

To:

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission  
Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Council  
Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament

Brussels, 7 July 2008

**Subject: New initiatives of the European Commission concerning combating discrimination outside the labour market**

Dear Presidents,  
Dear Mr. Barroso, Mr. Sarkozy, Mr Pöttering,

On behalf of EQUINET - the European Network of Equality Bodies, we would like to welcome the recent announcement of a cross-cutting anti-discrimination directive (ensuring extended protection against discrimination on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief). We would like to congratulate the European Commission on its continued efforts and commitment to ensuring equal treatment for all

As a network of specialised and independent equality bodies which were established on the basis of anti-discrimination community law, our daily work underlines the level of discrimination faced everyday by many citizens and social groups in the EU. The results of the very recent Eurobarometer survey on *Discrimination in the European Union* show that unequal treatment still remains a challenge for the EU. We are also convinced that legislation is an essential and effective tool to counteract any manifestation of discrimination. That is why EQUINET welcomes the European Commission initiatives which primarily aims to ensure that all grounds of article 13 EC Treaty will now be covered in both employment and beyond through equal treatment legislation.

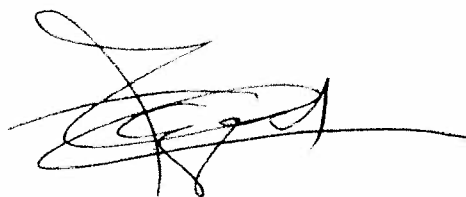
We hope that the new Directive will reflect a high level of protection for the grounds covered. We have emphasised the importance of a common standard of protection across all six grounds. In this regard we hope that the new Directive could achieve the standards already established by the 'Race' Directive 2000/43/EC for the four grounds covered and that the new Directive would also address deficits in this regard in relation to the gender ground.

EQUINET hopes that the European Council, European Commission and the European Parliament will take into consideration these views and will push forward the new legislative measure to create a common standard of protection against discrimination among various social groups across the six grounds covered in the EU Treaty. We would be happy to assist in any way with your work in this regard.

Yours Sincerely,



Chila van der Bas  
Chair of EQUINET  
European Network of Equality Bodies  
& Member of the Dutch  
Equal Treatment Commission



Anne Gaspard  
Executive Director of EQUINET  
European Network of Equality Bodies

CC. College of European Commissioners