

**STATEMENT ON COOPERATION  
BETWEEN  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE EQUALITY BODIES**

Firmly believing that the respect for human rights and prohibition of discrimination represent fundamental values and a starting point for socio-economic development of every country as well as personal development of every individual,

Aware of the fact that the Charter of the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions are binding on member states making it mandatory for the states to provide the exercise of rights to equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination in the society,

Recognizing the key role that equality bodies play in combatting discrimination and achieving full equality of all members of the society,

Bearing in mind that the promotion of regional cooperation and exchange of experience is an important segment conducive to further improving the work and activities geared towards the protection and affirmation of equality principles, prohibiting discrimination, achieving the principles of equal opportunities and tolerance,

Acknowledging and appreciating exerted efforts and demonstrated commitment of equality bodies towards establishing and promoting regional cooperation,

Equality bodies, consisting of South East Europe equality bodies, at the first session held on 16 November 2016 in Belgrade, signed the Statement on Cooperation between South East Europe Equality Bodies.

1. Priorities in joint actions and cooperation shall include suppression of discrimination and promotion of and support to equality of all people regardless of any real or presumed personal characteristic;
2. Particular attention shall be attached to the visibility of equality bodies as well as to overall strengthening of their capacities, primarily through dialogue, exchange of experience, examples of good practice and innovative approaches in the area of suppressing discrimination and promoting equality;

3. Equality bodies agree to appoint their representatives who will be in charge of regular and timely communication and information exchange for the purpose of implementing joint projects;
4. Equality bodies agree to hold the Regional Equality Bodies Conference annually with a different equality body each year acting as a host of the Conference;
5. Equality bodies agree that the host shall bear the expenses of organizing the Conference, while travel and accommodation expenses for other equality bodies shall be borne by each institution for their representatives, unless otherwise proposed by the host;
6. In particular, cooperation between equality bodies shall imply organizing subject matter related modules and seminars, as well as the exchange of publications, surveys and other expert literature related to discrimination and legal mechanisms for the protection against discrimination;
7. Cooperation of non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights and protection against discrimination shall be fostered, seeking to raise awareness of citizens of South East Europe on the fact that discrimination is prohibited, unacceptable and pernicious;
8. Joint efforts shall be exerted towards creating an environment in which the protection against discrimination and promotion of equality is one of the most important areas of social life and a way of building a better and more tolerant society;
9. All decisions taken by equality bodies shall be reached by consensus;

**10.** Cooperation between equality bodies shall be based on principles of coordination, mutual respect, partnership, equality and equity, joint planning, harmonization of activities and continuous communication.

**11.** This Statement shall be done and signed in the English language.

Done in Belgrade on 16 November 2016

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