

Fredrik Reinfeldt
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
103 33 Stockholm
Sweden

Brussels, 10 July 2009

Re: Call for an active leadership in putting forward equality for all in the EU

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to encourage your support and commitment to further intensify the efforts at EU level to secure the adoption of the proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

EQUINET is the European network of specialised equality bodies established across the Member States with statutory mandates to promote equality and combat discrimination. Our network aims to enhance cooperation between national equality institutions and seeks to act as a point of support for its members in the implementation of their core functions as defined in the existing anti-discrimination EU Directives 2000/43/EC, 2002/73/EC and 2004/113/EC.

EQUINET strongly supports the proposal for the anti-discrimination horizontal Directive promoting equal treatment in fields outside the labour market, which is urgently required. The Directive would create a coherent and integrated legal framework that covers all areas of daily life, and ensure equal treatment to all European citizens. When enacted, it will help to close a significant gap in the legal protection against discrimination on grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief and remove the impression of a hierarchy of rights in the EU legal framework in this area.

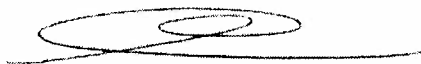
Equinet urges the Swedish Presidency to pursue and further intensify the European Union's efforts to ensure full equality for all European citizens. We trust and expect that under your leadership the proposed Directive will be actively discussed and will find its place on the EU agenda as a crucial legal document to be constructively addressed by all EU Members States. The emphasis put on this matter by the Swedish Presidency would also convey a significant message in the context of the forthcoming Equality Summit to be held in Stockholm on 16-17 November 2009.

In this respect, we further would wish to express our firm belief that we cannot allow for the current dramatic downturn in the global economy to be a barrier in the successful adoption of the proposed Directive. Full and equal participation of all its citizens can only benefit the European Union, and in times of economic crisis it is more, not less, important to ensure that effective and comprehensive legal safeguards upholding the principle of equal treatment are put in place.

EQUINET believes that the European Union and the Swedish Presidency must not miss this opportunity to build on the legacy of the already existing equality *acquis communautaire* as well as of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007). We strongly believe that your personal commitment to equality and human rights can and will contribute to establishing a more effective community legal framework that all EU citizens will be able to benefit from.

We thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Chila van der Bas
Chair of EQUINET
Member of the Dutch Equal
Treatment Commission



Katri Linna
EQUINET Board Member
Swedish Equality Ombudsman

CC:

- Commissioner Vladimír Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- Heads of all Member States Permanent Representations to the EU

Note: This position does not necessarily reflect the position of and does not bind all individual members of EQUINET.