

**Question for written answer E-008592/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Independent and effective equality bodies to ensure the implementation and impact of EU equal treatment legislation

Equality bodies are established in all EU Member States in compliance with the EU equal treatment directives.

They play a key role in the effective implementation of these directives and, as the study on equality bodies prepared for the Commission in 2010 established, equality bodies have significant potential in assisting victims of discrimination, empowering civil society, supporting good practice by employers and service providers, raising awareness of rights and obligations, contributing to quality public policy making, and supporting a culture of rights and equality in the Member States.

However, the directives do not provide adequate standards and guarantees for the independence and effectiveness of equality bodies, and a number of Member States, under the cover of the economic crisis, are challenging and undermining the independence and effectiveness of their national equality bodies.

These developments are threatening the accomplishment of the objectives and undermining the effective implementation of the EU equal treatment directives exactly at a time when protection against discrimination for vulnerable groups and individuals is most needed.

There is therefore a need to introduce some form of standards at EU level, tailored specifically for equality bodies. Such standards will stimulate the further development of equality bodies, will ensure that they can achieve their full potential and will offer them protection.

What steps, actions and initiatives does the Commission plan to take in order to provide adequate standards to achieve, promote and protect the independence and effectiveness of national equality bodies set up pursuant to the EU equal treatment directives and thereby to ensure the effective implementation of those directives?