

## **ECRI's Annual Seminars with Equality Bodies**

### **Special session 1: Addressing Racism and Intolerance in Health Care**

Friday 19 October, 9:00 – 10:30

#### **Setting the scene**

Tomas De Jong, EPHA

Tamás Kádár and Daris Lewis, Equinet

#### **Speaking notes: Equinet**

##### **Introduction:**

- Acknowledge the importance of the seminar in commemorating 30 years of ECRI's work.
- Briefly introduce ourselves and Equinet's role in advancing equality and combating discrimination across Europe, especially in healthcare.

##### **Setting the Scene: Addressing racism and intolerance in healthcare:**

- Emphasize the importance of equitable healthcare access for marginalized communities, including ethnic minorities, migrants, and the Roma community, as evidenced by ECRI's reports and country-specific recommendations
  - Unequal treatment, lack of cultural sensitivity, and unconscious biases by healthcare providers. For example, ECRI's reports highlight cases where racial or ethnic origin leads to disparities in care, whether through denial of services or lower quality of care compared to the majority population. EBs studies also show how minority women, especially from ethnic and religious backgrounds, often report feeling that their cultural needs and beliefs are not respected, particularly in maternal and reproductive healthcare.
  - The Roma community, one of Europe's most marginalized groups, faces chronic exclusion from healthcare systems. For example, Roma women have been subjected to forced sterilizations in some countries, and Roma patients often report that their medical complaints are not taken seriously, leading to worse health outcomes and further marginalization

##### **Equinet's contributions and challenges:**

- Highlight the critical role of Equality Bodies and Equinet in addressing racism and intolerance within healthcare systems.

- Unique mandate enables them to combat discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, and other protected characteristics.
  - Monitoring and enforcement
  - Raising Awareness and policy advice
  - Research
- The implementation of the Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies will enable the work of Equality Bodies to be of better assistance, more accessible, etc.
- Discuss how Equinet and its members have been actively working to combat racism and intolerance in healthcare by developing tools, supporting victims, and promoting good practices.
  - Promoting good practices
  - Engaging with stakeholders

#### Promising practices:

- Highlight the UK EHRC's framework, which covers key health measures and is rooted in human rights and equality, allowing for better tracking and identification of healthcare disparities.
- Mention FADA' study, Diagnosis of Discrimination, which exposes the complexity and opacity in reporting healthcare discrimination, and the need for better pathways for victims.
- Croatia's Ombudswoman work on promoting Roma equal access to healthcare

#### Challenges in Addressing racism in healthcare:

- Recognize persistent barriers, such as the underreporting of discrimination in healthcare, lack of specialized contact points, and systemic discrimination faced by ethnic minorities and marginalized groups.
- Highlight the specificity of the sector including sensitive data and treatment and therefore the need to cooperate also with DPAs and healthcare authorities and service providers.

#### Cooperation and the way forward:

- Stress the importance of cooperation between Equality Bodies, civil society, and relevant stakeholders, emphasizing how collaboration enhances efforts to promote equality. (DisQo)
- Link this to ECRI's broader mission of eliminating structural discrimination and institutional racism, tying Equinet's healthcare efforts into ECRI's work.

#### Closing:

- Reaffirm the critical role of Equality Bodies in combatting healthcare discrimination.
- Conclude by expressing the need for continued policy development and enforcement, ensuring that healthcare systems across Europe are more inclusive and equitable.