
Parliament adopts new standards for equality bodies

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- Independent and free from external influence
 - Sufficient resources to carry out their tasks
 - Victims of discrimination can use mediation as alternative to court to solve dispute
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On Wednesday, MEPs adopted a directive to ensure that new anti-discrimination rules are effectively applied and enforced in the EU.

The law, [informally agreed on by Parliament and Council](#), puts in place new standards for [national equality bodies](#) - public institutions that protect, and provide assistance to those who experience discrimination - to ensure that people across the EU have a minimum level of protection against discrimination. It was adopted with 479 votes in favour, 116 votes against and 29 abstentions.

Equality bodies will be independent, free from external influence and not receive any instructions from government under the new rules. They also ensure that equality bodies have sufficient human, technical and financial resources to carry out their tasks.

The new rules enable equality bodies to better carry out activities to prevent discrimination and to foster equal treatment, such as promoting positive action and gender mainstreaming, taking into account specific situations of disadvantage resulting from intersectional discrimination.

Finally, victims of discrimination will have the option to seek an alternative to taking their case to court to resolve their dispute, such as mediation and conciliation, in each member state.

Quotes Lead MEP for the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee [Sirpa Pietikäinen](#) (EPP, FI) said: "Today is a great day for European anti-discrimination legislation. With these

new standards, victims of discrimination all over the EU will receive more equal protection and support. Protection against discrimination should never depend on your country of residence. This law gives the tools needed to implement anti-discrimination legislation, such as the Pay Transparency Directive. It is now up to the member states to make sure that the objectives of this Directive are met."

Lead MEP for the Employment and Social Affairs Committee [Marc Angel](#) (S&D, LU) said: "This law is a celebration of a European Union of equality. Equality bodies are crucial in fighting discrimination in the workplace and elsewhere and access to their services will now be available to all those that have experienced discrimination. We must support them by ensuring their independence and autonomy to preserve their nature as independent bodies. Today marks a crucial step forward in the fight for the respect of human rights. The EU is stronger in diversity.

Next steps The directive will be formally adopted by the Council at one of its upcoming Council meetings before publication in the Official Journal of the European Union and entry into force.

Background

In December 2022, the European Commission presented [two proposals on standards for equality bodies](#):

- a directive for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation;
- a Council directive for the role of equality bodies across the EU in combatting discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

For the latter, the Parliament was required to give its consent (in line with Article 19(1) TFEU), which it also did today with 495 votes in favour, 106 votes against and 18 abstentions.

In adopting this legislation, Parliament is responding to citizens' expectations to ensure inclusive labour markets, and take action to harmonise living conditions across the EU and improve EU citizens' socio-economic quality of life, as expressed in proposals 13(6) and 29(4) of the conclusions of the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#).

Further information

[Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](#)

[Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[Press release after trilogue agreement - "Equality bodies: Provisional deal reached on new standards" \(12.12.23\)](#)

[EP Research Service: Standards for equality bodies: Equal treatment between women and men in employment \(26.09.2023\)](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)

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