

# European Network of Equality Bodies Together for an Equal Europe

Equinet Draft Strategic Plan 2019-2022

## Foreword

***Equinet, as a strong, engaged and innovative network, will continue to strengthen and support equality bodies and act as their expert voice to advance equality and non-discrimination in Europe.*** Our goal is to enable national equality bodies to fulfil their full potential to support people experiencing discrimination and to achieve substantive equality for all. Considering the increasingly challenging political, demographic and digital environment across Europe, enhancing the role of equality bodies as key champions for equality and safeguards for non-discrimination is more crucial than ever.

Over the past decade, we have built a responsive and effective network of national equality bodies and developed strong alliances for equality across Europe, and have successfully contributed to the emergence of new European standards for the establishment and operation of equality bodies. We have facilitated the leadership and staff of equality bodies to engage in key equality debates, increased their capacity on a broad range of non-discrimination issues, as well as created a unique body of literature on equality issues and the work of equality bodies.

This Strategic Plan gives practical expression to our hopes and ambitions for the next four years. It should position Equinet to assist equality bodies to respond to the changing societal, political and policy landscape in relation to the equality and equal treatment sector in Europe. Over the 2019 – 2022 period, we look to build upon our past successes and learnings to guide our future work in a way that is coherent and progressive. Our network will seek to extend its reach within equality bodies to engage with the future generations of leaders within our members. We will also strategically broaden our institutional relations with a wider range of stakeholders at European and international level, and maximise the potential in new developments in a challenging context for equality. By the end of 2022, we will have enhanced the strategic and operational capacity of equality bodies, strengthened the knowledge and expertise of equality body staff, as well as the operational and institutional capacity of the Equinet Secretariat. We aim to see an increasing influence of the learning from the work of equality bodies on policy, programmes and practice for a more equal Europe. We will consolidate a sustainable and resilient network of strong equality bodies at the cutting edge of work on equality issues and aim for a wider recognition of Equinet and equality bodies' vital role as catalysts towards full equality for all in Europe.

Tena Šimonović Einwalter

Chair of Equinet Board

Anne Gaspard

Equinet Executive Director

As a network of unique independent public institutions - national equality bodies - we work towards achieving equality and ensuring non-discrimination for everyone in all aspects of their lives. We aim to be a strong, resilient and innovative network in order to contribute to the achievement of substantive equality by addressing structural and institutional barriers and raising awareness on, understanding and appreciation of equality as a shared value. Doing so, we seek to empower everyone to fully participate in society and have equal access to existing opportunities in Europe.

## **Vision**

An equal Europe: where equality is a reality for everyone, diversity is valued, and all forms of discrimination have been eliminated.

## **Mission**

As the European Network of Equality Bodies, Equinet promotes equality in Europe by supporting equality bodies to be independent and effective catalysts for more equal societies.

## **Values**

We aim to deliver our mission in a way that embodies and promotes:

- **Equality**
- **Respect**
- **Dignity**
- **Solidarity**
- **Diversity**
- **Inclusion**
- **Transparency**
- **Participation**
- **Innovation**

## **OUR APPROACH**

*Note: an infographic visualising OUR APPROACH will be developed once the draft is confirmed by the Equinet General Assembly of Members*

**Support** - We provide capacity-building activities with and for equality body staff, as well as offer support to equality bodies in need of solidarity, including because of undue challenges to their independence or effectiveness.

**Networking** - We encourage and facilitate knowledge exchange, sharing of good practices and peer-to-peer support among equality bodies, as well as with equality stakeholders at European and international level.

**Research & Knowledge Hub** - We carry out legal and policy research to inform European policy and legislative developments, and provide relevant knowledge to those interested in equality and non-discrimination in Europe.

**Expert Advice** - We contribute to the European equality agenda by offering expert advice on equality and non-discrimination policy and legislation, based on the experience of equality bodies.

**Promotion** – We promote equality as a European value and seek to advance diversity and solidarity in Europe.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Equinet works to:

- 1. strengthen and support equality bodies to achieve equality for all*
- 2. act as the expert voice of equality bodies to advance equality in Europe*
- 3. sustain a resilient, engaged and innovative network*

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

#### *Strengthen and support equality bodies to achieve equality for all*

##### **Focus**

**National equality bodies are champions for the core European value of equality.** As part of a wider institutional framework, they are public independent institutions that also act as safeguards of the principle of equal treatment established in the EU legislation and specifically, the equal treatment directives. Equinet, as a network, seeks to support this crucial role of equality bodies. We do so by facilitating the development of expert and institutional capacities of our members, promoting the full implementation of European legislation and standards for equality bodies at national level, and providing opportunities for good practice exchange and peer-to-peer support. In line with diversity being one of the core values for our work, we harness the great variety in history, approach, mandate, powers, resources and standing of equality bodies as a rich source for peer learning and support.

##### **Action Areas**

We work to strengthen our members to realise their full potential in contributing to the achievement of equality for all by:

- Supporting the understanding, implementation and monitoring of European standards for equality bodies at European and Member State level;
- Strengthening institutional capacity of equality bodies by offering guidance and opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer support systems;

- Building the capacity of equality body staff by providing space for peer exchange, learning, information sharing and development of expertise;
- Building the capacity of equality bodies to increase their visibility by raising awareness about their work, understanding of their role and functions, recognition and appreciation of their potential at European and Member State level.

## Outcomes

As a result of our work, we expect to see:

- An increase in the number of equality bodies analysing, engaging and seeking to improve their position on the basis of European standards for equality bodies;
- An increase in the expertise of equality body staff on legal, policy and communication matters on equality and non-discrimination and;
- An increase in the number of equality bodies engaging in peer-support activities.

Our work will strive to contribute to:

- An increase in the percentage of people identifying equality bodies as the first point of contact for cases of discrimination and information on equality;
- An increase in the number of equality bodies with sustained and secure resources;
- A decrease in the number of instances when independence of equality bodies is being compromised.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

*Act as the expert voice of equality bodies to advance equality in Europe*

### Focus

As a network, we convey to the European level the practical experience of equality bodies in promoting equality and combatting discrimination on the ground. With a bottom-up and evidence-based approach, we raise awareness on the importance of equality and diversity, and strengthen the appreciation and fulfilment of these across Europe. **We act as the expert voice of equality bodies**, maintaining deep and sustained relationships with European and international partners **to promote equality and advance equal treatment legislation.**

### Action Areas

We seek in the years ahead to consolidate further our impact in this area by:

- Identifying, researching and analysing emerging challenges and opportunities in the field of equality and non-discrimination;

- Conveying the expert voice of equality bodies at European and international level;
- Being a research and knowledge hub for the work and contribution of equality bodies, while further generating and disseminating knowledge on equality and non-discrimination;
- Strengthening cooperation with all relevant stakeholders at European level and acting as a focal point for building shared perspectives and generating new thinking on equality and non-discrimination.

## **Outcomes**

As a result of our work, we expect to see:

- Extending evidence-based state-of-the-art body of knowledge in the field of equality and non-discrimination, derived from the experience, data and research of equality bodies;
- Increased recognition of Equinet and equality bodies as key actors and experts on equality and non-discrimination;
- Increased occasions of national equality bodies' experience influencing European policy and legislative developments;
- Deeper and sustained institutional relations with relevant European and international stakeholders;
- A well-developed, positive, values-based narrative on equality shared and promoted in Europe.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3**

### *Sustain a resilient, engaged and innovative network*

#### **Focus**

***Equinet is a network of and for its members.*** Sustained network resilience is essential for the successful delivery of the first two objectives. Therefore, we strive to provide a supportive and collaborative environment for the substantial contribution and benefit of members through knowledge-sharing, peer-exchange and support. Active membership engagement is a vital prerequisite for ensuring the development, innovation and strengthening of the Network to achieve its mission of promoting equality for all more effectively.

#### **Action Areas**

We will enhance the strength, resilience and innovative capacity of the Network by:

- Remaining relevant to the diversity of our membership and their staff, across the different combinations of functions and/or mandates held by equality bodies;
- Strengthening our governance through transparency, inclusion and increased Board capacity;
- Sustaining active membership communication and engagement through a variety of innovative communication tools;
- Ensuring sustainability of funding through securing a core grant and seeking diversification;
- Implementing better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

## **Outcomes**

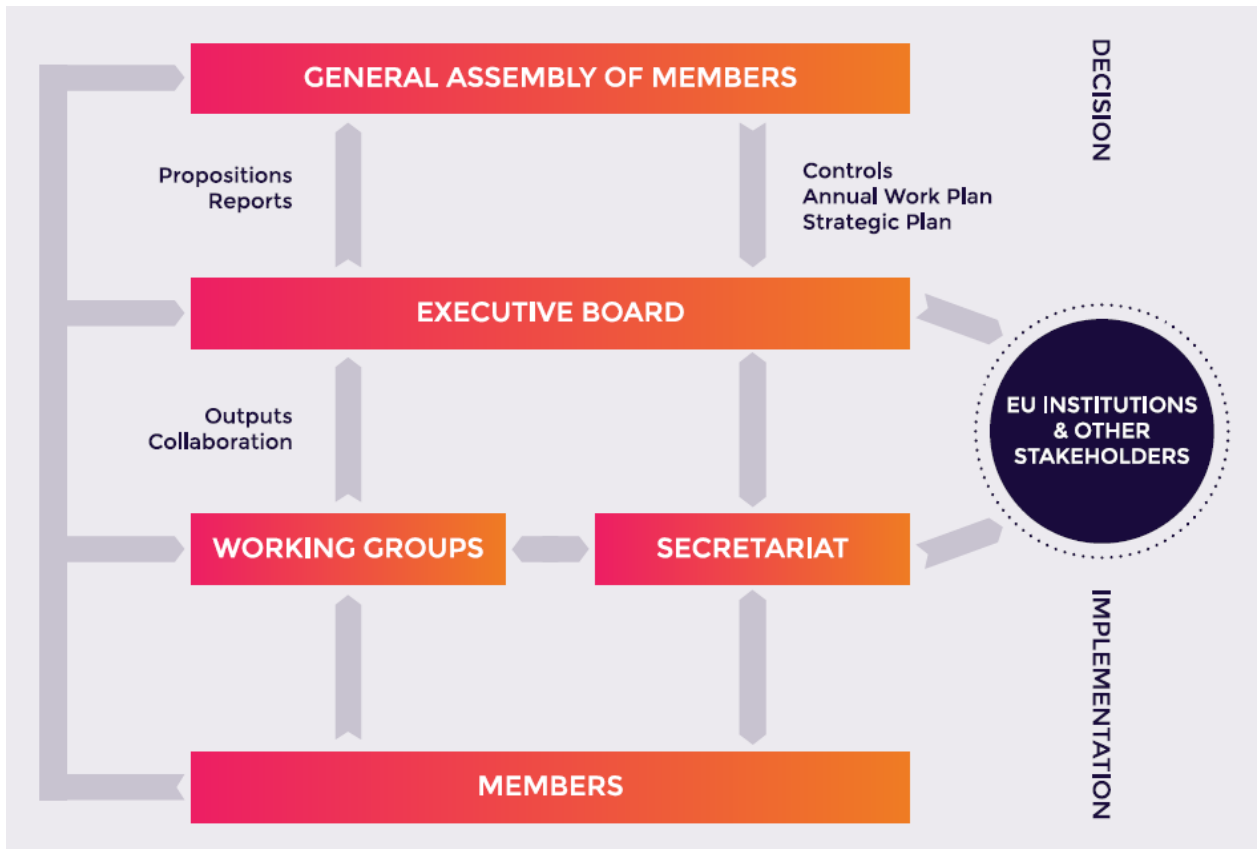
As a result of our work, we expect to see:

- Better informed and involved members with regard to key equality issues for the Network, ongoing projects, as well as governance and decision-making processes;
- Strengthened strategic leadership of Equinet;
- Strengthened administrative and institutional capacity of the Secretariat;
- Increased accountability and transparency in the way we work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

The leadership of Equinet - the Board and the participants of the Network's highest decision-making body, the General Assembly of Members, supported by the Secretariat staff - sets the tone for the whole Network, by giving direction, holding each other to account for performance, but also by agreeing and ensuring that the values of Equinet are effectively realized through the work of the Network.

Equinet members are at the core of our network structure: Equinet is a network of and for its members. Therefore, the active engagement and contribution of all our members guarantees the resilience, sustainability, innovation and further development of the Network to reach its full potential of promoting equality in Europe. The Board and Secretariat in turn seek to ensure that this engagement and contribution is made possible in an efficient manner guided by the values shared within the Equinet Network. The graph below presents the structure of our Network, the relations between its building blocks, as well as of the Network vis-à-vis our partners and stakeholders.



## MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING

To continuously do better, learning from our experience, we need to put in place specific and effective arrangements to ensure that we have the data and tools to measure our performance. At Equinet, we want to challenge ourselves in a way that advances the Network.

To achieve this aim, during the coming strategic plan period we will establish an evaluation and monitoring framework to clarify the type of data and information we need to collect in order to effectively track the progress of the Network and its work towards positive societal change. In this way, we will ensure that our shared vision and mission are better reflected and advanced in our day-to-day work.

- We will ensure that our strategic plan informs directly our annual operating plans and we will report both to the Board and to the General Assembly of Members on our successes and challenges in relation to delivering our ambitions.
- The preparation and presentation of our internal evaluation reports will be accompanied by space for reflection (e.g. during AGMs) so that the key learnings may be captured to inform the next round of planning.
- We will periodically engage an external evaluation to support our ability to learn, improve and adapt better.
- In line with our value of transparency, the results of all our internal and external evaluation work will be shared not only with members but also with *key* partners, not least our funding partners.