



Membership handbook 2012 A guide to internal procedures (excerpt)

Equinet – the European network of equality bodies



With the support of the European Commission

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1. Introduction

The member's handbook 2012 gives an overview of the running of Equinet – from the organisation's structure to a step-by-step guide to internal procedures.

Should there be anything that is not clear from the handbook, please feel free to contact the Equinet Secretariat.

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B-1000 Brussels
Belgium

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1.1 Vision

Equinet, the European network of equality bodies, was established in 2007 as an international not-for-profit association (ASIBL/INFPA) under Belgian law. The network was born out of the project entitled 'Strengthening the cooperation between specialised equality bodies for the implementation of equal treatment legislation', funded by the European Commission Community Action Programme. Equinet builds upon this two year project (2002-2004) and is currently funded by PROGRESS, the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013).

Equinet works to enable equality bodies to achieve and exercise their full potential at Member State level by sustaining and developing a networking between and a platform for equality bodies at European level.

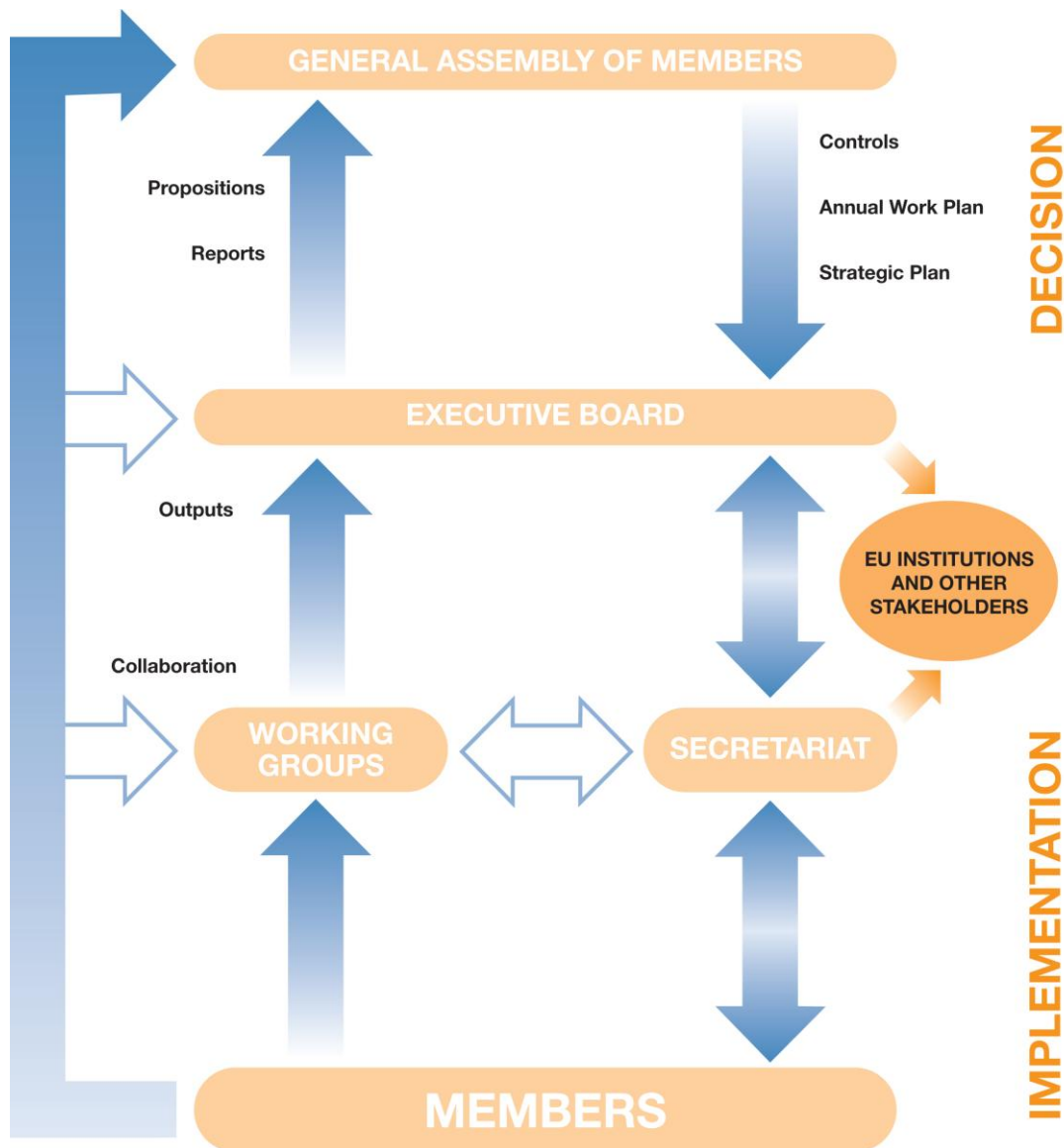
This networking and platform consist of running trainings and seminars; organising and moderating working group meetings and discussions; publishing reports on equality issues and managing the online forum.

1.2 Structure

Equinet currently consists of 37 equality bodies across Europe. The Brussels-based Secretariat is responsible for implementing the decisions made by the Executive Board (elected every two years at the annual general meeting of members [AGM]) and the General Assembly of Members.

Within this structure are the working groups. Each working group tackles different issues in Equality. Each working group is led by a moderator who is appointed by the Executive Board.

The following diagram illustrates the operational structure of Equinet:



1.3 Current Members

Equinet has 37 members from 30 countries across Europe:

Austria	Ombud for Equal Treatment
Belgium	Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism
	Institute for the Equality of Women and Men
Bulgaria	Commission for Protection against Discrimination
Croatia	Office of the Ombudsman
Cyprus	Office of the Ombudsman
Czech Republic	Public Defender of Rights – Ombudsman
Denmark	Board of Equal Treatment
	Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
Estonia	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner
Finland	Ombudsman for Equality
	Ombudsman for Minorities
France	Defender of Rights
Germany	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency
Greece	Office of the Ombudsman
Hungary	Equal Treatment Authority
	Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities
Ireland	Equality Authority
Italy	National Office against Racial Discrimination
Latvia	Office of the Ombudsman
Lithuania	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

Luxembourg	Centre for Equal Treatment
Malta	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
Netherlands	Dutch Equal Treatment Commission (CGB)
Norway	Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud
Poland	Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman)
Portugal	Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)
	High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI)
	Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE)
Romania	National Council for Combating Discrimination
Slovakia	National Centre for Human Rights
Slovenia	Office for Equal Opportunities
Spain	Spanish Race and Ethnic Equality Council
Serbia	Commission for the Protection of Equality
Sweden	Discrimination Ombudsman
UK – Great Britain	Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
UK – Northern Ireland	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

2. Procedures

2.1 Membership

2.1.1 Application

The application procedure is a three stage process (in accordance with the Equinet statutes).

1. Letter of Application

Once an organisation has decided they would like to become part of Equinet, they need to write a formal letter of application addressed to the Executive Director.

The letter of application must meet the following conditions:

- the letter must be submitted using the organisation's official letterhead
- it must be signed by the appropriate representative, CEO or Chair of the Board.

In addition, **a copy of legislation, statute or other document which demonstrates that the equality body in question is specialised in equality issues** must be attached. This document should illustrate that the **body performs the function of** an equality body as listed in **article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC** (independent assistance to victims, independent surveys, publishing independent reports and making recommendations on issues relating to discrimination) **and/or article 12 of Directive 2004/113/EC** (the above functions) **and/or article 20 of Directive 2006/54/EC (the above functions plus information exchange with corresponding European bodies).**

These documents must be accompanied by a translation **in English**.

An example letter of application can be found in annex I.

2. Executive Board Review

Once the application letter and supporting documents have been received, they are then submitted to the Executive Board for discussion during their next board meeting. The application is then reviewed and a decision is made on whether to accept or reject it.

3. Annual General Assembly Ratification

The Board's decision then needs to be ratified by the Annual General Assembly at its first meeting following the board's approval. Once the Assembly has ratified or rejected the decision, the Executive Director will inform the candidate organisation in writing of the outcome. If successful, the body becomes a full member of Equinet immediately after the AGM ratification vote.

2.1.2 Fees and Contributions

Following from the decision of the 2007 AGM, all members of Equinet are required to make a financial contribution to the network. These contributions are essential to ensuring that Equinet respects its EC financing agreement and related co-financing agreement - currently, the Commission contributes 75% of the annual budget; the remaining 25% is to be funded from other sources.

Following the decision adopted by the AGM 2009, Equinet operates a three-tiered membership fee system, to reflect the operating budgets of its members. The annual membership fee system is shown in the table below.

Annual Operating Budget of Equality Body (€)	Minimum Annual Membership Fee (€)
Under 1,000,000	1,000
Between 1,000,000 and 2,500,000	2,000
2,500,000 and above	3,000

As membership fees are an integral part of the contribution to the co-financing arrangement, contributions which exceed that minimum fee are most welcome.

Budget Declaration

In order to ascertain which band each body falls into, members are requested, annually, to send a budget declaration to the Secretariat.

This budget declaration is a breakdown of all the different monies that equality bodies spend on equality. An example declaration can be found in annex II.

Equality bodies must send the declaration for the coming year by the first week of December. It is important that this deadline is respected – on the basis of these declarations Equinet is obliged to declare its financial income to the European Commission for the grant application of the coming year.

2.1.3 Payment Procedure

1. Invoices

Members will receive an invoice (see annex III) at the beginning of the year to cover their membership for that year (01/01/20XX – 31/12/20XX). New members will also receive an invoice at the beginning of the year following the year of their membership ratification.

2. Bank transfer

Members must pay the membership fee invoice promptly (before the **15th February**) by bank transfer to the following account:

Beneficiary:	EQUINET AISBL
Bank name:	ING Belgium SA/NV
IBAN:	BE 95363017481258
BIC/Swift Code:	BBRUBEBB
Payment reference:	Membership details – year + name of equality body

Important Notes

- Equinet will not accept any additional fees or charges that may be incurred through payment.
- Equinet is **only able to accept payment in the form of bank transfers** (and not cheques).

If a member does not pay the minimum membership fee, Equinet reserves the right to refuse reimbursement of costs due to the member (travel expenses, accommodation etc for training sessions, working group meetings, etc.) up to the first EUR 1000.

2.1.4 Members' timesheets

In addition to contributing financially, members' time contributions also form part of the 25% co-financing requirement.

At the end of each year, members are required to commit to a certain number of days dedicated to Equinet for the following year (see 2.1.6 *letter of commitment*). Equinet then converts the contributions into money – based on the personnel cost of the member. This conversion allows Equinet to reach the 25% co-financing agreement.

Each member organisation is expected to ensure that staff members dedicate an average of 30 days per year to Equinet (although smaller organisations are able to dedicate less by prior arrangement).

These 30 days can be spent in any of the following ways: participation in Equinet's AGM, contribution to Equinet Working Group activities (communication, preparation of reports, meetings etc) and participation in and preparation of Equinet training events. Board members' time contributions include participation in and preparation of Board meetings.

2.1.5 Time contributions

1. Commitment

As mentioned earlier, members are required to commit to at least 30 days **at the end of the year** for the following year via the letter of commitment (see 2.1.6 *letter of commitment*).

2. Timesheets

Timesheets are a summary of the time committed at the Equinet Members level by each staff involved in Equinet activities. At the beginning of each year, the Secretariat will request timesheets from each member for the preceding year. These timesheets must be included in the financial report to the European Commission, therefore it is essential that they are completed on time. Members must keep track of how much time they have donated to Equinet throughout the year.

Members need to send their timesheets to

Yannick Godin, Administrative and Finance Officer,
Equinet Secretariat – European Network of Equality Bodies
138 rue Royale/Konningstraat,
B-1000 Brussels,
Belgium.

Email: Yannick.Godin@equineteurope.org
Fax: +32 (0)2 212 30 30

Important note:

Without these timesheets, Equinet will not be able to complete its final reporting to the European Commission. As a consequence of this, the payment of the final instalment of the grant might be jeopardised.

Day rates are provided by members corresponding to the costs of their staff time inputs in order to quantify the level of co-financing by Equinet provided in staff time contribution, in addition to membership fees. Day rates provided must correspond to real costs for the member organisation. The European Commission may ask at times for justification of certain day rates.

A template timesheet can be found in annex IV.

2.1.6 Letters of commitment

By early December, members are required to send a letter of commitment to the Equinet Secretariat. This letter will confirm the member's contribution for the coming year on the following grounds:

1. Payment of membership fee
2. Contributions of staff time to Equinet activities

Members will need to send their letters to:

Yannick Godin (Administration and Finance officer),
Equinet Secretariat,
138 rue Royale/Koningstraat,
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium.

Email: Yannick.Godin@equineteurope.org

Fax: +32 (0)2212 30 30

These letters of commitment (to be submitted in December for the forthcoming year) are needed in order to comply with the European Commission Grant Application. Without all the letters of commitment from members, the European Commission Grant Application cannot be completed and submitted – all payments may be suspended as a result.

See annex V for an example letter of commitment.

2.1.7. Structural Change within a Member Organisation

When a Member body is being merged into or replaced by another entity/organisation, the new body will be asked to send Equinet a formal letter confirming its will to remain a Member of Equinet and provide evidence (e.g. legislation) that it still meets the Equinet Membership requirements.

2.2 Expenses

2.2.1 Travel and accommodation expenses rules

Equinet is able to cover all expenses members incur for participation in Equinet events (travel, accommodation etc). However, for the AGM, members are expected to cover the costs of the representative(s) they send. This section explains the rules and procedures for expenses in training events and the AGM.

2.2.2 General travel expenses

Equinet will cover all expenses incurred by participants for training events, working group meetings, Board meetings and other events as appropriate **(except the AGM)**.

Claims for reimbursement should be submitted to the Equinet Secretariat using the form in annex VI, to the following address:

Yannick Godin (Administration and Finance Officer),
Equinet Secretariat,
138 rue Royale/Koningstraat,
B-1000 Brussels,
Belgium.

Email: Yannick.Godin@equineteurope.org

Fax: +32 (02) 212 30 30

Requests for reimbursement are subject to Equinet budgets and European Commission financial regulations. Equinet will cover economy class air travel up to a threshold of EUR 350. Members must keep original invoices and boarding passes/tickets and submit these with their claim forms.

As proposed by the Equinet Board and Treasurer and approved at the AGM (18 April 2008), actual payments and reimbursement of members' costs may be postponed to the end of the financial year in order to bridge cash-flow gaps related to the payment schedule of the European Commission Grant to the Equinet network. For this reason, and general reasoning of expense request processing time, Equinet advises individuals not to pay for their tickets themselves but rather, where possible, request that their organisation covers the cost. The organisation can then claim the costs back from Equinet.

2.2.3 AGM travel expenses

Following the decision taken at the AGM 2007, Equinet will not reimburse travel or accommodation expenses for AGMs. Equinet will, however, cover the other costs of the AGM event (conference venue, costs, documentation, meals etc).

There are, in exceptional cases, funds available to support member organisations that are not in position to cover these costs themselves. However, Equinet is only able to support a small number of participants from such organisations.

3. Annexes - Templates

Annex I: Template letter of membership application (printed on official organisation letterhead)

Official letterhead of equality body

Executive Director
EQUINET AISBL
European Network of Equality Bodies
138 rue Royale
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium.

Date, place

On behalf of (*name of organisation*) I request formal membership of Equinet AISBL/INFPA – European Network of Equality Bodies, enjoying the full rights that members of Equinet are entitled to and respecting the obligations that membership brings with it, including adhering to Equinet statutes.

(Chief Executive)

Annex II: Equinet declaration of estimate budget dedicated to equality work in 2012.

First name

Surname

Organisation

Address

Country

Email

[Please refer to the Budget chart on page 2 to help you determine what needs to be taken into account in your 2009 operating budget estimation]

In line with the approval by the Equinet AGM 2009 of the new system of Membership fees, the undersigned hereby declares that the total budget of his/her organisation dedicated to Equality work for the year 2009 amounts to _____ EUR.

The undersigned declares that the above-mentioned amount is an honest estimate to the best of his/her knowledge based on relevant budget lines for the year 2009.

Signature:

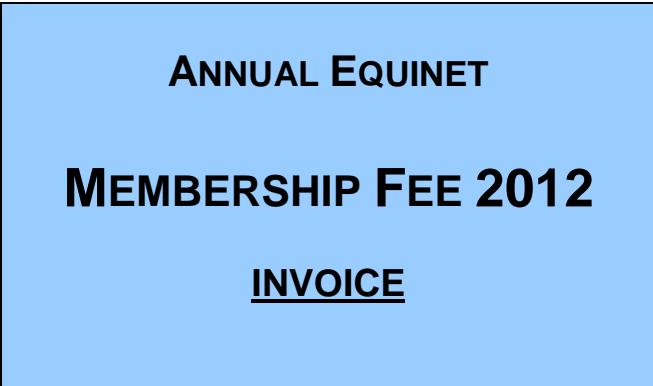
Date:

Estimated Operating Budget for 2012	
General headings	
1. General and administrative costs	
<i>Rents, stationery/equipment, equipment leases, insurance, utilities, taxes, organisation or/participation in seminars, conferences, workshops etc, translation, publications, research work (surveys, studies etc), communication/promotion, other costs, travel and accommodation, stationery/material purchase, consultancy, misc. etc</i>	
Total	€ xxx xxx
2. Salaries	
<i>Includes wages of all permanent and temporary personnel involved in equality work. In cases of part-time work, a pro-rate estimate is acceptable. Please also include the salaries of employees recruited for specific projects related to equality.</i>	
Total	€ xxx xxx
3. Funds for the implementation of equality related projects	
Total	€ xxx xxx
GRAND TOTAL	€ xxx xxx

Annex III: Template invoice for payment of annual Equinet membership fee



Rue Royale 138
 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
 Tel +32 (0)2 2123182
 Fax +32 (0)2 2123030
info@equineteurope.org
www.equineteurope.org



Member Organisation	
COUNTRY	

Date of the Invoice	Communication	Total Amount (€)
dd/mm/year	Equinet Membership Fee 2012	-

** This amount is a minimum annual Membership Fee. Member organisations which are able or willing to contribute a higher amount as a support and co-financing to the functioning and operations of the Network are welcome to do so.*


We hereby request payment of the above mentioned Annual Membership Fee 200X by your member organisation. Payment should be made by bank transfer only as per details below, within 30 days following the date of this invoice.

The Equinet Board and Secretariat thank you in advance for your cooperation.

PAYMENT DETAILS (BANK TRANSFER ONLY):

Name of bank account holder:	EQUINET AISBL
Bank name:	ING Belgium SA/NV
Bank address & country:	Brussels North Area–Central Station Rue Ravenstein 68 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Account Number:	363-0174812-58
IBAN:	BE 95363017481258
BIC:	BBRUBEBB

Annex IV: Template time sheet

	TIMESHEET EQUINET MEMBER 1 January [2012] – 31 December [2012]
Name of Organisation (Equinet Member):	[insert]
Country:	[insert]
EC Contract Title Reference:	Equinet Aisbl – European Network of Specialised Equality Bodies
EC Contract Reference:	[VS/2010/0086 [Commitment SI2.560844]

Please complete the below table for each day worked (in full days or 0.5 days) by any of staff for the following activities – training events, working Group meetings/reports/activities, communication and exchange with members etc. **Please do not include the AGM or Board meetings in this table**

Date	Number of day(s) –	Place of work	Name of staff person / Detail on event or activity
dd/mm/year	1		
dd/mm/year	0.5		
TOTAL (days)	[total sum]		

Name of member representative:

Daily rate:

The below table is for **Board meetings** (participation and preparation) and the Equinet **AGM**.

Date	Number of day(s) –	Place of work	Name of staff person / Detail on event or activity
dd/mm/year	1		
dd/mm/year	0.5		
TOTAL (days)	[total sum]		

Name of member representative:

Daily rate:

Daily rates are estimated and calculated on the basis of total real employment costs (gross salary + social security charges + holidays/social advantages) for the level of staff representative(s) concerned. According to European Commission financial regulations relating to Equinet Grant contract, the daily rate must be calculated on the basis of an average of 20 days per month, up to a maximum total of 220 working days per annum.

We have made a distinction between participation at training events and the AGM/Board meetings as delegates to the AGM/Board meetings tend to be Directors of Chief Executives. Participants in training events, on the other hand, tend to be staff members on a different level (e.g. legal or policy officers). We therefore expect a different daily rate to be applicable to the AGM/Board meetings than to training events.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Organisation stamp:

Please return the completed and signed form to: Yannick Godin – EQUINET Secretariat

Yannick.Godin@equineteurope.org or Fax +32 (0)22123030

Rue Royale 138, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Annex V: Template letter of commitment

Printed on organisation letterhead

EQUINET Board
c/o EQUINET executive director
Rue Royale 138
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Re: Contribution [2012] to the EQUINET Network

Dear Members of the Board,

On behalf of [member organisation] I hereby inform you that our organisation will contribute in the year [2012] the staff as provided for in the Equinet Network proposal (beneficiary contribution) and budget, being:

1. A 2012 membership fee of minimum € xxxx
2. [x] number of days at a daily rate of [y]
3. [a] number of days at a daily rate of [b] (in case a different rate is applied for AGM attendance, working group/ training activities, Board)

The contribution is calculated on an annual basis for 2012.

Yours sincerely,

[executive officer]
[member organisation]

Annex VI: Template travel expenses form



Expenses Reimbursement Form

Please return this form to:
EQUINET Administration & Finance Officer
Yannick.Godin@equineteurope.org
 Rue Royale 138, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
 Tel: +32 (0)2 212 3182 / Fax: +32 (0)2 212 3030

Name:	
Organisation (if applicable):	
Event / activity:	
Date of the event:	
Place of the event:	

Details of Reimbursement claim:

DATE of expense (dd/mm/yyyy)	Details of the Item	Cost per Item (€)*	Number of items (nights, tickets)	Total Amount (€)*
	Travel – provide details (1)		1	€ 0.00
	Accommodation – provide details		1	€ 0.00
Other Per diem costs (e.g. meals, local transport, etc.) – provide details for each item				
	Item - provide details		1	€ 0.00
	...Item - provide details		1	€ 0.00
	...Item - provide details		1	€ 0.00
TOTAL for Reimbursement (in Euro currency):				€ 0.00

(1) International travel only in economy class, local transfer included in per diem

** If the supporting invoices/tickets are provided in another currency than Euro (€), please attach a copy of the daily exchange rate applied in order to present your claim above in Euro (€) currency.*

IMPORTANT - please attach (as requested per EC financial regulations):

- Original tickets and boarding pass or boarding pass stubs (flights) / Tickets (train)
- Original copy of all invoices / receipts supporting claims listed above

Reimbursement Details for Bank Transfer:

Name of bank account holder:	
Bank name:	
Bank address & country:	
IBAN:	
BIC:	
Your reference (if applicable):	