents of Children with Autistic Disorders to coach football to people with intellectual disabilities, with the aim of promoting inclusion, equity, and participation of individuals with intellectual disabilities and other vulnerable groups in sports.

Together with the Albanian Football Federation, the CPD and the National Club of Parents of Children with Autistic Disorders work to organize a national football tournament, bringing together at least eight teams from various regions, highlighting the talents of participants and raising public awareness about the values of equality and non-discrimination. The project culminates in the creation of a national team to compete internationally, further advancing the visibility and inclusion of vulnerable communities through sport.



# March

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- 1 Zero Discrimination Day
- 8 International Women's Day
- 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 31 International Transgender Day of Visibility

## NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY, MALTA

Equality Bodies are at the forefront of tackling discrimination through digital automation, playing a crucial role in ensuring equal treatment in access to goods and services and addressing gender bias.

Sarah filed a complaint with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) after encountering issues accessing a joint home insurance policy shared with her male partner. When she provided her ID card number, her details were not found as the IT system defaulted to storing only one person's information per policy and selecting her male partner's over hers, despite Sarah having made it a point to enter her information first on the policy.

The NCPE found this practice discriminatory, breaching the regulations on Equal Treatment in Access to Goods and Services and their Supply, which mandate equal access regardless of gender. While the insurance company denied intentional discrimination, they acknowledged shortcomings in their IT system, and promptly updated it to address the issue.



# April

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**2** World Autism Awareness Day

**8** International Day for Roma

**22** Earth Day

**26** Lesbian Visibility Day

**29** European Day of Solidarity between Generations

## DEFENDER OF RIGHTS, FRANCE

Climate change is not a distant threat but has already a damaging impact on the daily lives of those living in areas mostly affected by this phenomenon. Equality Bodies have a key role to play in restoring access to full equality for individuals suffering the damages of the current climate crisis.

The Defender of Rights is working to address the unequal impact of climate change, particularly in the French overseas territories. With its local delegates, the institution handles individual discrimination complaints and advocates for improved access to healthcare, education, and essential services.

A report by the Defender of Rights on children's rights to a healthy environment recently highlighted how climate change exacerbates inequalities in access to resources, water, healthcare, and education, as well as the right to live in a healthy environment. The report offers actionable recommendations to restore equality for those most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change.



# May

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**5** European Independent Living Day

**17** International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

## OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, HUNGARY

Equality Bodies that have a mandate to tackle discrimination based on the grounds of gender identity, sex characteristics, and gender expression can better address the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community and ensure equality for trans, intersex, and gender-diverse people.

In Hungary, Eszter, a trans woman returning to work after gender reassignment surgery, requested access to the women’s changing room and restroom. Instead of granting her request, the employer held a secret vote among female employees, who largely opposed it. Subsequently, the employer denied her access to the women’s facilities.

The Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights found this to be direct discrimination based on gender identity. It ruled that the employer’s reliance on employees’ opinions was unjustified and ordered the situation to be rectified within 90 days, reinforcing Eszter’s right to dignity and equal treatment.



# June

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**1** Global Day of Parents

**18** International Day for Countering Hate Speech

**20** World Refugee Day

## ADVOCATE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY, SLOVENIA

Equality Bodies that have a mandate extending beyond the EU Equal Treatment Directives, for instance including the ground of nationality, are better equipped to ensure equality and fair treatment for all.

In Slovenia, David, a third-country national, and his Slovenian wife, Ana, attempted to apply for a residence permit under family reunification rules. However, a public employee refused to process their application, alleging that their marriage was fictitious, without following the prescribed procedure to verify such claims.

The Advocate of the Principle of Equality investigated the case and found the refusal to be discriminatory, as it was based solely on the husband's nationality. Following the Advocate's intervention, the administrative unit implemented measures to prevent similar cases in the future, ensuring fairer procedures for all applicants.





# July

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**14** International Non-Binary People's Day

**15** World Youth Skills Day

## INSTITUTE FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN, BELGIUM

**Equality Bodies are vital in addressing discrimination resulting from the interplay or cumulation of multiple personal characteristics such as gender, age, and health status.**

Emma was fired from her job of 16 years after informing her employer about health complications following a traumatic childbirth, which also affected her child. The dismissal occurred shortly after she disclosed her situation, despite expressing her willingness to continue working. Her dismissal letter stated she was being replaced by someone “younger, dynamic, and flexible.”

The Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IGVM) intervened on its own motion in the lawsuit initiated by Emma to support her claims and argued that her dismissal constituted discrimination based not only on gender (pregnancy), on which the IGVM has a mandate, but also on age and health. The Court agreed, ruling that the employer had violated anti-discrimination laws.

The judgment emphasized that replacing an employee based on such criteria reinforces harmful stereotypes and marginalizes individuals who wish to remain in the workforce despite health-related difficulties.



# August

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**12** International Youth Day

**22** International Day Commemorating Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief

**31** International Day for People of African Descent

## OMBUDSWOMAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA, CROATIA

Equality Bodies play a vital role in educating service providers to prevent discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin and ensuring that vulnerable groups, like refugees, receive their rightful support.

A dentist informed Maryam, a refugee mother, that she needed to pay for her children's retainers, despite their dental care being covered by health insurance as asylees. The mother, aware of her rights, sought help from the Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia to address this discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin.

After investigating, the Ombudsman reminded the dentist that refugees have the same healthcare rights as other insured individuals. She also recommended that if the dentist had doubts about healthcare rights in the future, they should consult the Ministry of Health for clarification. As a result, the children received their retainers without any charge.



# September

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**15** International Day of Democracy

**21** European Day against Islamophobia / International Day of Peace

**23** International Day of Sign Languages

## EQUALITY OMBUDSMAN, SWEDEN

**Equality Bodies play a crucial role in addressing discrimination and promoting fair treatment for individuals of all religious backgrounds.**

Farah was recruited as airline ground staff through a recruitment company. After being hired, she was informed she could not wear her hijab due to the airline's neutrality standard in uniform policy, which banned visible religious symbols. Both the recruitment company and the airline upheld the restriction, prompting Farah's decision to resign from the job and seek the assistance of the Equality Ombudsman.

The Equality Ombudsman sued the airline, citing direct discrimination, since it only targeted religious symbols, as opposed to all symbols stating a belief, and indirect discrimination, since the policy was neither necessary nor proportionate to its claimed aims of neutrality or safety. The airline agreed that the policy was discriminatory and accepted to settle and financially compensate Farah for the breach.



# October

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**1** International Day of Older Persons

**10** World Mental Health Day

**15** International Pronouns Day

**17** International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

**25** European Day of Justice

**26** Intersex Awareness Day

## GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL TREATMENT COMMISSIONER, ESTONIA

**Equality Bodies are vital in ensuring inclusion for all in the workplace so that everyone can thrive and be part of the working life without any discrimination.**

A non-native Estonian speaker approached the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner to understand whether their employer could lawfully require employees to speak Estonian during off-time, such as lunch breaks. After examining Estonian legislation, EU directives, and relevant court rulings, the Commissioner concluded that such a requirement is not in line with Estonian legal standards if the off-time is unpaid.

The Commissioner recommended that employers who wish to promote the use of Estonian language opt for positive and voluntary initiatives, such as language games, competitions, or provide paid breaks for practice. These measures encourage language learning in a supportive environment without infringing on workers' rights and they build inclusive safer spaces for all employees.



# November

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**9** International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism

**16** International Day for Tolerance

**20** Transgender Day of Remembrance / International Children's Day

**25** International Day to End Violence against Women

## GENDER EQUALITY OMBUDSPERSON, CROATIA

**Equality Bodies are essential in addressing discriminatory practices and promoting inclusivity, particularly in education, where messages of equality can shape young minds.**

The Gender Equality Ombudsperson in Croatia received complaints about notebooks distributed by a municipality to first-grade students. The covers depicted a different-sex couple and their two children shielding themselves with an umbrella from rainbow-colored raindrops, accompanied by the text: "Everything is ok, but... Family always comes first!", implying that the LGBTIQ+ community, symbolized by the rainbow, posed a threat to families.

The Ombudsperson concluded that this constituted direct discrimination based on sexual orientation, perpetuating harmful stereotypes with public funds. A warning was issued to the municipality and school, alongside a recommendation to provide training on gender equality.

The school later organized a lecture for teachers on human rights and preventing discrimination against sexual and gender minorities, taking a step toward fostering equality in education.



# December

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**3** International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**10** Human Rights Day

**18** International Migrants Day

## PUBLIC DEFENDER OF RIGHTS, CZECH REPUBLIC

Equality Bodies help educate institutions to prevent discrimination and ensure individuals with disabilities can fully exercise their rights.

Petr, a man with a mild intellectual disability, was denied access to his bank accounts because the bank mistakenly believed his guardian's consent was required for all financial transactions. This misinterpretation of his guardianship status prevented him from managing his own money.

Petr reached out to the Public Defender of Rights, who clarified that his guardianship allowed him to act independently, having the power to choose to request the support of his guardian. The Public Defender of Rights educated the bank on the correct interpretation of guardianship without restriction of legal capacity, leading them to change their policies.

As a result, Petr regained full access to his accounts, and the bank took steps to prevent similar issues in the future. This case also helped raise awareness of the rights of people under such guardianship arrangements.



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OF EQUALITY BODIES

## EQUINET MEMBERS:

COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION, **ALBANIA** | AUSTRIAN DISABILITY OMBUDSPERSON, **AUSTRIA** | OMBUD FOR EQUAL TREATMENT, **AUSTRIA** | UNIA (INTERFEDERAL CENTRE FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES), **BELGIUM** | INSTITUTE FOR THE EQUALITY OF 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** | GENDER EQUALITY OMBUDSPERSON, **CROATIA** | OMBUDSMAN FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, **CROATIA** | OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION AND THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, **CYPRUS** | 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\*** | OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA, **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** | EQUALITY COUNCIL, **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 OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND, **POLAND** | COMMISSION FOR CITIZENSHIP AND GENDER EQUALITY, **PORTUGAL** | COMMISSION FOR EQUALITY IN LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT, **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** | UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENT COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, **UKRAINE** | EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, **UNITED KINGDOM – GREAT BRITAIN** | EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, **UNITED KINGDOM – 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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