

ECRI Seminar  
Joining Forces to Communicate the Equality and Diversity Message

**28 September**

**Speaking Notes: Tena Šimonović Einwalter**

**Session 1: Why & How to Communicate the Equality and Diversity Message**

**10:15 – 11:30**

*Speakers:*

- *Nils Muiznieks, Former Chair of ECRI and former Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Regional Director,*
- *Michael O’Flaherty, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Director: will focus on [10 Keys](#)*
- *Tena Šimonović Einwalter, Chair of the Executive Board of Equinet, member of the Bureau of ECRI and ECRI-member in respect of Croatia, Deputy Ombudsperson of Croatia*
- *Tatiana Baeva, Directorate of Communication of the Council of Europe*

*Questions posed for the session:*

- *Why is it important to focus more on communication and how can we effectively communicate the equality and diversity message?*
- *What are our target audiences?*
- *What are our messages to each of these audiences?*
- *How do we frame our messages?*
- *What does “story-telling” mean?*

It is great to be here with you today. I am wearing **three hats**– of ECRI, Equinet and of an equality body, but will be mainly talking from the **Equinet** point of view.

But no matter the organization – ECRI, EQUINET, EBs or other stakeholders working in the field of equality here with us today **our common communication goals** should be **to inspire respect for diversity and promote equality & non-discrimination for all across Europe**.

To tell you why that’s important to me and to us, and how to do that, I will tell you a story of self, a story of us and a story of now, while presenting Equinet’s concrete and practical suggestion of ABCs, the 3 main steps to positively framing equality.

**First, the STORY OF SELF** (my values, my choice and why I do what I do):

For me, it actually **started with bedtime stories**, stories I was told as a child. I can still remember my father reading me the Little Match Girl and by the last lines I was always crying. *“But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the little girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year.”* It is a story of inequality and injustice which stuck with me. **I knew from early on that the values of equality and social justice motivate me**. But I was not always aware or enabled on **how exactly** I can help change realities. I still remember trying to persuade my Roma friend and neighbour Kristina to enroll into high school – unfortunately, I did not succeed, the issues at stake were much larger than us. It was **my later life choices** which lead me to what I do today, to a position to bring about change. Having **specialized in human rights and EU equality law** I got to **work on drafting the first Croatian Antidiscrimination Act**. After that I **was called by the then Ombudsman of Croatia to join the office and set up the institution’s new equality body mandate**, thereby getting a chance to put into practice my expertise, as well as to actually implement the legal norms we have just drafted. And I have stayed in the EB ever since, for 12,5 years now, **moving up within the institution**, as well as becoming involved with **European endeavors** for equality, through Equinet and ECRI, all the while intrinsically motivated and **passionate about equality**, often thinking about the little Match Girl and much more about Kristina.

But enough about me. The point of this story of me was that you can see that **I am clearly not someone who needs to be persuaded to value equality**, I am **not the target audience** of our messaging. And **neither is anyone here**. Often we address each other in seminars and conferences, preaching to the choir. But the point of my intervention is thinking **how to communicate publicly, via mainstream media and social networks, and reach** those who do not necessarily value equality **like we who chose this as our profession**. How to tell a **particular type of stories** of of people, of reality around us - **with the aim to inspire positive change**.

## STORY OF US

**We equality bodies**, as champions of equality and defenders of the right to equal treatment, are well positioned to tell impactful stories, based on values such as equality, justice, and respect.

This is important for many reasons:

- **Efficient** communication can help our reports and recommendations find a fertile ground faster, if we raise awareness about them efficiently to our **target audience – be it decision makers, NGOs or certain groups of citizens**.
- **Proactive** communication can help us position our messages in a way that sparks the public's interest, thus creating efficient public pressure where we need to make a difference.
- **Informative** communication can help people understand that they are **entitled to equality**, that it is guaranteed for them, as well as **how they can and should react** if they think they are treated in a discriminatory way.
- **Positive** communication can also help **fight prejudice and stereotypes**.

But the basic line is that we **aim to inspire positive change**.

But how exactly do we do that?

In **Equinet's Communication Handbook 'Framing Equality'**, we suggest 3 main steps, **I will call them the ABC of positively framing equality**.

A Define the Task

B Create Frames

C Test and Refine

Now I'll take you through them in more detail.

### **A Define the Task**

To frame equality successfully, we have to **identify our vision and goals**. This will guide our communication work, and how we frame our story telling.

We should **identify our audiences and how they think**, usually the 'moveable middle' or people who can be persuaded by your argument, as they have not yet made up their mind on equality issues. They may value loyalty and social justice, so they are likely to support equality too, if we use the right kind of arguments.

Think, for example, about Ivana, a 54 year old nursing assistant, who has 2 children and 2 grandchildren. She lives in Kutina (small, Croatian town) with her husband and a dog and votes for the populist party. She certainly doesn't consider herself a feminist, but believes in justice, is interested in people and thinks everybody deserves to be treated decently. If you ask her if she has ever been discriminated against, she'll tell you no. If you ask her if she has lost a job to a worse qualified man, she'll laugh and say "yes".

**Our values** are things that we deem important and can include concepts like equality, honesty, effort, perseverance, loyalty and many other concepts. They inform our thoughts, words and actions. And the good news is, **they are not static; they can be engaged, and strengthened.**

Once we understand **how our audience thinks and what values they hold dear**, we should set our **framing task**. Your framing tasks are the articulation of what you want your communication to do. It should identify:

- **A Problem**, and aim to get agreement as to what that problem is
- **A Solution**, and aim to get agreement around the solution
- **Inspire support or action** that achieve that solution.

### **B is to Create Frames**

We recommend **5 key framing principles** - you will hear examples of many of them throughout this seminar, as equality bodies give examples of their work.

- 1. Speak to people's best self:** If we appeal to **the emotions and values of people's better selves**, we can significantly reduce people's prejudices.

In 2015, there was great show of solidarity from Croatians in small villages who organized themselves locally to support refugees crossing the border. In the first days, they went out and bought food, prepared sandwiches and set up tables to feed the refugees bread and jam.

Their response was highlighted by the Office of the Ombudswoman to tell a different story of the refugee crisis: one that focuses on compassion, community and collective action. When reading articles about this collective response, nursing assistant Ivana would be reminded that she cares for others, and thus be more likely to be supportive of the refugees passing through.

A second framing principle you could use is to

- 2. Create common ground:** as the sense of being part of the same group helps people to empathise with and support each other.
- 3. Talk about change:** Your frame needs to make change feel possible, and should show how your audience is involved in the solutions.

Imagine you wanted to tackle harassment in the workplace. Your campaign 'Not in my hospital' would resonate with Ivana because you would lead with vision, not the problem. You would get her to play an active role in the solution as you work with hospitals and health authorities to create their own strategies for tackling harassment. Calling for change in hospitals (rather than at national or regional level) will allow Ivana to identify how to get involved locally.

- 4. Make it real:** Think of your frame as a story. Give it a human face. **Think of Ivana.**

- 5. Avoid reinforcing unhelpful frames:** Directly responding to something by saying it isn't true, reinforces the original belief in someone's mind. Instead, focus the audience's attention on a positive story about the benefits of diversity.

### **C is Test and Refine**

Test your communication messages. Choose what outcomes you will measure. Choose who you'll test on. Measure your impact. **Evaluate the impact and achievements of your framing. Modify as needed and repeat!**

But remember, in order to translate this into practice, we must value our communication work and communication experts, who should cooperate with legal and policy experts if we want the ABCs to work.

### **STORY OF NOW - and a call to action**

**The communication work of ECRI and national equality bodies should be mutually strengthening:**

One way would be by **equality bodies helping ECRI country reports be better known nationally, by helping attract national media attention.**

For example, **in Germany** this year, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency worked closely with ECRI to launch their latest report with a number of in-person events (when that was thought to be possible) to attract media attention and increase resonance of the ECRI recommendations in the political sphere. Although the events had to be cancelled due to COVID, their press releases and social media work attracted a lot of media attention, including a segment on the main evening news.

Why was that? ECRI had identified and prioritised recommendations that were of high current relevance and easy to communicate. In turn it fell to FADA to use this opportunity to make sure the ECRI report was understood as a politically relevant document and to tie the recommendations back to ongoing debates, such as the unfortunate Hanau attacks or racial profiling amongst the police more generally.

Another way would be **ECRI reinforcing and communicating** in its country reports, general policy work and public statements **about the importance of equality bodies for fighting discrimination at the national level**, including about the importance of their independence and other standards for equality bodies, as per ECRI's own GPR No 2.

Another way would be **mutually reinforcing work on particular topics and communicating about it in a mutually strengthening way.**

**For example, tackling hate speech**, as per ECRI GPR 15 - particularly against minority groups, as well as dealing with hate speech against the head and staff of the institution – this is something that we as equality bodies may still struggle with, not least because some bodies don't have the mandate to deal with it. In its GPR 2 on equality bodies, ECRI has recommended that the mandates of equality bodies should cover hate speech, which call

equality bodies welcome and encourage ECRI to keep a focus on this aspect of its work in upcoming country reports and communicate about it.

As one can see from these - **combining ECRI's authority and expertise with equality bodies' expertise and experience, as key actors in our national settings will be beneficial for all.**

Finally, let me end with a **call for action**:

Let's **underline the importance of equality** in all our communication, and try to make it as tangible as possible. Let's **tell the story of equality**, in a way that highlights the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now, as I have done today.

Let's **communicate in a positive, hope-based manner** which promotes the benefits of equality & non-discrimination for all.

And while we are doing it **let us build alliances, and let's reinforce each others messages, as that way they will be louder, stronger and go further – let's truly Join Forces to Communicate the Equality and Diversity Message.**