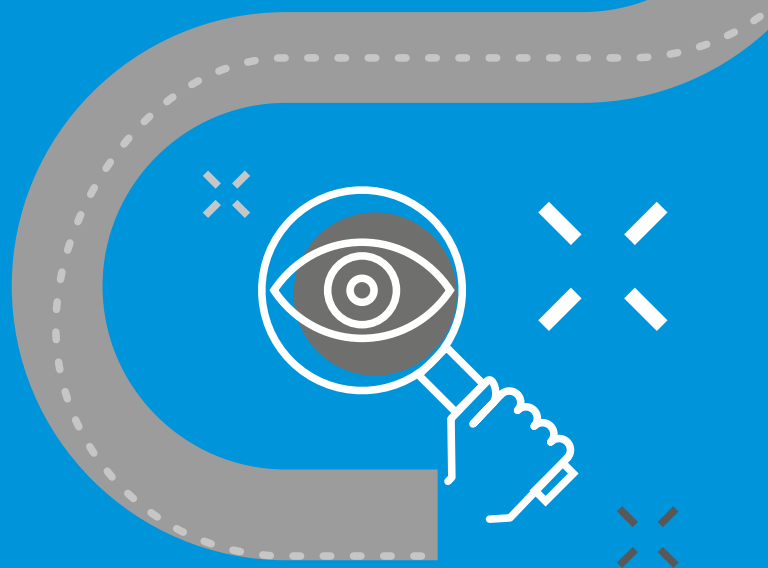




UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA
IN KATOWICE

Report on the survey



among employees
and doctoral students regarding
discrimination and unequal treatment
at the University of Silesia in Katowice

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Katowice, 31 May 2021

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introduction



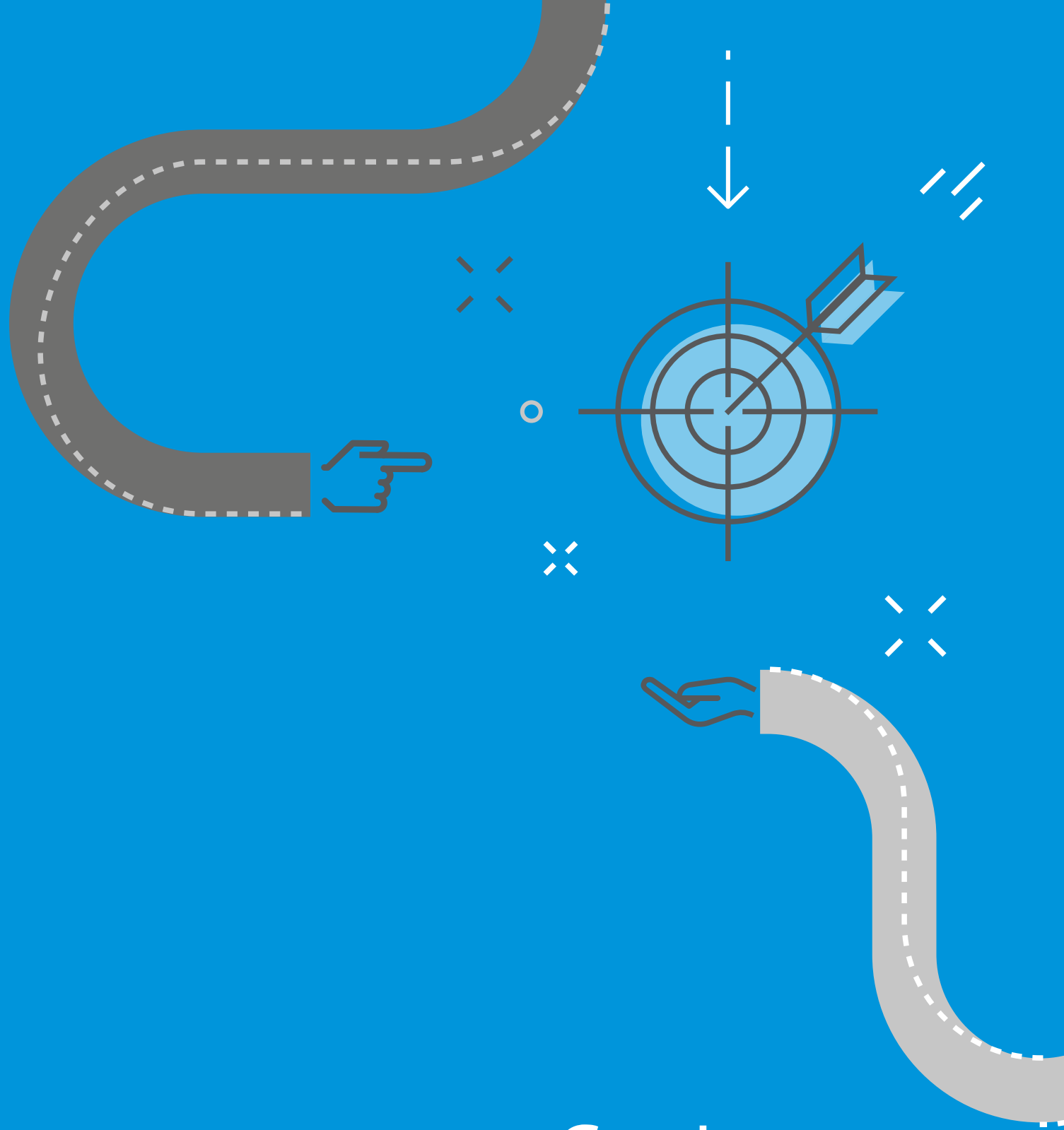
**So much has been said
about us being a community,
but it is far from reality...**

Statement expressed by survey participant

Discrimination and unequal treatment were diagnosed already in the previous studies on attitudes and opinions conducted at the University of Silesia, which concerned mental health of students, difficult situations they experienced, adaptation and safety issues at the university as well as difficult situations in employee-student relations. In 2016, employees also participated in a survey study completed with an analysis of gaps in the scope of staff management that constitutes a stage of the process of obtaining a logo of HR Excellence in Research by the University of Silesia.

According to the previous analyses, discrimination and unequal treatment are present at our university. Moreover, in the test which constituted the basis for this report, employees and doctoral students of our University, when asked about behaviours and actions related to discrimination and unequal treatment, additionally reported various undesired behaviours which they had experienced and observed: violating personal dignity, questioning professional competencies, bullying, humiliating, ridiculing, striving for elimination from the group of co-workers, mental and verbal aggression, mobbing and disrupted communication. When it comes to unequal treatment, the respondents described not only the striking examples but also microvoids, that is, small, often subtle and hardly noticeable behaviours, statements or gestures that depreciate the person experiencing it due to their specific feature, decreasing their position in a group or in a given situation.

The University of Silesia authorities wish to eliminate discrimination and unequal treatment to the maximum degree possible, as these situations are not only non-compliant with the law, but they also affect the core of university operations as a community and its organisation. Their existence questions the values adopted by the university and causes a working atmosphere that destroys mutual respect, decreases creativity, disrupts or even prevents cooperation and exchange of thoughts, discriminates diversity and provokes retaliatory actions. Persons who experience discrimination or unequal treatment are unable to show and develop their creative potential, and they bear psychological costs that impact their intellectual work. Undertaking actions intended to eliminate these phenomena and their effective prevention are thus a necessity, and a sign of care for basic academic and democratic values, as well as the implementation of an idea of the university as a developing community.



Goals of the survey



1. Goals of the survey

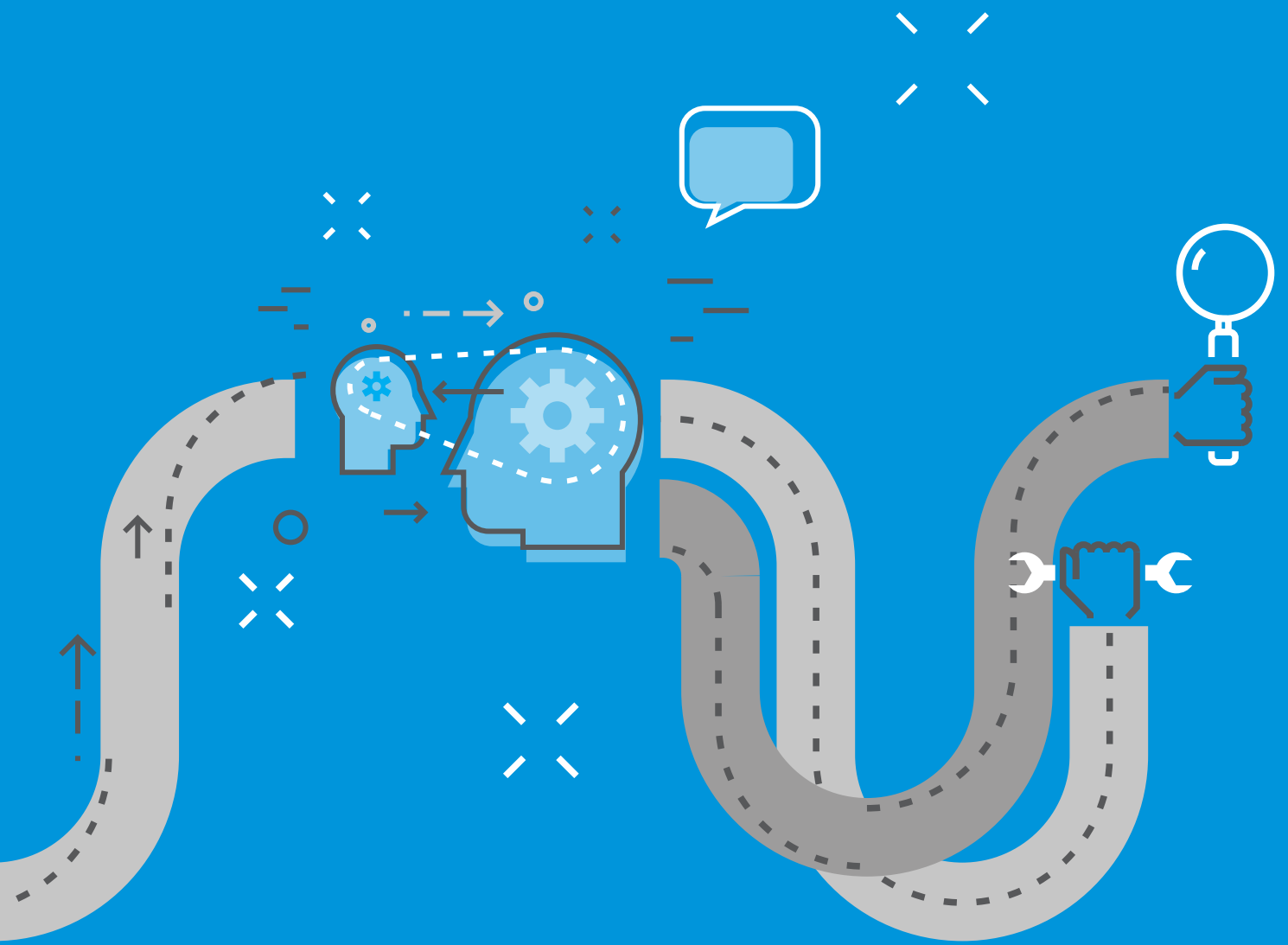
The conducted research on attitudes and opinions is targeted at contributing to the formation of equality policy at the university that strives to meet the needs and preferences of its personnel. In the practical dimension, it is crucial to elaborate specific standards of actions and paths of reacting as well as the overall policy of actions in case of various situations of uneven treatment and discrimination occurring in an academic circle, as well as preventing them. Opinions, reflections and proposals of possible solutions indicated and presented by persons participating in research constitute supporting material for the broadly-understood equality policy at our university¹, pointing out the most urgent and expected actions. The consultative and participatory manner of introducing solutions at our university is in itself, according to its basic purpose, designated to implement the idea of equal treatment.

The conducted research has focused in particular on gathering opinions regarding:

- proposal of solutions and actions on the side of the University of Silesia to support fight against discrimination and unequal treatment, and attempt to remove it from the organisation (questions 5 and 7);
- declared knowledge of employees and doctoral students on the possible reactions in the face of discrimination and unequal treatment (questions 1 and 2);
- causes of passivity in the face of discrimination and unequal treatment (questions 2 and 4);
- causes of occurrence of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University of Silesia (question 6).

An additional goal of the research was to obtain data regarding manifestations of discrimination and unequal treatment, as well as to increase the understanding of causes of their occurrence in the working environment of the University of Silesia (questions 9,10).

¹ In accordance with the Human Resources Strategy for Researches - HRS4R resulting from European Charter for Researchers.



Process ✕
of gathering
opinions

✕

2. Process of gathering opinions

The research was conducted from 24 November 2020 to 4 December 2020 through an online anonymous questionnaire survey prepared by the Equality Policy Development Team² and subsequently published on LimeSurvey. The link to the survey was also distributed through:

- regular newsletter sent from the Rector's Office;
- e-mail by Vice-Rector for Staff Development Professor Ewa Jarosz of 25 November 2020 to the personnel of the University of Silesia, repeating the content of an invitation to attend the survey along with a link to LimeSurvey, subsequently repeated on 3 December 2020;
- e-mail by Vice-Rector for Staff Development Professor Ewa Jarosz of 27 November 2020 targeted directly at the doctoral students of the University of Silesia studying in the so-called "old mode", and directly, through the authorities of both doctoral schools, to doctoral students of these institutions.

The distribution lists were based on:

- staff summary made in SAP system (the list automatically downloads currently active e-mail accounts from the catalogue of employees);
- summary of email addresses of doctoral students of the University of Silesia (the list automatically downloads active e-mail accounts of doctoral students from the USOS catalogue).

²Equality Policy Development Team – supervised by Ewa Jarosz – composed of: Radosław Aksamit, Małgorzata Balewska, Agnieszka Bielska-Brodziak, Jędrzej Błaszczak, Małgorzata Chrupała-Pniak, Marcin Gierczyk, Giga Gogosashvili, Jacek Górecki, Oliwia Janus, Joanna Laskowska, Joanna Mateusiak, Barbara Mikołajczyk, Krzysztof Pająk, Sabina Pawlik, Tomasz Pietrzykowski, Małgorzata Poszwa, Barbara Smorczevska, Marek Suska, Justyna Szostek-Aksamit, Jacek Szymik-Kozaczko, Katarzyna Topolska, Urszula Torbus, Aneta Trojanowska, Edyta Widawska, Gabriela Wilczyńska, Agnieszka Wiszniewicz.

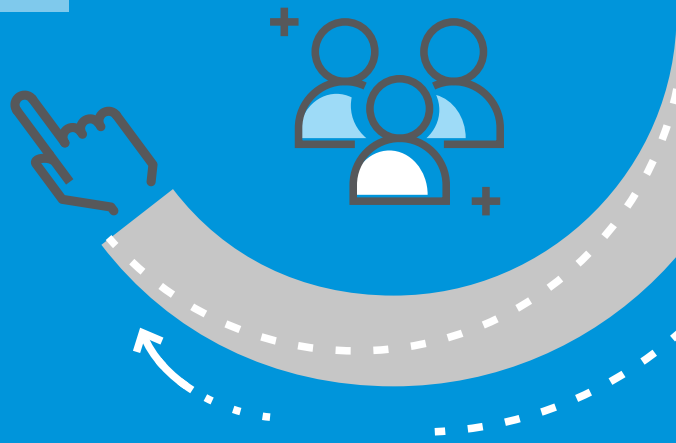
For the purposes of calculating the feedback index, the number 3,288 of employees was accepted (number of personnel with employment contracts as of 30 November 2020) and 846 doctoral students whose email addresses are listed on the distribution list characterised above. Among more than 4,000 recipients, survey invitations were opened by 1,550 persons who clicked on the link, whereas the whole survey (all mandatory questions) was completed by 932 employees and doctoral students, which means feedback at the level of 22% compared to the overall number of persons selected for opinion testing.

The survey form consisted of 10 questions, one of which was not numbered. The structure of the survey included 7 obligatory half-open questions and 3 optional questions, of which one was an open-ended question, while the other two were half-open.

The questions contained in the survey concerned possible reactions of a person experiencing discrimination and a witness, the perceived causes of silence and passivity of these persons, as well as solutions helpful for reporting these situations, understanding why discrimination and unequal treatment in an organisation occurred and proposals to counteract them. The questionnaire also contained space for descriptions of potential examples of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University.

When designing the survey, its authors decided not to include the demographic data in the questionnaire, in order to strengthen the research anonymity, and to eliminate any possibilities of identifying personal data.





Research
results



3. Research results

The survey research results have been presented in the form of descriptions illustrated with diagrams, tables and the selected answers of research participants which were outlined in the report in *italics*.

3.1

Knowledge about possible reactions

The first two questions in the survey form concerned knowledge of employees and doctoral students regarding potential reactions in situations of experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University.

It turns out that the majority of respondents – **59%** (548 persons) – declared that in case of experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment **they did not know how to react**. The number of negative answers increases even more in case of asking about possible reactions in the situations of being a witness of such behaviours – **66%** (613 persons).

Persons who declared that they knew how to react in the face of discrimination or unequal treatment (in the first question these were only 384 survey participants – 41%, whilst in the second question concerning being a witness 319 persons – 34%) were asked to briefly describe what could be done. And so, in the first question, 328 persons provided substantive responses, while 56 did not describe any potential reactions. On the other hand, in the second question (about witness reaction), substantive answers were provided by 265 persons, whilst 54 persons did not expand their affirmative answer.

During the analysis of responses of employees and doctoral students, several meaning categories appeared, whilst two groups tend to occur much more frequently, that is: **REPORTING** and **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE**.

The most frequently indicated solution by the survey participants is **reporting** an incident of discrimination or unequal treatment: 1) to university structures distinguished by employees and doctoral students in the scope of their work/position as superior entities; 2) University of Silesia bodies not subordinated to the Rector, formally or as perceived by the survey participants; 3) non-university entities/institutions.

With regards to the broadly-understood "university structures", the respondents indicated notifying, **through a conversation with the superior**, or reporting an incident to them. Both answers indicating direct superior and authorities of specific units of the whole University as well as the substantive superiors, that is, directors of institutes or heads, have been included in the described category. The respondents rather frequently indicated both direct superiors and "higher institutions" in the survey. When analysing the gathered answers, one may notice a broad spectrum of attitudes towards the expressed intention of reporting discrimination or unequal treatment to the superior, i.e. starting from distrust, through referring to certain limitations of this solution, ending with a feeling of obviousness in selecting a given path of reaction. Several dozen respondents expressed an intention to report a given situation of discrimination to the "administration" or, more precisely, to the HR Department or Department of Personal and Social Affairs.



Another category of addressees of discrimination or unequal treatment reports is **bodies or structures which are either not subjected to the formal authority of the Rector and the university administration**, or considered as such. In this regard, the following have been recognised: Ombudsperson for Academic Rights and Values, Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson as well as disciplinary spokespersons, disciplinary committees, ethics committees, anti-mobbing committees and Student Government. A slightly less frequently occurring category of answers is reporting the existing pathological situation to trade unions, anti-mobbing club or to the social labour inspector. As in the case of reporting discrimination to the persons performing managerial functions, or more broadly – to "structures of the university" – certain respondents are rather sceptical as to the effectiveness of actions of these entities.

The third distinguished category of answers is ones that relate to informing **non-university entities**, e.g. enforcement authorities, police, solicitors, prosecutors, labour court, State Labour Inspection and media. Sometimes the respondents indicated this path as a manner of getting back at the university if it fails to cope with an organisational pathology. Answers in this category are less frequent in the case of declaring witness reactions.

The second, frequently occurring group of answers is a declaration of **reacting in person** in a situation of discrimination or unequal treatment. This is mainly a verbal reaction towards a discriminating person, with a various degree of intensity. It involves expressing disapproval, communicating lack of allowance, caution, "calling things what they are", making a remark, explaining the person who discriminates the meaning of their behaviour or pointing to the fact that they are breaking the law.

In case of describing a witness reaction to discrimination, the answers indicating a personal reaction are noticeably more frequent and normally concern the reaction of defence or support for the discriminated person. Supporting the victim is also reflected in informing about the possibilities of actions, as well as behaviours consisting in confirming the observed events through a formal procedure. There were also answers indicating reaction by impacting both sides of a situation of discrimination, such as *Cool down emotions on both sides* or *Conversation – mediation*.

Few respondents, when asked about their reaction in a situation of experiencing discrimination, replied in a general manner, writing about launching the relevant procedure, using the path proposed by the university, turning to the applicable instance etc. (e.g. *note via official route supported by evidence*). One may encounter "general" replies slightly more frequently when employees and doctoral students describe reactions from the perspective of a witness.



As opposed to the answers expressing an unquestionable obligation to react to acts of discrimination, e.g.:

A witness should always react – show support and express their objection. A lack of reaction means in fact consent to such behaviours. A witness may also inform the victim about an ombudsman, psychologist from the university as well as offer assistance in reporting the case. Persons who are victims of unequal treatment are frequently unable to react by themselves, which is why the help of a witness is so important.

There are also declarations of refraining from reacting among the submitted answers, e.g.:

it's better to keep quiet and suffer

or

The case is resolved at the request of the victim. If there is no such request, a witness has nothing to do.

or

One may, for example, go to the toilet.

The analysis of free answers of the respondents leads to some answers not being possible to be classified into any category, as they are not of substantive nature or are ambiguous in terms of the author's intentions. This survey also contained such cases, i.e.:

Theory is one thing and reality is another.

or

Are there any ideological guidelines from the Rector? Is there still academic freedom left in this regard?

or

To be a sensitive person with one's own subjectivity and individual independence.

There are also responses such as:

I did not notice such situations taking place at US.

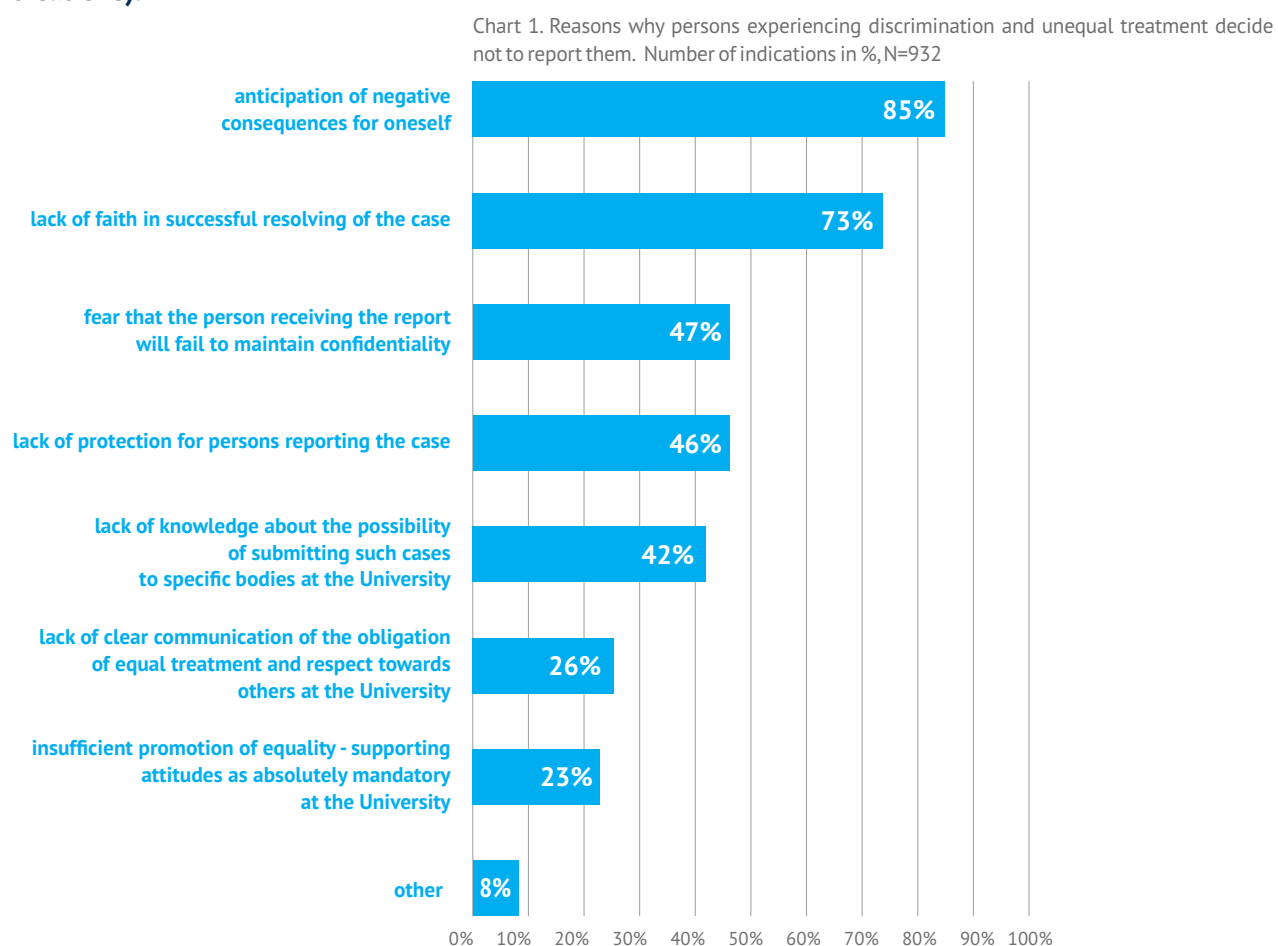


3.2

Causes of a lack of reactions

Subsequent questions in the survey referred to the attempt to identify the reasons why persons experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment do not report such situations (question 3), whereas the witnesses of such irregularities remain passive (question 4). In both questions the respondents could select any number of reasons from amongst the indicated ones, and had the opportunity to write other answers not included in the answer choice.

The most frequently indicated obstacles in reporting discrimination and unequal treatment (compare with chart 1) was **anticipating negative consequences for oneself** by indicating such answers as **fear of revenge by the perpetrator or their environment (85% of all indications)** and **lack of faith that the result of the intervention will be successful, and negative practices will be put to an end (73% of all indications)**.



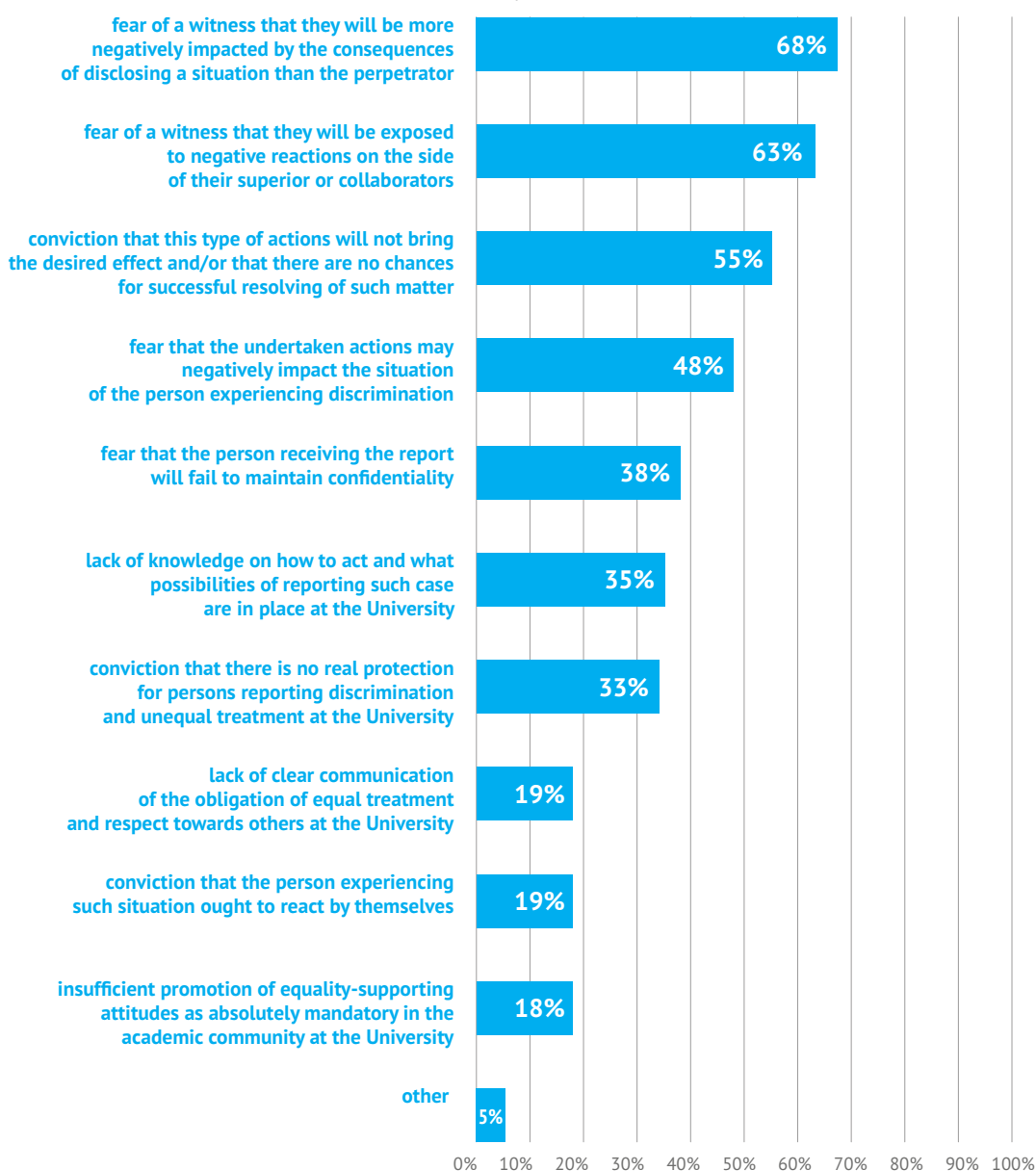
As we can see in chart 1, among the remaining important reasons that in the opinion of the respondents may impact reluctance to disclosure, the following have also been noted: fear of breaching confidentiality by the person receiving the notification (47%), lack of protection for the reporting person who experienced such irregularities (46%) and lack of knowledge that such case may be reported to relevant entities at the university, i.e. authorities, superiors, Department of Personal and Social Affairs, HR Department, Ombudsperson for Academic Rights and Values (almost 42% of indications).

The following indications were made slightly less frequently as factors which block the reporting of such situations: lack of communication on the side of the University regarding the obligation of fair treatment and respect towards others (26%), and insufficient promotion of fair treatment attitudes at the university as clearly demanded (23%).

Answers in the "other" category constituting 8% of indications partially referred to fear and concerns about oneself in a situation of a potential report of such breaches and uncertainty as to the positive resolving of the problem. Here, fear and helplessness of persons experiencing discrimination were indicated, as well as the indifference of authorities towards such situations or silencing them, especially if the perpetrator is a superior or a person holding a high position in the university hierarchy. Less frequent answers in the "other" category referred to ideological issues (discrimination of "normality" and promoting minorities), bad individual experiences in this area or lack of knowledge about discrimination.

The analysis of answers to question 4 (compare chart 2) concerning causes of a lack of reaction to discrimination by witnesses of such events demonstrates that most indications refer to **the fear that disclosure of irregularities will result to a greater degree in negative consequences for the reporting person rather than for the perpetrator (68%), and concerns that the disclosure will cause a negative reaction of the superiors or collaborators (63%).**

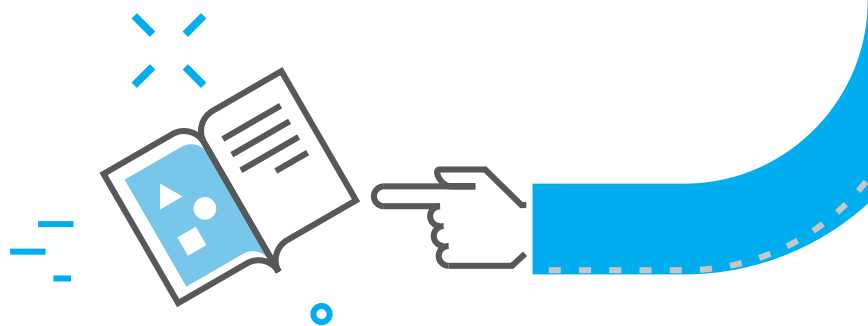
Chart 2: Reasons for passivity on the side of persons who witness discrimination or unequal treatment of others. Number of indications in %, N=932



Among reasons for the lack of witness reactions to discrimination and unequal treatment, the respondents often mention the conviction that a particular situation will not be resolved (55%) as well as that a potential reaction will negatively impact the person experiencing discrimination (48%).

The respondents also relatively frequently indicated a lack of guarantee that confidentiality of the reporting will be maintained (38%), lack of knowledge on how to proceed in such situations, as well as a lack of knowledge about the possibility of reporting the issue within the structures of the University (35%) as the reason for the passivity of witnesses. Furthermore, it was indicated that passivity of witnesses may stem from the lack of protection provided to the persons reporting such irregularities (33%). Similarly, in the previous question, the least frequently selected answers referred to the insufficient communication level at the University regarding the obligation of fair treatment of others (almost 19%) and insufficient promotion of equal treatment attitudes by the university (18%). An equally often expressed conviction was that the burden of responsibility for reporting this type of irregularities ought to be transferred onto the person who experienced it (19%).

The "other" category covered 5% of all indications, and the respondents indicated the generally occurring indifference and lack of empathy, ideological issues, own negative experiences in this regard, hierarchical structures at the university and nepotism among the answers from outside of the previously-specified categories. Several persons negated the occurrence of the issue of discrimination and unequal treatment at the university.

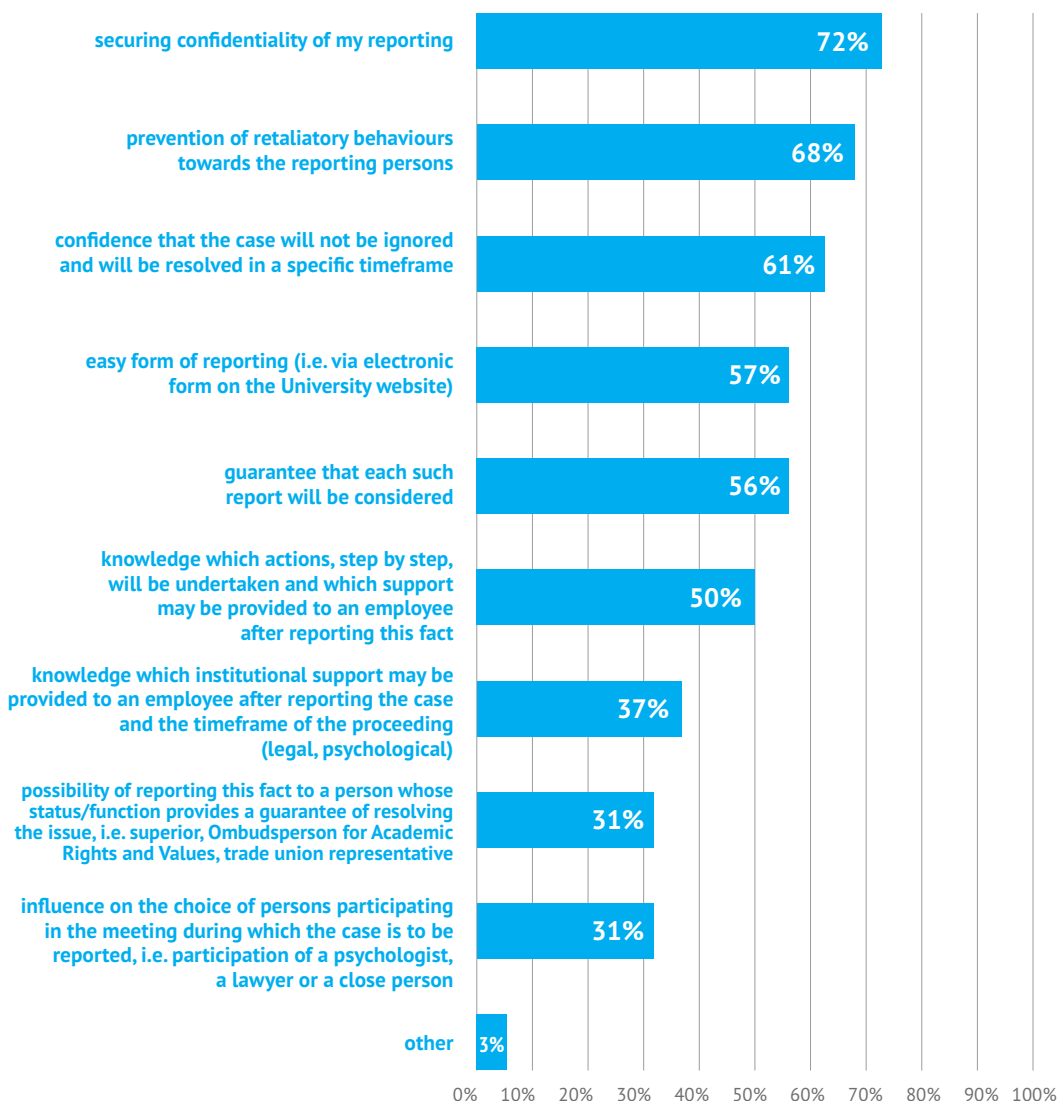


3.3

Helpful solutions in reporting discrimination and unequal treatment

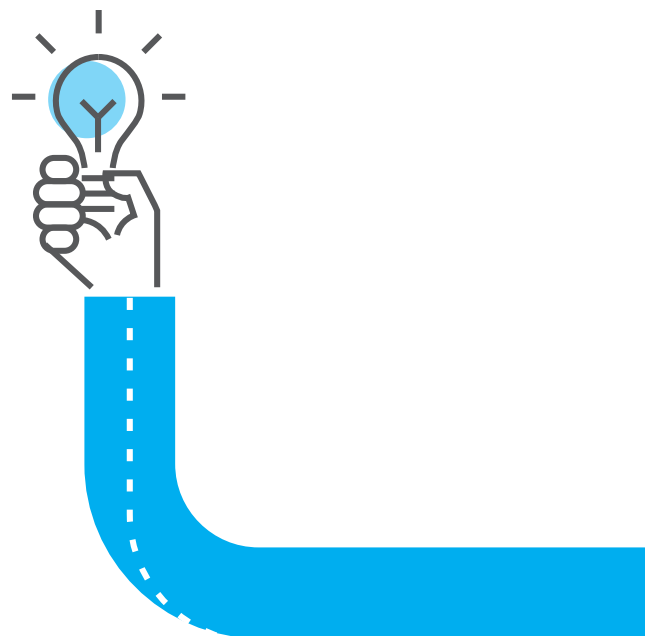
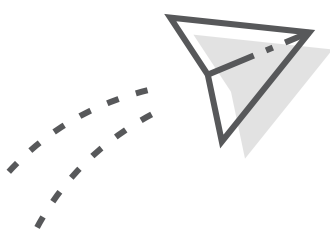
A significant goal of the research was to investigate opinions regarding the solutions that might help the personnel and doctoral students in reporting discrimination and unequal treatment at the University. With regards to the relevant question (question 5), the most frequently occurring indication was **securing the confidentiality of submission** (72%) and **prevention of retaliatory behaviours towards the reporting person** (more than 68%).

Chart 3: Solutions indicated as helpful in reporting situations related to experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment at the University. Number of indications in %, N=932



Significant factors that in the opinion of the personnel and doctoral students might assist in reporting the situations in question would be: certainty that the matter will be resolved in a specific timeframe (61%) and guarantee that each report will be considered (56%). The following were also specified by many respondents as helpful in such situations: easy form of reporting (57%) and knowledge of procedures launched when the report is submitted (50% of indications), as well as the possibility to obtain institutional forms of support in such situations (37%). Some relatively less frequently specified solutions that would be helpful in taking a decision to report discrimination and unequal treatment include: impact of the reporting person on the choice of discussion participants (32%) and possibility of reporting the case to a person whose function guarantees that the issue will be solved (also 31%).

Slightly more than 3% of indications covered answers that were in the "other" category. The following may be distinguished among them: neutrality and objectivity of persons dealing with the case, certainty that the authority and function of the person against whom the abuse is reported do not protect them against the consequences, examples proving that such report was successful before, ongoing information flow about the case status, establishment of a clear and transparent procedure of selecting persons to be involved in the report.



3.4

Perception of the causes of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University of Silesia

600 respondents replied to the question about the causes of occurrence of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University. Both the causes of discrimination and **the discrimination premises** were indicated, such as: gender, age, position held, position in the personnel group, seniority, degree/scientific title, represented scientific discipline, psycho-sexual orientation, racial/ethnic origin, religious denomination/lack of any religious denomination, ideology, political beliefs, economic status, family situation, appearance, health state/degree of fitness, place of residence.

Among the indicated causes of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University of Silesia, one may distinguish five key categories that were indicated by the respondents with various frequency.

The most frequently indicated **structural causes** are those related to: hierarchical structure of the system, abuse of power by the superiors, peer pressure oriented towards promotion and judgment, lack of transparent actions of the superiors, lack of reaction towards acts of discrimination on the side of authorities (the term "impunity" repeated with regards to persons using discrimination practices), lack of clear rules of proceeding in the authority relation, delegating persons without competencies in the scope of teamwork to perform managerial tasks, lack of preventive actions (e.g. permission for the functioning of "fundamentalist organisations" was indicated).

Another group of most frequently indicated causes included those related to **limited resources** (i.e. job positions, remuneration, promotions) and the system of values among the employees of the University of Silesia. The group of causes concerning access to limited resources included phenomena such as: nepotism, employing relatives and kinsmen, lack of cooperation, competitive approach, taking care of oneself only and supporting the group of privileged persons with access to limited resources, which is equivalent to depriving others of these resources. With reference to discrepancies in the hierarchy of **values**, the respondents pointed out the well-grounded stereotypical perception of the social roles that leads to prejudice, and in the area of behaviours – to discrimination. On the other hand, the current social-political situation was also noted as important for the daily functioning of persons at the university.

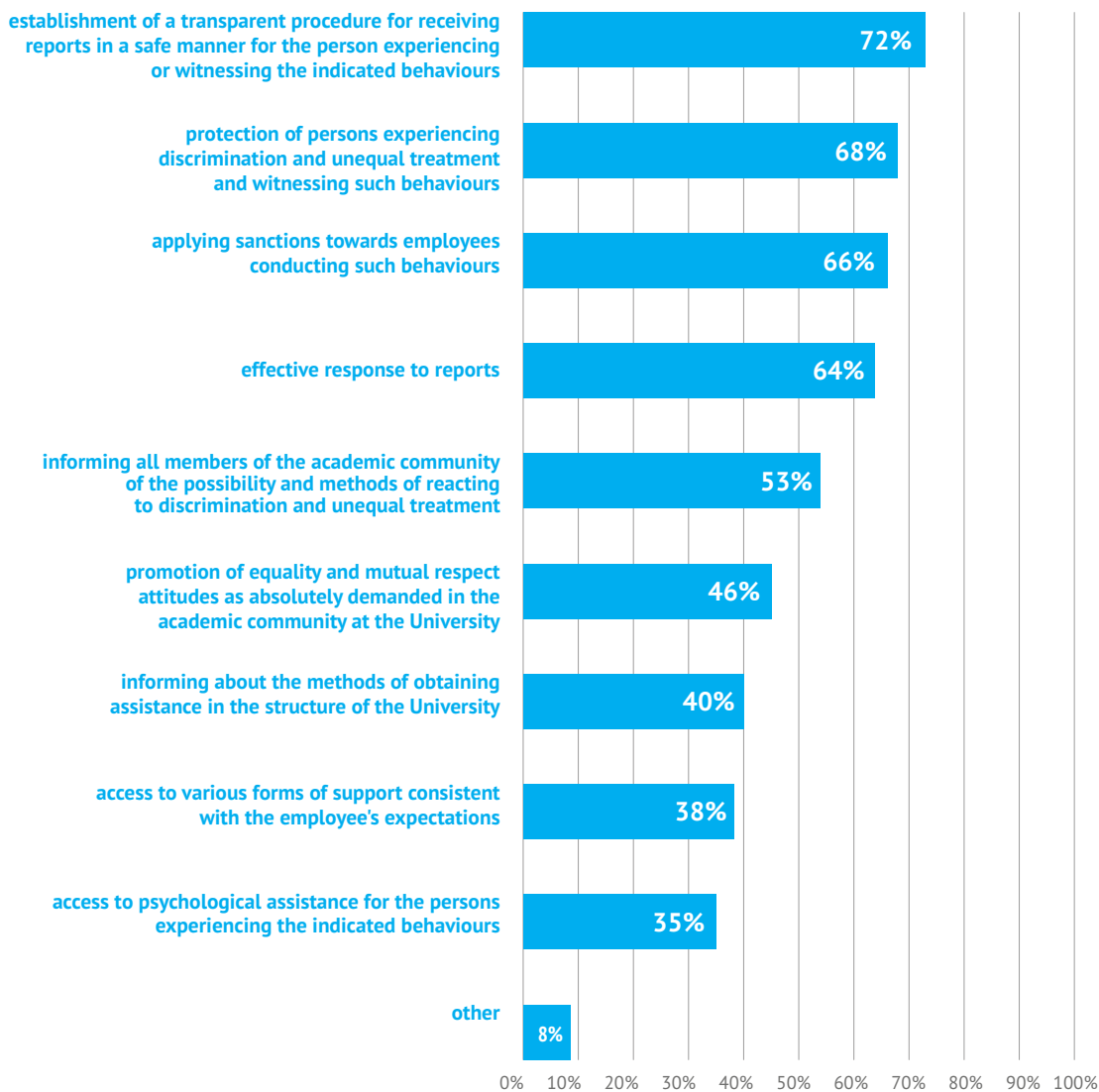
The third group of answers was causes of interpersonal and cognitive nature. Within the category of **relational causes**, the actions, behaviours and reactions that are related to the low level of competencies and conflict resolving skills and communication were specified. A separate group of causes was **knowledge deficit** (among all members of the society), both regarding the issue of discrimination and equal treatment, as well as knowledge related directly to managing a team of persons in managerial positions.

3.5

Suggested countermeasures

One of the basic goals of the survey was to establish opinions regarding actions to be undertaken by the University of Silesia in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment. With reference to this question (question 7), the Equality Policy Development Team proposed nine possible actions to be undertaken, out of which the respondents could indicate those that in their opinion were the most important to implement. It was possible to indicate any number of actions, and the respondents had an additional possibility to suggest their own solutions under the "other" category.

Chart 4. Actions that ought to be undertaken by the University of Silesia in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment. Number of indications in %, N=932



The question analysis (compare chart 4) indicated that **the most important action for the respondents was the elaboration of a transparent procedure of accepting reports in a manner that is safe for the person experiencing the issue or for the witness of unequal treatment of discrimination (72%)**. Protection of the persons experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment and witness of such behaviours (69%), applying sanctions towards employees committing such behaviours (66%), access to various forms of support in line with the expectations of a given employee (64%) - these are the further most often indicated actions that ought to be undertaken by the University of Silesia.



The analysis of "other" category revealed that the proposed answers of respondents constitute an extension of the presented categories for selection:

The University ought to condemn, in a clear manner, discriminating behaviours of any social groups and undertake specific disciplinary steps against persons who display such behaviours. At present, there is no faith in the effectiveness of undertaken actions among our academic community. Furthermore, the university ought to clearly communicate that it condemns all discriminating actions undertaken by any social group whatsoever.

A transparent establishment of rules about what is unacceptable, absolute and quickly exercised - sanctions for a person (for now, this is the perspective of an employee: "Chaos will appear, something will be announced, and then the matter will die down and I will be left with the perpetrator/problem anyway").

[...] severe and firm actions towards persons committing discrimination [...]

Several voices also appeared stating the necessity to introduce trainings in the scope of equality, tolerance and combating discrimination.



3.6

Personal experience and being a witness of discrimination and unequal treatment

Questions about personal experience of unequal treatment and discrimination or being a witness of such situations were optional and had an open character (questions 9 and 10).

The question regarding personal experience related to discrimination and unequal treatment was replied to by 812 respondents, out of which 373 persons (46%) stated that they had experienced discrimination and unequal treatment at the University. **290 persons decided to describe their experience** in the further part of this question.

The question regarding witnessing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University was replied to by 796 respondents, including 413 persons (52%) who indicated that they had been witnesses of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University. 317 persons specified what discrimination or unequal treatment they witnessed was about.

The analysis of the provided answers demonstrated that discrimination at the University of Silesia was most often related to the premise of gender. It was indicated most frequently both by the persons who directly experienced discrimination and unequal treatment, as well as by the witnesses. Other causes occurring in the descriptions included: employment in the employment group and position held, age, family situation (pregnancy, parenthood, divorce), psycho-sexual orientation. Descriptions of discrimination situations on account of nationality, place of residence, ideology, disability, religious beliefs followed the initial categories.

Among the most frequently described symptoms of unequal treatment, the following could be found: unequal manner of dividing the allocated funds for bonuses and rewards as well as for publications, research, conferences, internships etc., and unequal or unfair division of didactic and organisational duties.

The most frequently described pathological phenomena at the University included: mobbing, nepotism and cronyism, lack of reaction of authorities to the reported acts of discrimination and unequal treatment, as well as silencing such acts.

The below tables present examples illustrating the most frequently indicated premises of discrimination (table 1), symptoms of unequal treatment (table 2) as well as pathological phenomena at the University (table 3).



Table 1. The most frequently described premises of discrimination

premise of discrimination	example of answer
<p>gender</p>	<p><i>A disparaging approach to my competencies as I am just a woman and I was not made for science. Operating measurement devices - this will be better done by a man, as a woman doesn't know how to use even a simple thing like a hammer. She will hurt herself or break the equipment.</i></p> <p><i>Your male colleague will go to the conference as we need to support his development [...].</i></p>
<p>employment in the employee group</p>	<p><i>I have no idea which example to quote, I have seen it so many times. i.e. didactic employees are treated as second-category teachers.</i></p> <p><i>I have been refused the possibility of funding my research and publication several times lately due to being a didactic employee [...].</i></p>
<p>age</p>	<p><i>Due to my age, despite my skills, I was refused the possibility of being promoted and, due to my age and experience, I became a victim of blackmailing initiated by my superior.</i></p>
<p>family situation</p>	<p><i>Transferring an employee to another unit due to changes in their personal life (divorce).</i></p> <p><i>I have a small child. I was not always able to participate in meetings that were held in the afternoon and not during the working hours. I was informed that there was no point in me continuing the task. I felt really bad about it. Meetings are more and more often held after hours.</i></p> <p><i>[...] I also experienced a direct statement expressed by my superior that despite the fact that he might recommend me for a functional position, he will not do so, as I have children and this would impact my availability.</i></p>
<p>psycho-sexual orientation</p>	<p><i>Yes... negative comments and speculations regarding my sexual orientation. It is shocking that such professors, enlightened people in the 21st century, still tend to pry into people's lives.</i></p>



Table 2. Examples of unequal treatment

examples of unequal treatment	example
unequal manner of dividing the allocated funds	<p><i>Refusal to grant a scientific award of the first degree while fulfilling all the premises that stem from the Rector's Regulation!</i></p> <p><i>Unequal and ambiguous division of funds for statutory research. Omitting scientific achievements upon applying for awards. This situation lasted from the moment I was employed until 2019 when the structure and management of the unit changed, i.e. for about 10 years!</i></p>
unequal division of didactic and organisational duties	<p><i>A situation in which a newly employed person was favoured. A seminar was taken away from me with an explanation that it could not be granted to anyone and then it turned out that the newly-employed person obtained it. I have been employed at the University of Silesia for 4 years, and since the beginning I have been asking to get a seminar, which is constantly ignored - and a newly-employed person without experience got it without any efforts. This is extremely demotivating, showing unequal treatment.</i></p> <p><i>More is expected from those working to gain scientific achievements and/or organisationally active than from those who do not work towards gaining any scientific achievements and who do not organise anything.</i></p>



Table 3. Pathological phenomena at the University

pathological phenomena at the university	example
mobbing	<p><i>[...] criticising and offending me, harassing my students (by my superior) whilst at the same time threatening to fire me at any time.</i></p> <p><i>[...] psychological threats, continuously threatening to let me go and preventing me from returning to my research-didactic position (despite scientific achievements) – I needed psychotherapy (let me add that I was granted a PhD title, so it could not have been this bad when it comes to my overall performance).</i></p>
nepotism cronyism	<p><i>I feel like I am not always appreciated for my work, my efforts, the knowledge and experience I have, whilst other persons who never make any efforts and never strive to achieve something at work, or who even neglect it, are well-assessed on account of their position held at the University of Silesia (friendships or family ties with the superiors).</i></p> <p><i>On multiple occasions, being a member of someone's family turned out to mean more than the actual skills of others.</i></p>
lack of reaction of the superiors silencing issues	<p><i>I reported a case of mobbing and discrimination in September of 2015 to the Dean and then again in March of 2020. To date, no clear actions have been undertaken.</i></p> <p><i>Trade unions did not help me, but instead they threatened me with their lawyers in case I continued to look for help at higher levels of Trade Union Headquarters. The anti-mobbing committee has not dealt with my case until today, and it's been a year and a half now. It's all fiction...</i></p> <p><i>My female friend had a problem. A storm was unleashed between her and another lecturer. Even though she was innocent, she was left alone with the problem. Her superior said she did not want to hear about it anymore, and that the matter was to be quieted down as soon as possible, because "people will start to talk" and that it would be best for her to withdraw discretely.</i></p> <p><i>Many problems are swept under the carpet. People who are victims are afraid to speak up as they know they are in a lost position.</i></p>

4. Conclusion

In the final remarks, it is worth noting that the analysis of answers granted by the employees and by doctoral students in the conducted survey has revealed that the University of Silesia is not free from discrimination and unequal treatment and other organizational pathologies that in fact were not the subject of the survey (i.e. mobbing). At the same time, one must emphasize that not every respondent noted having experienced this type of behaviours; some respondents indicated that they did not encounter the issue of discrimination or unequal treatment at US.

The most crucial conclusions drawn from the conducted survey include the following:

01

More than half of the employees and doctoral students at US declared that **they would not know how to react** in case of experienced or witnessed discrimination or/and unequal treatment. On the other hand, descriptions of possible reactions indicated by the respondents might be divided into two basic categories: report and/or react in person.

02

If persons being affected by discrimination at the University of Silesia or witnessing it are silent and do not react, the reason for it is that they **do not believe in a successful resolving of the problem** (lack of reaction by the broadly-understood university authorities), and **they anticipate negative consequences** towards themselves and not towards the perpetrator. The respondents raised an issue of impunity of persons with discriminating behaviours and, quite often, even them being awarded by their superiors as effective in implementing strategic goals.

03

The impunity of perpetrators of discrimination and their retaliatory reactions in case of reporting pathologies is also evidenced on the basis of the selection of supporting solutions while reporting this type of events. The respondents care most about the **protection of the reporting person**.

04

The safety and protection of persons experiencing discrimination and sanctions towards perpetrators, as well as the effectiveness of reacting, are also the most important goals of actions expected from the University with respect to counteracting discrimination and unequal treatment.

05

In the perception of causes of discrimination and other organisational pathologies, those of **structural character** dominate, related to the hierarchy of the system, abuse of power by the superiors, peer pressure oriented towards promotions and judgement, lack of transparency of superiors' actions, lack of reaction of the authorities towards acts of discrimination, lack of clear rules of proceeding in the authority relations, delegating persons without competencies in the scope of teamwork with managerial tasks, lack of preventive actions.

06

The employees and doctoral students indicate diverse premises of discrimination, including the most frequently encountered one, i.e. **gender** (but also affiliation to an employee group, age, family situation and psycho-sexual orientation). Experiencing discrimination is described most frequently as an unequal (unfair) **division of funds and duties**.

07

The most frequently described pathological phenomena at the University the following included **mobbing, nepotism and cronyism**, as well as lack of reaction to the reported acts of discrimination and unequal treatment, and silencing them.

08

The employees and doctoral students indicated in their replies **the systemic nature of discrimination** at the university, but also specific examples of behaviours of discriminating nature. The respondents indicated drastic situations, such as sexual harassment, as well as described microinequities occurring at the University of Silesia that lead to the corrosion of academic community values.

09

Some respondents stressed the fact that the symptoms of discrimination and unequal treatment in the academic community reflect, to a certain degree, the present social situation in Poland.

10

The survey revealed multiple ideas, proposals of improving the present situation and preventing discrimination and unequal treatment, which indicate the involvement of academic community and the will to act so as to guarantee and promote equality and non-discrimination.

This report has become the basis for formulating specific recommendations for the authorities and bodies of the University of Silesia appointed to protect the rights and interests of members of the academic community, as well as the ethical standards effective at the University. The plan of actions is currently being developed for the elaboration and implementation of a coherent equality policy at the University of Silesia.

Attachment – survey form

Dear All,

The University of Silesia strives to be an institution free from any unequal treatment and discrimination phenomena. In order to do so, we have undertaken certain tasks in order to establish the operating standards, reaction paths and the overall policy of acting in case of situations related to unequal treatment and discrimination that might occur in the academic community. Bearing in mind your experience and your ideas, but also your care about the matter, we would like you to share your opinions, reflections and proposed solutions with us by taking part in this survey.

Discrimination is an unjust, hurtful and bad treatment of a person or group of people in comparison to others on account of a specific feature. The most frequent causes of discrimination include gender, age, race, disability, psycho-sexual orientation, physical features, religion, affiliation to an ethnic, national, social-cultural or professional group, trade group, political belief or other beliefs, as well as economic status, social origin and other features. Unequal treatment, on the other hand, is a broader category than just discrimination, and may occur for other reasons, leading also to a different situation of a given person or to limitation of their rights.

The prepared questionnaire consists of 9 questions, mainly of semi-open-ended nature, which provide the possibility of sharing your perspective with us. The survey is anonymous and assumes voluntary participation of the University personnel. We are truly keen on receiving honest replies, as they will constitute the basis for building solutions that are real and adequate to the existing needs in the area of reacting at the University to situations of discrimination and unequal treatment, as well as actions designed to counteract such phenomena.

Equality Policy Development Team
Coordinated by **Prof. Ewa Jarosz, Vice-Rector for Staff Development,**



1. Do you know how to react when experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?

NO

YES

please briefly describe what can be done: _____

2. Do you know how can a witness of such situations react at the University?

NO

YES

please briefly describe what can be done: _____

3. What are, in your opinion, the main reasons why employees experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment decide not to report them:

Please indicate the most important reasons, in your opinion.

- lack of knowledge about the possibilities of reporting such cases to specific bodies of the University (i.e. authorities, superiors, Department of Personal and Social Affairs, HR Department, Ombudsperson for Academic Rights and Values)
- anticipating negative consequences for oneself, i.e. perpetrator's or their environment's revenge
- lack of faith in successful resolving of the matter and/or ending negative practices
- lack of protection of the persons reporting discrimination and unequal treatment
- fear that the person receiving the report will fail to maintain confidentiality
- lack of clear communication of the obligation of equal treatment and respect towards others at the University
- insufficient promotion of equality-supporting attitudes as absolutely mandatory at the University
- other

4. In your opinion, what is the source of the passivity on the side of persons who witness discrimination and unequal treatment of others?

Please indicate the most important reasons, in your opinion.

- fear that the undertaken actions may negatively impact the situation of the person experiencing discrimination
- fear of a witness that they will be more negatively impacted by the consequences of disclosing a situation than the perpetrator
- conviction that the person experiencing such situation ought to react by themselves



- fear of a witness that they will be exposed to negative reactions on the side of their superior or collaborators
- fear that the person receiving the report will fail to maintain confidentiality
- conviction that this type of actions will not bring the desired effect and/or that there are no chances for a successful resolving of such matter
- lack of knowledge how to act and what possibilities of reporting such case are in place at the University
- conviction that there is no real protection at the University of persons reporting discrimination and unequal treatment
- lack of clear communication at the University of the obligation of equal treatment and respect towards others
- insufficient promotion at the University of equality-supporting attitudes as absolutely mandatory among the academic community at the University
- other

5. In a situation of experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University, what would help you report such a situation?

Please indicate the most helpful solutions in your opinion.

- easy form of reporting (i.e. via electronic form on the University website)
- guarantee that each such report will be considered
- securing confidentiality of my report
- my influence on the choice of persons participating in the meeting during which the case is to be reported, i.e. participation of a psychologist, a lawyer or a close person
- prevention of retaliatory behaviours towards the reporting person
- possibility of reporting this fact to the person whose status/function provides a guarantee of resolving the issue, i.e. superior, Ombudsperson for Academic Rights and Values, trade union representative
- confidence that the case will not be ignored and will be resolved in a specific timeframe
- knowledge what actions, step by step, will be undertaken and what support may be provided to an employee after reporting this fact
- knowledge which institutional support may be provided to an employee after reporting the case and the timeframe of the proceeding (legal, psychological)
- other



6. What, in your opinion, are the key causes of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University?

7. What actions, in your opinion, should be undertaken by the University of Silesia in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment?

Please indicate the most important actions in your opinion.

- establishment of a transparent procedure for receiving reports in a safe manner for the person experiencing or witnessing the indicated behaviours
- effective reacting to the reports
- protection of persons experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment and witnessing such behaviours
- applying sanctions towards employees conducting such behaviours
- access to various forms of support consistent with the employee's expectations
- access to psychological assistance for the persons experiencing the indicated behaviours
- promotion of equality and mutual respect attitudes as absolutely demanded in the academic community at the University
- informing all members of the academic community of the possibility and methods of reacting to discrimination and unequal treatment
- informing about the methods of obtaining assistance in the structure of the University
- other

If you want to share your thoughts, ideas, comments regarding discrimination and unequal treatment at the University, please do so here: ...



Please find below two questions that concern personal experiences related to unequal treatment/discrimination at the University of Silesia. If you decide to answer them, we will appreciate it. If not, please finish completing the form and send us the questionnaire.

Have you ever experienced discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?

NO
YES,
please briefly describe the situation in question

Have you ever witnessed discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?

NO
YES,
please briefly describe the situation in question

Thank you for participating in the survey.



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