



UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA  
IN KATOWICE

# Report on the survey



conducted among students  
of the University of Silesia regarding  
**discrimination and unequal treatment**

Elaborated by:

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Katowice, 31.05.2021 r.

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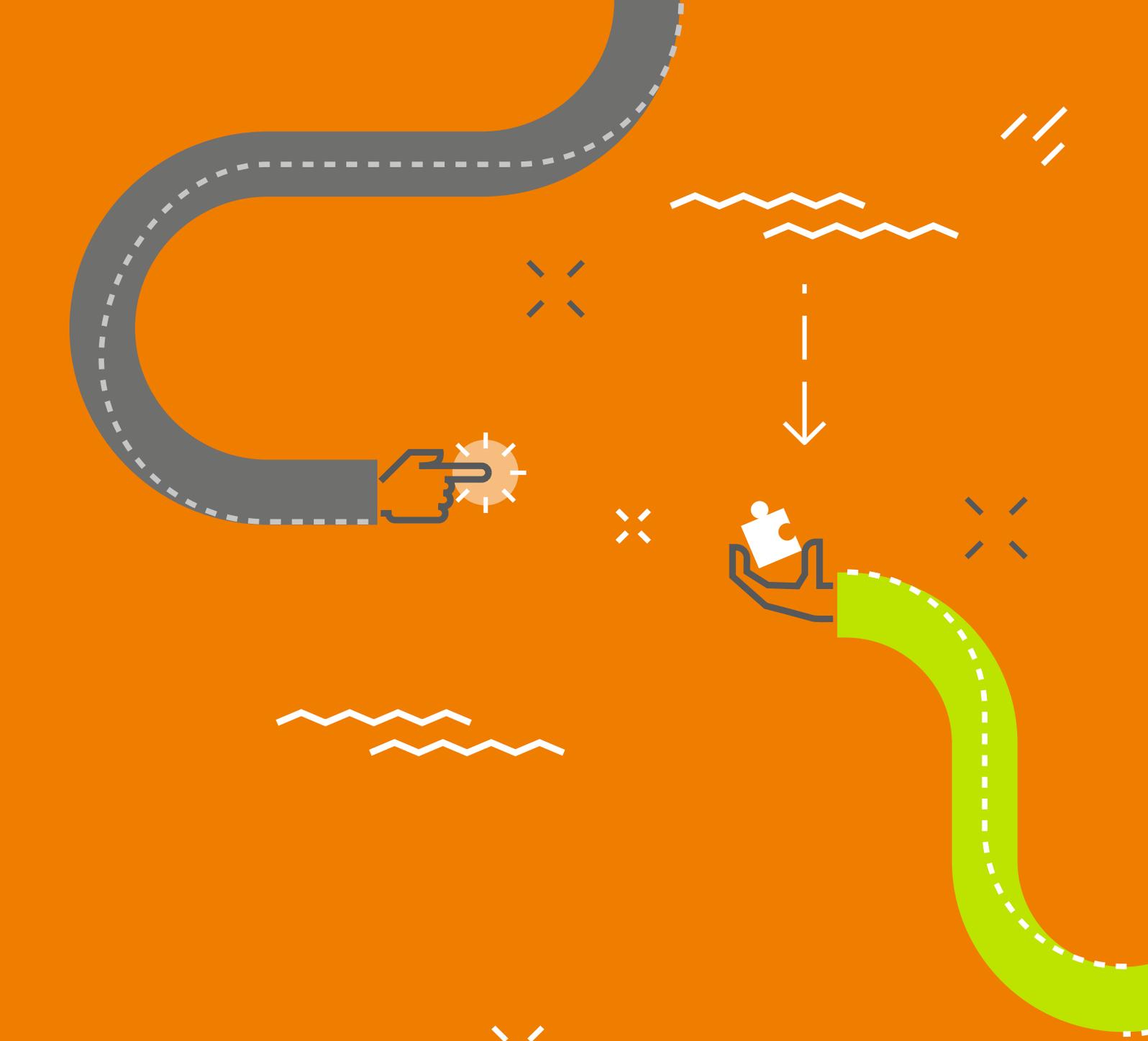
The report constitutes an element of the project „Level up – increasing the communication efficiency of US and shaping attitudes of openness inside the academic community”, co-financed from the resources of the European Social Fund under the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development, a non-contest project entitled "Increasing competencies of academic personnel and the institution potential in hosting foreigners – Welcome to Poland", realized under Measure 3.3 Internationalization of Polish higher education institutions, specified in the application for funding of the project no. POWR.03.03.00-00-PN14/18.



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Assumptions  
and manner  
of conducting  
the survey

# 1. Assumptions and manner of conducting the survey

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As part of actions targeted at building the policy of equality at the University of Silesia in Katowice, a survey concerning the phenomenon of discrimination and unequal treatment was conducted among students<sup>1</sup> of the University of Silesia<sup>2</sup>. The goal of this survey was to diagnose the reasons why situations related to discrimination and unequal treatment are often not reported, and to propose actions that might help to improve this situation. Furthermore, the survey was an opportunity for the respondents to exchange experiences. Finding out the attitudes and opinions of students in this regard will assist in elaborating the tools and solutions for an easier reporting process of irregularities, and for planning preventive actions. In a broader perspective, the analysis of experiences, needs and attitudes of students in the area of unequal treatment and discrimination is a necessary step towards elaborating a comprehensive University policy with respect to these phenomena and counteracting them.

The survey was carried out from 26 November 2020 to 8 December 2020 via USOS system, which allowed for limiting the tested group to the University students solely, and guaranteed that the survey would be filled out by one person only. The system ensures anonymity of responses for the survey respondents.

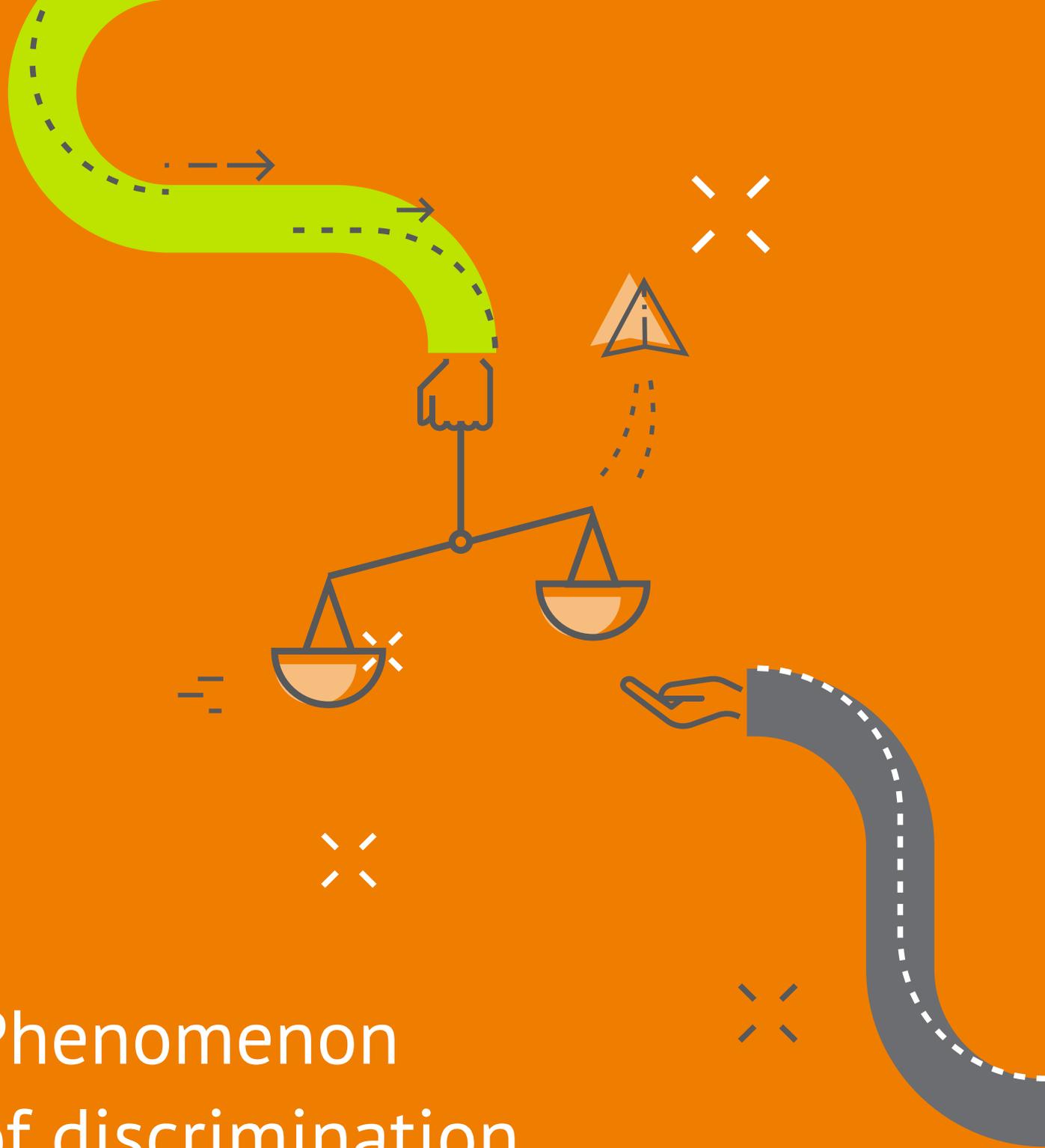
1,445 participants attended the survey, whereas the total number of respondents authorised to fill out the survey was 20,897. The authors of the survey decided to exclude gathering of record data at the planning stage in order to increase the sense of anonymity among the participants.

The information about the survey was distributed by means of:

- cyclical newsletter targeted at students – STUDENT NEWS 03/2020 of 12 December 2020;
- information in the USOS system;
- information in social media released by the Student Government – posts on Facebook published on 30 November 2020 and 05 December 2020

<sup>1</sup>The use of inclusive language was adopted in the report.

<sup>2</sup>The survey for students was adjusted by Małgorzata Poszwa, Oliwia Janus and Jędrzej Błaszczak (based on the survey for employees, elaborated by the Team for Elaboration of Equality Policy – under the supervision of Ewa Jarosz, Vice-Rector for Staff Development – comprising: Radosław Aksamić, 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-Aksamić, Jacek Szymik-Kozaczko, Katarzyna Topolska, Urszula Torbus, Aneta Trojanowska, Edyta Widawska, Gabriela Wilczyńska, Agnieszka Wiszniewicz.

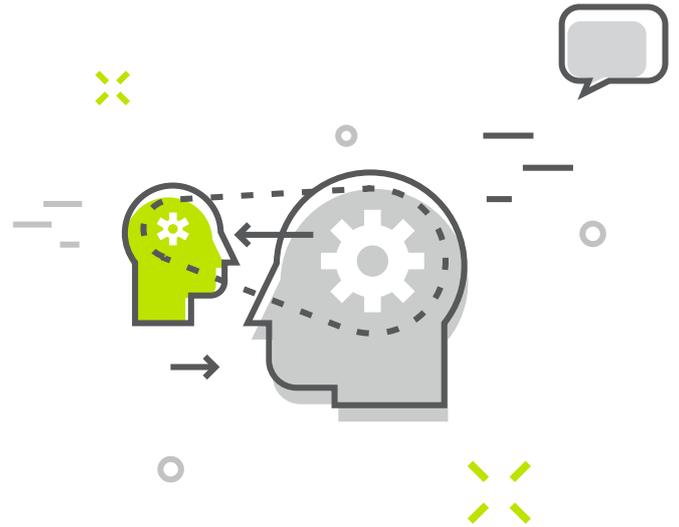


Phenomenon  
of discrimination  
and unequal treatment in  
the perception of students  
of the University of Silesia  
– survey results

## 2 • Phenomenon of discrimination and unequal treatment in the perception of students of the University of Silesia – survey results

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This part of the report contains an analysis of the gathered data. In the subsequent sections, the obtained responses to questions in the survey presented in the attachment comprehensively were discussed. Statistical data with regards to the frequency of granted replies were carried out in the course of data analysis. In the case of certain points, a subjective selection of sample answers granted by the University students was also presented. While selecting the quoted answers, the authors were mainly guided by the typicality of a given category, or the originality of its content.



## 2.1

# Knowledge about the possibilities of reacting

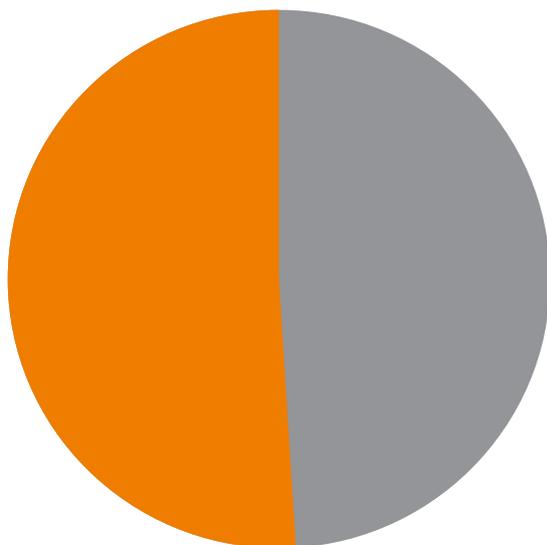
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The first question concerned knowledge regarding the possibilities of reacting in situations of experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment at the University.

The obtained results showed that more than half of the surveyed students did not know how to react in such situations – negative answer was provided by 735 respondents (50.9% of respondents), whilst positive answer was provided by 709 persons (49.1%). Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of the results.

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

**no, 51%**  
**yes, 49%**



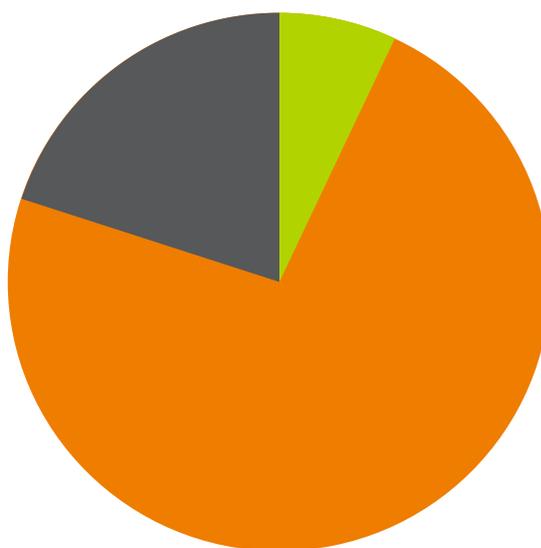
**Figure 1.** Breakdown of answers to the question on how to react in situations of experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment

Persons who provided positive answers to this question were asked for a brief description of possible reactions. 476 obtained replies were subsequently analysed. As a result, several categories were distinguished that might be divided into further three key categories: **REPORTING**, **INDEPENDENT REACTION** and **OTHER**.

Figure 2 presents a breakdown of the frequency of granted replies by general categories.

## Manner of reacting to an event of discrimination or unequal treatment

reporting, 73%  
independent reaction, 20%  
other, 7%



**Figure 2.** Proposed manners of reacting to discrimination or unequal treatment – general categories of answers

The most frequently occurring proposals of reacting to discrimination involved **REPORTING** such situations to various persons or institutions. Proposals related to reporting such events to the faculty or Rector and Vice-Rectors appeared in this category most frequently (approx. 32% of answers). Reporting to trusted lecturers, Dean, Deputy Dean, Rector or broadly-understood university authorities was indicated. Subsequent proposals in terms of the frequency of occurrence involved reporting such events to: year tutor or major tutor (approx. 20%), student government (approx. 15%), Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson (approx. 15%), group or year prefect (approx. 3%) Dean's Office (approx. 3%), non-university external bodies (police, prosecution, submission of a civil lawsuit - approx. 3%), disciplinary committee (approx. 0.6%). At this stage, students often proposed a rather non-precisely formulated necessity to submit such situations to the relevant bodies (approx. 9%).

The category **INDEPENDENT REACTION** contained, above all, all answers indicating the need to reprimand the person committing discrimination, start a discussion with them, or assertively stand up against them. **144 persons** indicated this path as the right one. Below one may find sample replies selected as the most typical ones that reflect the meaning of most proposals of reactions within this category:



*I explain why a given behaviour is inappropriate. I speak about my feelings.*

*I would try to explain, in an amicable and cultural manner, that this is not fair.*

The category **OTHER** contained proposals related to seeking social or psychological support, ignoring such situations or not undertaking actions, describing such situations in the media or other, individual proposals of reactions. The below answers may be considered as exemplary for this category:

*I would run "Rainbow Fridays" or something along those lines. One might consider introducing a non-discrimination day or week.*

*In case of mental issues resulting from experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment, I would look for the assistance of a psychologist.*

Many respondents indicated several proposals of interventions in their replies, while some of them indicated a sequence of actions to be taken in case the initial method proved to be ineffective. A good example of such answers would be:

*First, I would try to resolve the situation with the person committing an act of discrimination. If that didn't work, I would turn to the major tutor or to the Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson.*

*Discussion with a given person or group. If that didn't work, I would contact the Dean of the Faculty or Vice-Rector for Education and Students. If this was ineffective, I would write to the Rector. If this continued to be ineffective, I would inform the police and a prosecutor's office.*

Certain voices revealing a fear of reaction occurred in answers to this question.

*If unequal treatment occurred on the side of the lecturer, I would surely remain silent in order not to expose myself to problems with getting a credit, etc. If the situation repeated, I would turn to the Ombudsman.*

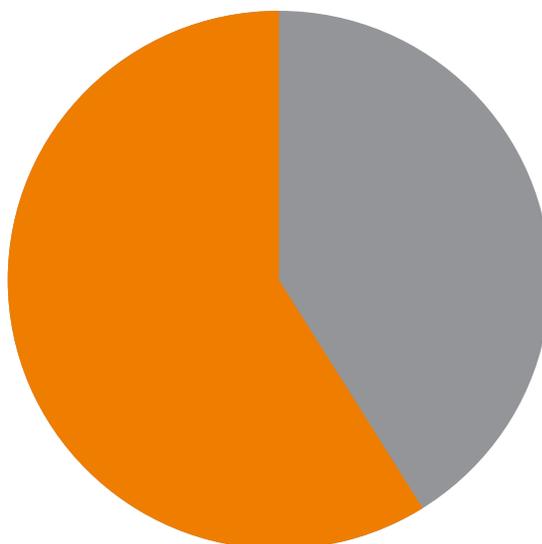


Next, the respondents were asked the following question: *Do you know how can a witness to such type of situations at the University react?*

Only **40.5%** of the surveyed group (599 persons) gave a positive reply, whilst 846 persons (**58.5%**) declared lack of knowledge about possible reactions of a witness to discrimination events at the University. Figure 3 illustrates the breakdown of the results.

### Do you know how to react when witnessing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?

no, 59%  
yes, 41%

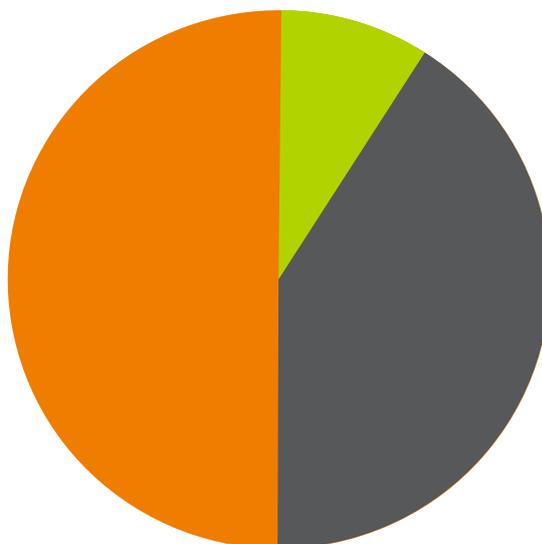


**Figure 3.** Breakdown of answers to the question on how to react in situations of witnessing discrimination or unequal treatment

Persons who declared having knowledge about possible reactions to witnessing this type of act were asked to provide a brief description. 351 answers were provided. As in the previous question, the analysis of replies allowed us to distinguish three key categories: **REPORTING, INDEPENDENT REACTION** and **OTHER**. Figure 4 presents a breakdown of the frequency of granted replies.

### Manner of reacting to witnessing an act of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

reporting, 50%  
independent reaction, 41%  
other, 9%



**Figure 4.** The proposed ways of reacting in situations of witnessing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

As in the case of direct experiencing discrimination, the respondents indicated INDEPENDENT REACTION as the most frequently occurring way to react to observing this type of act. Proposals of persons or institutions to which, in the opinion of students, one ought to turn in such situations were quite similar to the replies granted with regards to the direct experience of discrimination, whilst more persons did not indicate who specifically they would wish to direct their reporting in this question (approx. 21%).

The surveyed students much more frequently indicated a need to undertake direct intervention in situations in which they would become witnesses of such treatment of other persons than with respect to them directly experiencing discrimination. The following answers were placed in this category:

- reprimanding the person committing discrimination, talking to them, defending the victim (such answers were granted by 134 persons) – the following is a sample answer:

*I would note to the person oppressing another person and I would ask them to stop.  
I would try to explain to such perpetrators that their attitude and behaviour were inappropriate.*

- support for the discriminated person – mainly in the form of showing emotional support (talking to them) as well as information support (telling them where to seek help) – this type of answer was granted by 78 persons – below is a sample answer:

*Contact with a discriminated person and offering assistance, as well as ensuring the feeling of solidarity.*

- being on the side of the discriminated person (4 persons indicated this reaction).

The category **OTHER** contained showing readiness to confirm the occurrence of a given situation (16 answers.); ignoring an event (12 answers), describing the case in media (6 answers), recording the event and/or gathering evidence (4 answers) and other single proposals.

Furthermore, some voices indicating fear of the respondents against consequences of reacting to such situations were noted in the provided answers to this question. Here are some of the answers:

*It is sad that the person who stands up for the victim will bear consequences of their action...*

*I would not react in fear of being eliminated from the group. In the present situation (online education), we are at mercy of our study mates.*

*In the majority of cases, we agree with the lecturer out of fear of consequences at the later stage of education as we know that personal matters interweave with professional ones and the consequences may be felt first-hand, for instance, in getting a credit / lower marks. The second option is a lack of reaction [...], if I stood up to a lecturer – I tread on their toes – as a result, for instance during classes, I will be called to answer more often, my answers will be evaluated more harshly, more critically. I want to smoothly handle my studies - these are the most possible attitudes – not to feel the responsibility and not to bear the consequences for the discriminated person.*



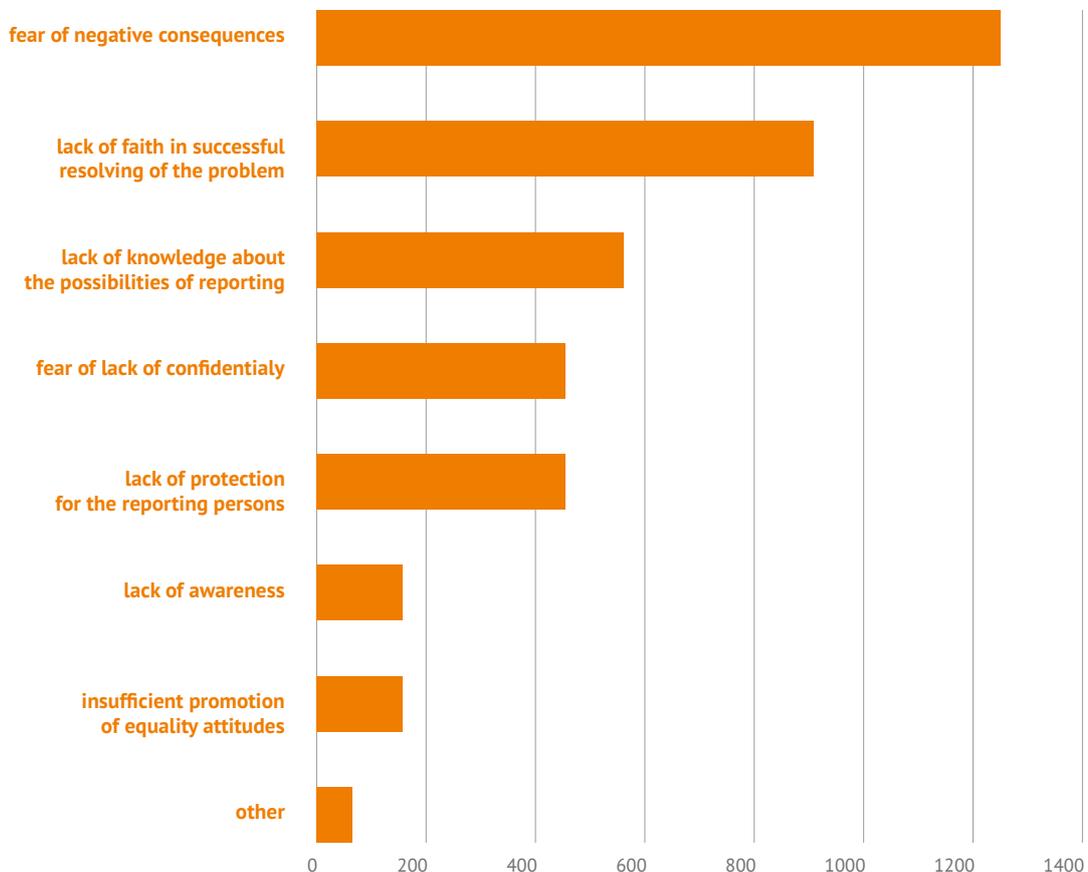
## 2.2

# Reasons for silence / passivity in the face of discrimination

The subsequent questions were intended to indicate the reasons why persons experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment fail to report them. The respondents were asked the following question: *What are, in your opinion, the main causes on account of which students experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment decide not to report them?*

This question allowed to indicate maximum three items from the list of available proposals. The respondents also had a possibility to indicate other options than those specified in the multiple-choice answers. Figure 5 presents a breakdown of granted answers. Detailed data have been presented in Table 1.

### Reason for not reporting discrimination and unfair treatment by the victims



**Figure 5.** Breakdown of answers to the question concerning the causes of non-reporting discrimination and unequal treatment

Almost **85%** of the survey respondents indicated that discriminated and unfairly treated persons fail to report their situation on account of the fear of negative consequences. Yet another frequently occurring and indicated reason is lack of faith in successful resolving of the matter and/or ceasing of negative practices, indicated by more than **65%** of the surveyed students. Almost **40%** of respondents indicated, as a cause of passivity among the discriminated persons, a lack of knowledge about the possibility of reporting such practices to applicable bodies at the University.

**Table 1.** Reasons for non-reporting discrimination and unequal treatment

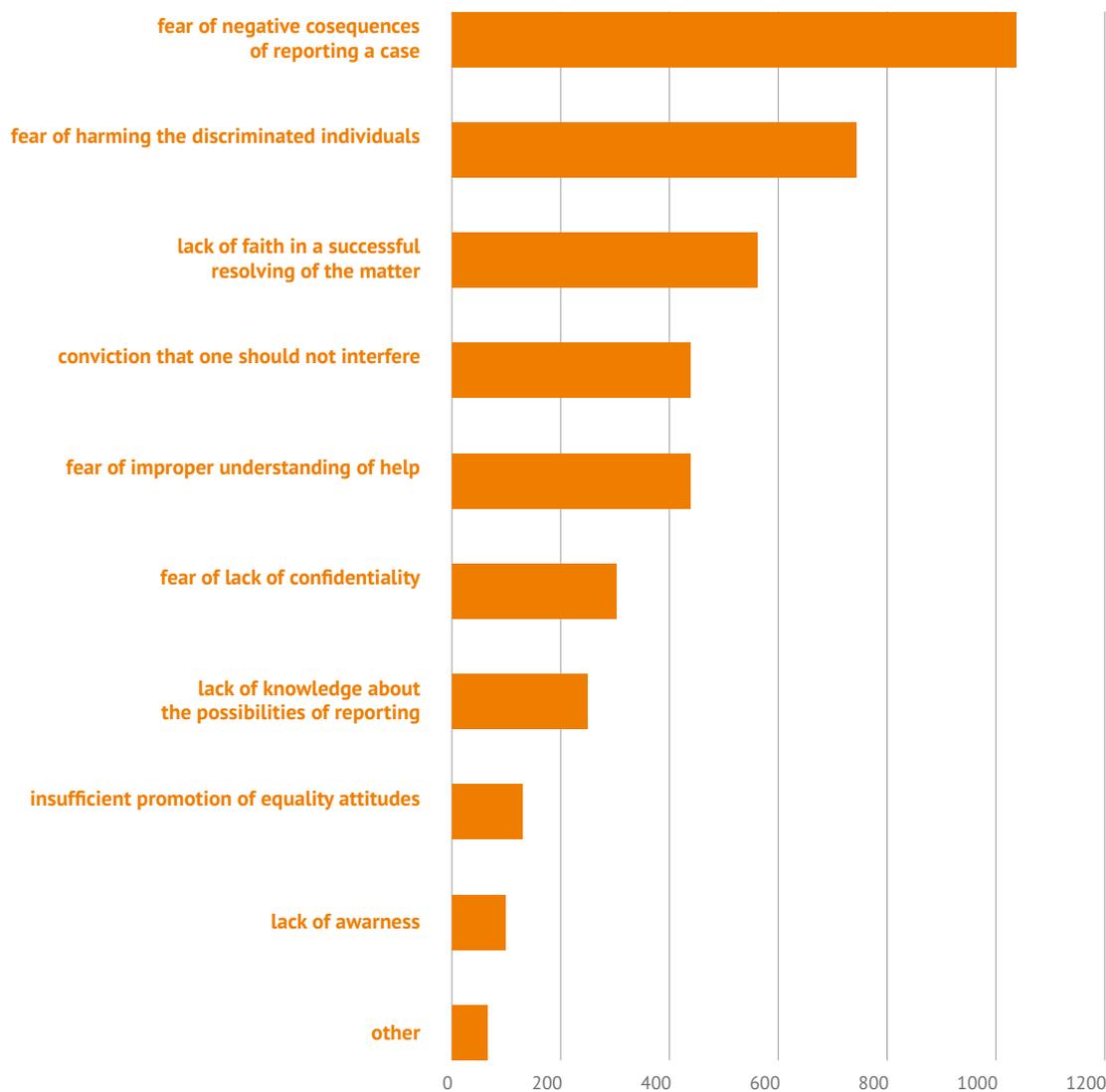
<b>Causes of the lack of reporting discrimination</b>	<b>number of answers</b>	<b>% of replies</b>	<b>% of respondents indicating this option</b>
fear of negative consequences	1,225	30.8	84.8
lack of faith in successful resolving of the matter and/or ceasing of negative practices	943	23.7	65.3
lack of knowledge about the possibility of submitting such cases to specific bodies at the University	565	14.2	39.1
fear that the person accepting the report will fail to maintain confidentiality	468	11.8	32.4
lack of protection of the persons reporting discrimination and unequal treatment	455	11.4	31.5
lack of awareness or equal treatment and respect towards all is an obligation of each member of the University community	141	3.5	9.8
insufficient promotion of equality attitudes by the University	140	3.5	9.7
other	43	1.1	3.0

In this question, **43** respondents indicated the option "other" and among them, **40** expanded their replies. Upon data analysis, the largest distinguished category of answers focused on the lack of trust among the respondents to the University and faith in it undertaking actions in relation to a potential reporting (9 answers). Six respondents stated that the problem of discrimination did not occur at the University at all. Five answers were related to low self-esteem among the persons affected by discrimination and/or unwillingness to expose the matter. Three respondents indicated low harmfulness of such events. Two respondents stated that all multiple-choice answers are correct. The remaining answers repeated the answers indicated previously or constituted individual interpretations, i.e. difficulty in proving the event, complicated procedures.

Then, the respondents were asked the following question: *What is the source - in your opinion - of the passivity on the side of persons who witness discrimination and unequal treatment of others?*

As in the previous question, it was possible to indicate three options from the list of available proposals as well as indications of other answers than the suggested ones. Figure 6 and Table 2 present a breakdown of the obtained results.

## Causes of passivity among witness of discrimination and unequal treatment



**Figure 6.** Causes of passivity on the side of persons who are witnesses of discrimination or unequal treatment of others

Similar to the situation of direct experience of discrimination, the witnesses of such acts also indicated the fear of negative consequences as the most frequent cause of lack of reaction (almost 71% of the respondents indicated this answer). The next most frequent answer was the fear of worsening a situation of the discriminated or mistreated person (almost 50% of respondents).

Almost 40% of respondents selected the conviction that there were no chances for positive resolving of the matter anyway as the main cause.

**Table 2.** Causes of passivity among persons witnessing discrimination and unequal treatment of others

Causes of the lack of reporting discrimination	Number of answers	% of replies	% of respondents indicating this option
fear of negative consequences	1,024	26	70.9
fear that they will cause even more harm to the discriminated or mistreated persons	721	18.3	49.9
conviction that there are no chances for positive resolving of the matter anyway	569	14.4	39.4
conviction that one should not interfere in other people's affairs even if they are discriminated or mistreated	421	10.7	29.1
fear that the offered help and support may be incorrectly or wrongly understood	415	10.5	28.7
fear that the person accepting the report will fail to maintain confidentiality	301	7.6	20.8
lack of knowledge that it is possible to report such a matter to the University bodies	221	5.6	15.3
the University insufficiently promotes the equality attitudes	130	3.3	9.0
lack of awareness or equal treatment and respect towards all is an obligation of each member of the University community	98	2.5	6.8
other	43	1.1	3.0

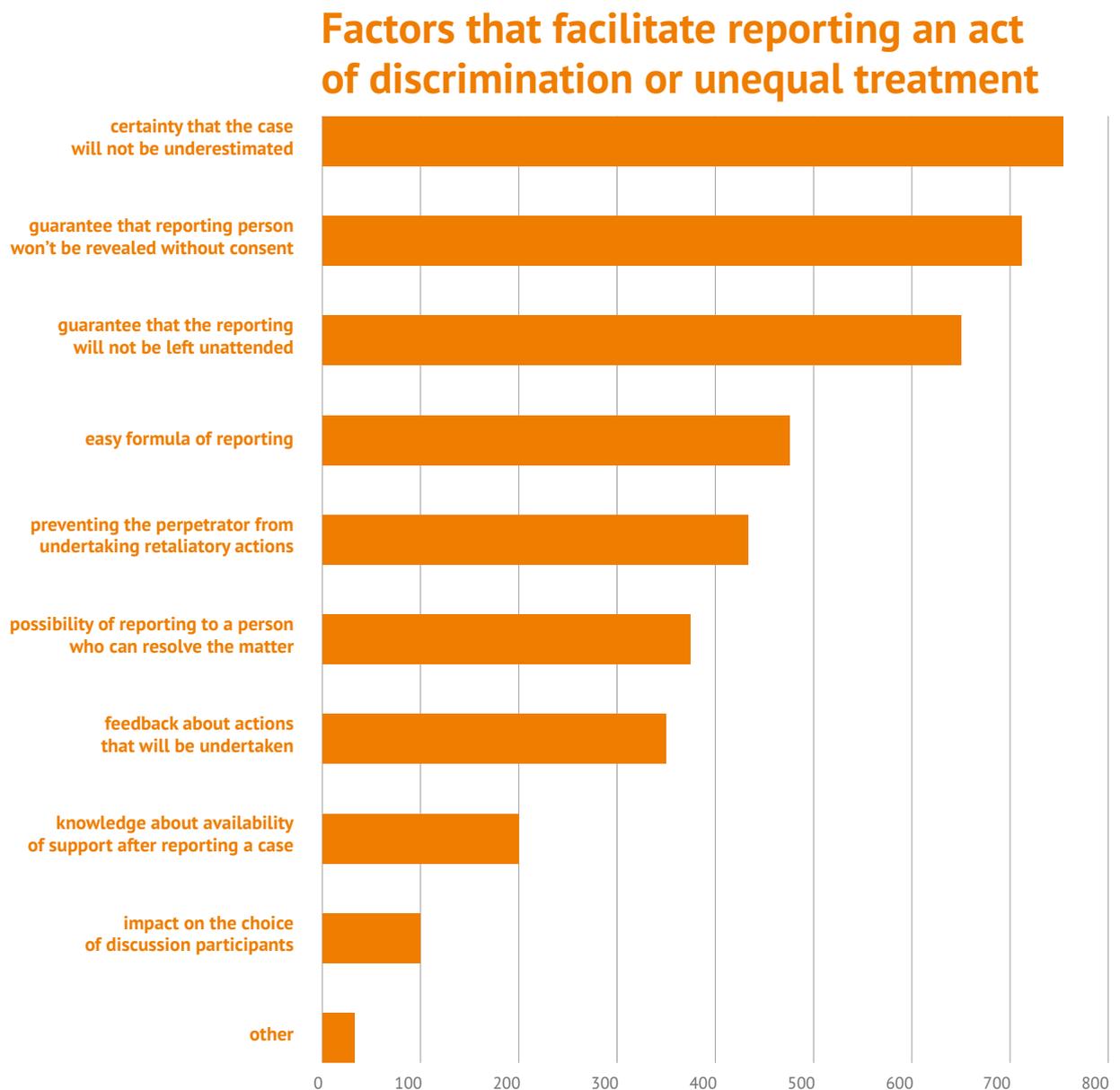
In this question, **43** respondents indicated the option "other" and among them, **42** expanded their replies. Repetitions of one of the answers contained in the choice of answers constituted the largest group of obtained answers – mostly concerning the fear of negative consequences (7 answers). Furthermore, **6** persons indicated the lack of empathy, interest or pro-social attitude as the cause of passivity of witnesses, while **4** persons drew reference to the effect of diffusion of responsibility in situations with many witnesses. 3 persons considered that the problem of discrimination did not occur at the University, witnesses are unaware of the problem, the observers of discrimination or unequal treatment may approve of such behaviour, and witnesses have no courage. The remaining answers constituted individual reflections, such as, among others, unwillingness of the discriminated persons to report such acts, lack of knowledge and skills to behave adequately in such situations, feeling of helplessness, treating reaction as a sign of grassing.

## 2.3

# Helpful solutions in reporting discrimination and unequal treatment

In the subsequent part of the survey, the students were asked the following question: *What would help you in reporting discrimination or unequal treatment if you experienced such phenomena at the University?*

It was possible to mark a maximum of three options from the list of available proposals and the respondents could also indicate other answers than those suggested in the survey. Figure 7 and Table 3 present a breakdown of the obtained results.



**Figure 7.** Factors that would likely contribute to reporting discrimination or unequal treatment in case of experiencing them at the University

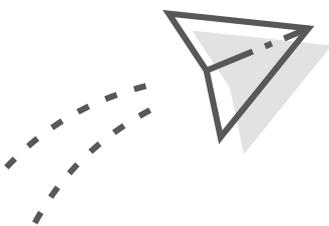
A factor which, in the opinion of the respondents, would most facilitate the reporting of discrimination or unequal treatment to students would be the certainty that the reported complaint will not be ignored, and that actions will be trivialized in order to resolve the problem.

In the opinion of respondents, guaranteeing non-disclosure of data of the person making a submission and ensuring follow-up actions after each such submission would also be very helpful. Almost one third of the respondents indicated the importance of an easy formula of reporting such situations.

**Table 3.** Factors that would likely contribute to reporting discrimination or unequal treatment in case of experiencing them at the University

<b>Factors that facilitate reporting an act of discrimination or unequal treatment</b>	<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>% of replies</b>	<b>% of respondents indicating this option</b>
surety that my submission will not be trivialised and that actions will be undertaken in order to resolve it	748	18.5	51.8
guarantee that the person who collects a report will not disclose my data to anyone without my consent	708	17.5	49.0
guarantee that my report will not be left unattended	651	16.1	45.1
easy formula of reporting	475	11.7	32.9
preventing the perpetrator from undertaking retaliatory measures towards me	423	10.5	29.3
the fact that I will be able to submit discrimination or unequal treatment to a person who has a real chance to repair the situation (i.e. lecturers, major director, Dean, Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson)	366	9.0	25.3
informing me which actions will be undertaken and enabling me to make a decision whether I agree to such intervention	350	8.7	24.2
knowledge about the support that students may obtain after submitting discrimination or unequal treatment	200	4.9	13.8
my impact on the choice of discussion participants - i.e. ensuring participation of a psychologist, a lawyer or a relative	100	2.5	6.9
other	25	0.6	1.7

All persons who indicated the option "other" in this question provided their explanations. Some of them constituted repetition of one category contained in multiple-choice answers, while three persons specified that all proposals presented in the body of the question were equally important. The next 3 individuals indicated that nothing would be able to ever make their reporting easier. Among all answers, the following proposals occurred: apoliticism of the University and its employees, the possibility of submitting anonymous reports, including issues related to discrimination to the content of evaluation surveys of conducted classes, the possibility of changing class tutors, the possibility of submitting such classes to the persons who are not academics, and surety that no false accusations are submitted against the persons making submissions that lead to interrogations carried out by law enforcement.



## 2.4

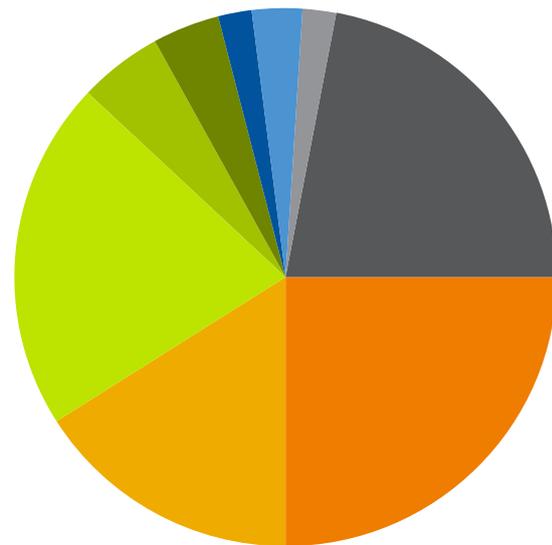
# Reasons of discrimination and unequal treatment

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Another question that the students participating in the survey had to answer was as follows: *What, in your opinion, are the key causes of occurrence of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?*

Substantive answers to this question were provided by 991 persons. The analysis of data indicated that some respondents indicated several different causes of discrimination at the same time. A multitude of obtained information was divided into 8 general categories and their breakdown of the frequency of answers has been presented in Figure 8.

### The causes of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University



**Figure 8.** The key causes of occurrence of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

Students participating in the survey indicated personality factors and factors related to the manner of bringing up persons who commit discrimination as the most frequent causes of discrimination and unequal treatment (these answers constituted approx. **25%** of all indications). Personality factors from the data analysis were the answers showing such features as the stiffness of attitudes and lack of openness for discussion (78 answers), individual sensitivity and personality features (76 answers), grandiosity (57 answers), the tendency to manifest one's views without any reflection (33 answers). The following answers may be considered as exemplary in this category:



- *Lack of empathy and thinking about what one says. Unreflective application of one's views over the feelings of others.*
- *Very 'stiff views', unwillingness towards 'otherness'.*
- *Lack of tolerance towards other people, unwillingness to understand the other side.*
- *Feeling of superiority towards other people.*

The aspects related to socialisation in a family home included factors related to upbringing (37 answers) and school education (23 answers). The following answers may be considered as exemplary in this category:

- *Lack of adequate education and upbringing of the perpetrator at school age.*
- *[...] insufficient education from the youngest years  
– we don't teach the children that otherness is not a bad thing.*
- *In my opinion, such things are normally taught at home, thus, the upbringing conducted by the parents is key [...].*
- *Usually, it depends on the lack of correct upbringing and ethical attitudes of the persons who are unjust.*

The next large group of answers included various types of deficits appearing among the persons who committed discrimination and unequal treatment (approx. 22% of the indicated causes). Lack of knowledge, awareness, reflection and understanding were defined as deficits (131 answers), cognitive errors, including being guided by stereotypes and prejudices (119 answers), an anachronism of attitudes, lack of professionalism, conformity and intellectual shortages were described as deficits. The following answers may be considered as exemplary in this category:

- *Lack of awareness among the discriminated persons regarding the consequences of their actions.*
- *Insufficient knowledge and ignorance.*
- *Destroying stereotypes, even those unintentional. Little awareness that certain behaviours constitute discrimination or unequal treatment.*
- *Prejudices to specific groups/persons on a certain account (philosophical), stereotypical thinking.*
- *Old-fashioned views regarding certain persons, i.e. University lecturers.*
- *The University employs persons who are unable to separate private views (political, religious) from the functions they perform.*

Yet another category of frequently granted answers was structural factors (approx. 21%) related, among others, to the hierarchical structure of an academic society and inequalities stemming from it as well as the large distance of authorities (76 answers), feeling of impunity (64 answers), lack of reaction to the occurring pathologies and lack of prevention in this scope (55 answers), political involvement of the University (25 answers), lack of respect towards students (14 answers), lack of equality promotion at the University (13 answers), presence of cycles and student organisations promoting unequal treatment and committing discrimination at the University (12 answers), insufficient monitoring of the quality of education/conduct of classes (7 answers). The following answers may be considered as exemplary in this category:

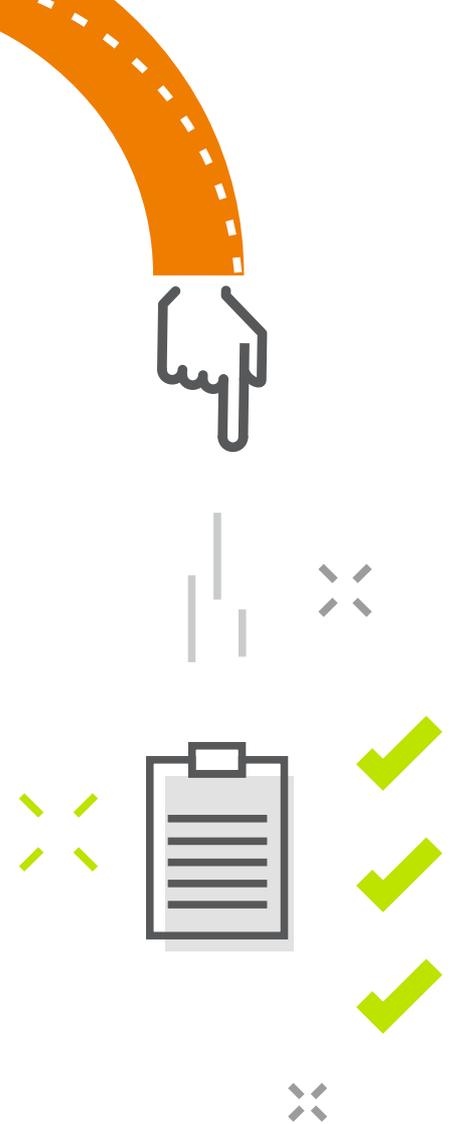
- *Significant feeling of superiority of lecturers over students.*
- *Feeling of impunity of some didactic teachers.*
- *Lack of respect towards students as individuals.*
- *Lack of drawing consequences and frequent trivialisation of matters.*
- *Saturation of the University with politics which should not, in any case, be in place.*
- *Attitude of the university authorities that in a transparent manner identify themselves with a left-wing perception of equality, promoting neo-Marxist values and discriminate all persons with conservative views at the university.*
- *Lack of proper response to such behaviours on the side of the University or simulated response.*

The survey participants also frequently indicated relational factors (approx. 5%), thus, a low level of communication skills and negative feelings occurring among people: cultural factors and the present political situation in the country (approx. 4%).

From amongst the obtained answers of the respondents, 211 answers indicating not so much the causes of occurrence of discrimination phenomena as its premises (i.e. gender, race, nationality, disability, political views, religion, sexual orientation). 34 persons indicated at this point that in their opinion the problem of discrimination at the University of Silesia does not appear at all or was not encountered by them. 28 survey respondents indicated that they did not know the causes of discrimination.

More than 1,300 indications of causes of discrimination and unequal treatment were made in response to the discussed question. One ought to point out that the qualitative analysis of the content and the conduct of their categorisation is to a certain degree burdened with the researcher's subjectivism. It is, furthermore, not possible to discuss all types of answers, and the provided categories solely indicate the dominating trends occurring in the perception of the survey participants. Many unique answers were single opinions specified in the "other" category.





## 2.5

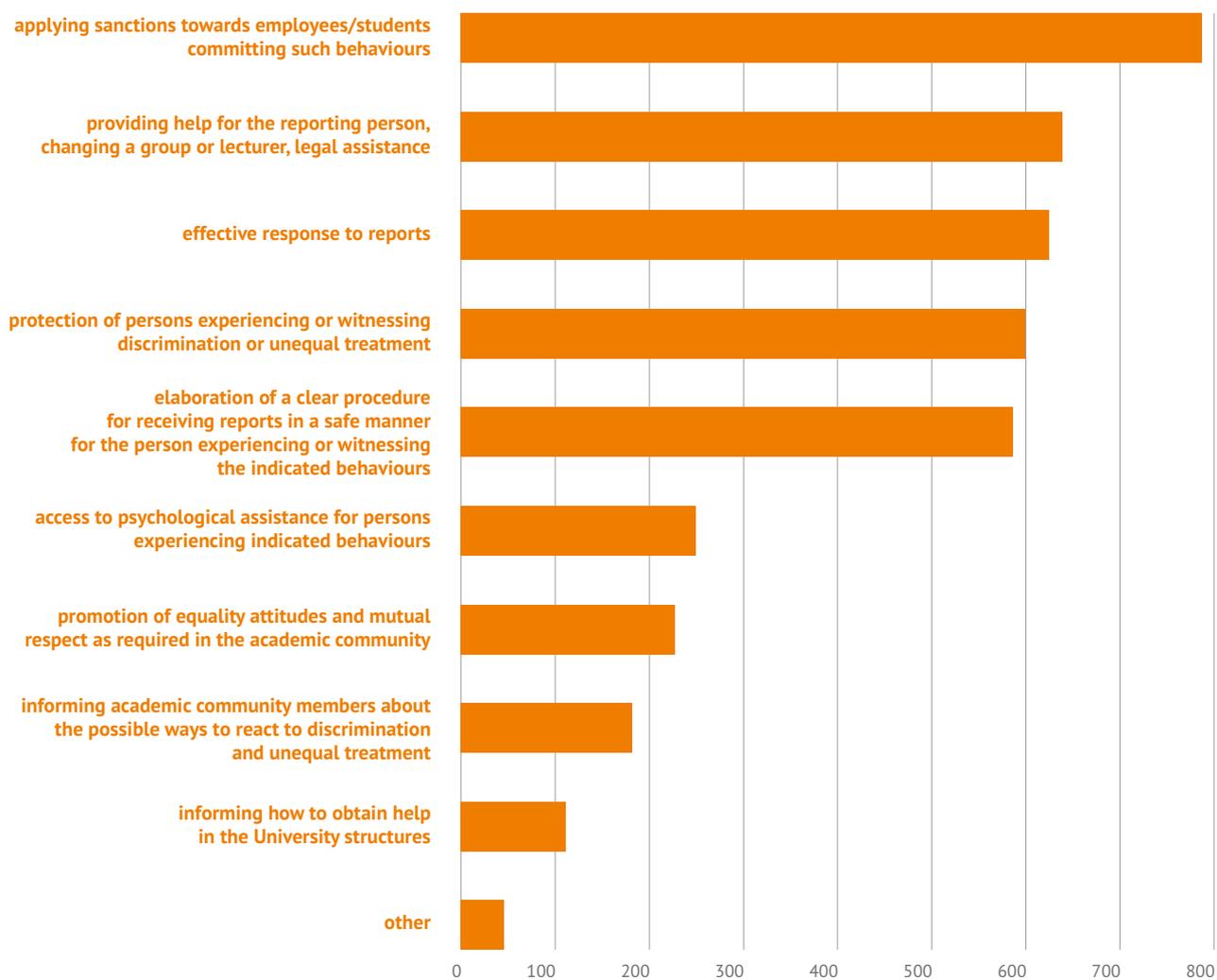
# Suggested actions in the area of counteracting the discussed phenomena

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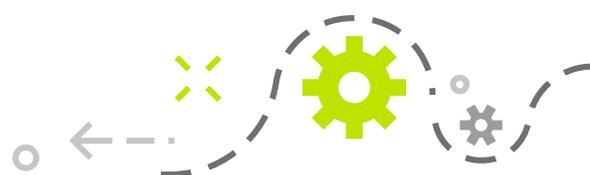
The subsequent question that the respondents had to answer was as follows: *What actions, in your opinion, should be undertaken by the University in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment?*

It was possible at this stage to indicate three options from the list of available proposals as well as an indication of other answers than the suggested ones. Figure 9 and Table 4 present a breakdown of the obtained results. More than half of the respondents indicated that the University should apply sanctions towards employees and students committing discrimination. The second most frequently occurring answer was providing help to the person reporting an event, corresponding to their needs, i.e. in the form of changing the group, changing the lecturer or ensuring legal assistance. Moreover, more than **40%** of the respondents saw the need for efficient response to reporting, protection of individuals experiencing discrimination and unequal treatment and witnesses of the indicated behaviours, as well as elaborating a clear procedure for receiving reports in a safe manner for the persons experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment, or witnesses of the indicated behaviours.

## What actions, in your opinion, should be undertaken by the University in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment



**Figure 9.** Actions that should be undertaken by the University in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment



In this question, 43 respondents indicated the option "other" and among them, 39 expanded their replies. The need to introduce all actions proposed in multiple-choice questions (8 answers) and the political nature of the University (8 answers) appeared the most frequently. The need to enhance knowledge, awareness and promotion of equality in an academic society by undertaking such actions as training, discussions and meetings with specialists was indicated by 5 respondents. The remaining answers repeated options disclosed in multiple-choice answers or constituted individual ideas. 2 persons expressed a lack of need to undertake any actions in this regard whatsoever.

**Table 4.** Breakdown of answers to the question:

*What actions should be undertaken by the University in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment?*

<b>Actions that should be undertaken by the University in order to counteract discrimination and unequal treatment</b>	<b>Number of answers</b>	<b>% of replies</b>	<b>% of respondents indicating this option</b>
application of sanctions towards employees and students displaying such behaviours	787	19.5	54.5
ensuring that the person who reports event assistance in response to their needs, i.e. change of group, change of lecturer, legal assistance	625	15.5	43.3
effective response to reports	620	15.3	42.9
protection of persons experiencing or witnessing discrimination and unequal treatment	599	14.8	41.5
elaboration of a transparent procedure of receiving reports in a safe manner for the person experiencing or witnessing the indicated behaviours	586	14.5	40.6
access to psychological assistance for the persons experiencing the indicated behaviours	263	6.5	18.2
promotion of equality and mutual respect attitudes as absolutely demanded in the academic community	235	5.8	16.3
informing all members of the academic community of the possibility and methods of reacting to discrimination and unequal treatment	175	4.3	12.1
informing about the methods of obtaining assistance in the structure of the University	108	2.7	7.5
other	43	1.1	3.0

## 2.6

# Experiencing and/or witnessing discrimination and/or unequal treatment

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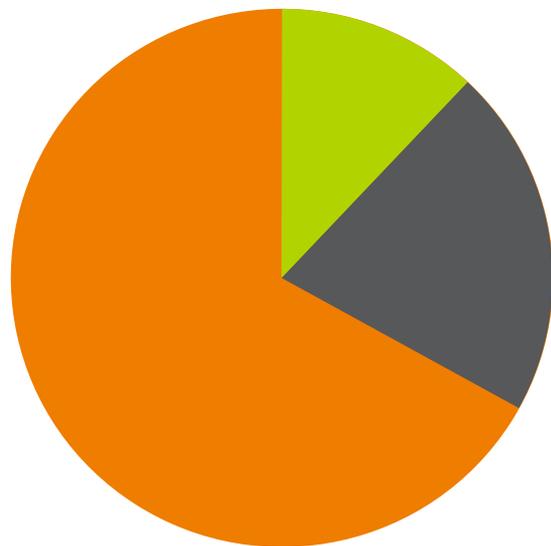
The respondents were invited to express their personal behaviours of unequal treatment/discrimination at the University of Silesia. The following question was formed: *Have you ever experienced discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?*

Figure 10 presents a breakdown of the frequency of granted replies.

Among all respondents, 300 students who participated in the survey (approx. 21%) admitted they had experienced discrimination or unequal treatment at the University. These persons had an opportunity to describe such situations, and 183 of them used it.

### Personal experience of discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

no, 67%  
yes, 21%  
i don't want to respond to this question, 12%



**Figure 10.** Personal experience of the respondents related to discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

The obtained descriptions were divided into **4 main categories**, listed below in the order of the frequency of replies:

## 1. Description focusing on the form of experienced discrimination or unequal treatment – here, descriptions of such situations may be found, such as:

- difficulties in passing a given subject through unfair evaluation, granting other criteria of passing than those obtained by the rest of the group, enforcing long waiting time to meet during office hours etc. (47 answers);
- insulting students by university employees (30 answers);
- expressing stereotypical views by lecturers and/or demonstrating their political views during classes (28 answers);
- sexist statements expressed by class tutors and sexual harassment on their side (17 answers);
- disparaging statements regarding faith and religious rituals or allowing for such behaviours during classes by the lecturers (12 answers);
- favouring or discriminating students by lecturers without any visible premises (8 answers);
- verbal aggression and threats on the side of other students (3 answers).

**This category of answers constituted approx. 52% of all answers.**

## 2. Description focusing on the premises of experienced discrimination or unequal treatment – the following premises of such behaviours appeared at this stage:

- gender (33 answers);
- political views and beliefs (13 answers);
- origin, nationality, race (13 answers);
- appearance (10 answers);
- major or form of studies (10 answers);
- health state (physical and/or mental (8 answers);
- faith/religion (7 answers);
- sexual orientation (7 answers);
- age (2 answers)

and one answer to each of the following:

- place of residence (countryside);
- adhering to sanitary restrictions during the pandemics;
- studying in more than one major.

**This category of answers constituted approx. 38% of all answers.**

### 3. Discrimination focusing on experiencing discrimination on the side of the university understood as a system – here, answers indicating the following issues could be found:

- perception of support for Women's Strike as discrimination towards persons who do not agree with it (7 answers);
- lack of possibility to use the preferred name by transgender people (2 answers)

and single answers to the following:

- support of the University for the discriminated female and LGBT person;
- carrying out classes in an online form;
- lack of adaptation for studies corresponding to the adaptation days for students from the second enrolment cycle.

**This category of answers constituted approx. 5% of all answers.**

### 4. Other – here, single answers could be found, among others,

- indicating suspicion of class tutors towards students submitting technical issues during online learning;
- discrimination of persons on account of their material status i.e. in the form of requiring a camera during online classes.

**This category of answers constituted approx. 5% of all answers.**

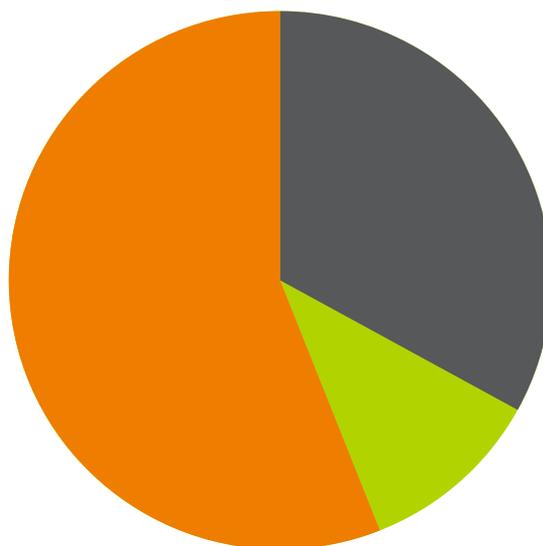


The next question that the respondents were asked was as follows: *Have you ever witnessed discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?*

One third of the respondents (**470 persons**) stated that they had witnessed discrimination or unequal treatment at the University. Figure 11 illustrates the breakdown of the results.

## Witnessing discrimination or unequal treatment at the University

no, 56%  
yes, 33%  
i don't want to respond to this question, 11%

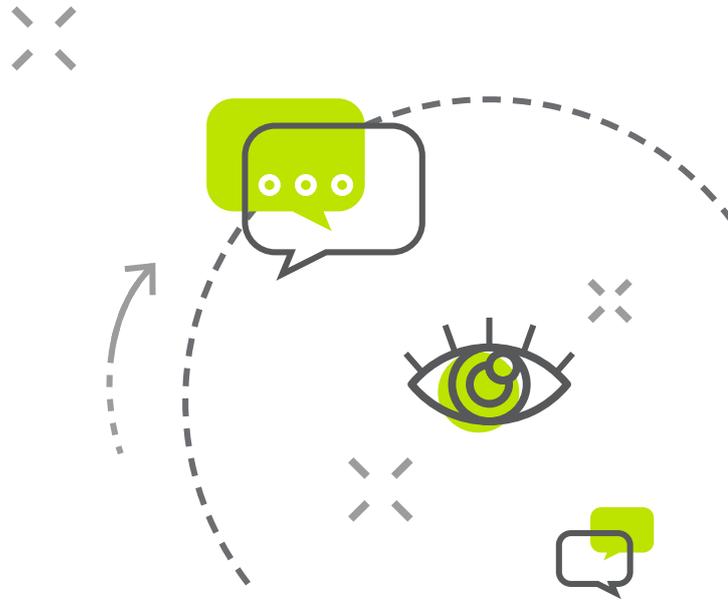


**Figure 11.** Breakdown of answers to the question: *Have you ever witnessed discrimination or unequal treatment at the University?*

Persons who granted positive answers to this question had a possibility of describing the situation, and 219 respondents used this option. The obtained answers were quite similar to those described in the previous question. In this case, the largest category also contained answers describing the form of experienced discrimination or unequal treatment – approx. 44.7% of the obtained descriptions. One must, however, note that in case of witnessing discrimination, students, when describing its forms, most frequently referred to demonstrating their political views during classes (41 answers).

The second most frequent category of answers, as in the previous question, focused on the premises of experienced discrimination or unequal treatment (approx. 43.3%) – however, this time the majority of respondents submitted the following factors as a premise of discrimination or unequal treatment: political views and beliefs (49 answers), then gender (30 answers), followed by origin, nationality and race (25 answers).

The descriptions focused on experiencing discrimination on the side of the university understood as a system constituted only 2.3% of granted answers, whilst category "other" became slightly more numerous (9.7%).



## 2.7

# Comments, observations and reflections of respondents

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In the final questions of the survey, the respondents had an opportunity to freely express their views on the discussed topic. The following invitation was formed: *If you wish to share your observations, reflections, comments regarding discrimination and unequal treatment at the University, please do so here:* 374 persons availed of this opportunity.

Many repeated statements appeared in the replies which had already been cited in the previous questions – mainly descriptions of situations of discrimination or unequal treatment (approx. 32%), but also summaries and thoughts on the phenomena of discrimination and the situation at the University (approx. 23%). Some respondents underlined that they had not experienced discrimination and/or that they did not notice the issue of discrimination in their environment (approx. 18%).

Other respondents (approx. 18%) focused on the need to introduce changes at the University in order to improve the existing situation. Within this particular group, the following needs were stated several times: consequences imposed on persons committing discrimination, increasing the awareness of academic community members in the area of discrimination and elaborating clear procedures of counteracting it. The respondents frequently drew reference to the need to increase/maintain tolerance and neutrality of the University as an organisation towards religion and beliefs of its academic community members.

Some selected proposals submitted by the respondents, concerning the ways to cope with discrimination at the University, have been quoted below. While selecting the proposed solutions, the authors were guided by their typicality, comprehensiveness and originality:



*In order to prevent discrimination, it might be worth to introduce a ban on political agitation during academic classes [...]. The authority of lecturers must be an indisputable issue, except for the situations in which the anti-discrimination committee notes, post investigating evidence, that entitlements have been abused and the rules and regulations breached. Introducing such a procedure will scare away the potential provocateurs among students "wishing to show off" as well as lecturers who will be afraid to refer in a discriminatory or degrading manner to students due to fear of initiating an anti-discrimination procedure against them that might damage their reputation.*

*[...] Obviously, those who are unable to cope with discrimination should undoubtedly receive psychological assistance and support from the university authorities, however, the attitude of substantive, world-view and political dialogue should be promoted among the students and persons striving to reinstate rhetorical culture among the university community ought to be appreciated.*

*It would be fantastic if the University emphasized its equality attitudes and organised events designated to promote equality or free educational meetings concerning tolerance.*

*[...] Obligatory training for scientific employees regarding unconscious manifestations of discrimination that might be committed by them in order to strengthen the awareness about the words and comments that must be avoided and that cannot be expressed; larger promotion of equality which may be co-formed by NGOs that will surely be able to conduct various interesting initiatives at the University of Silesia.*

*The issue is serious and concerns the whole society and not just the university, thus, drawing consequences from discriminating behaviours must go hand in hand with educating – the university will frequently be the first point of contact for students encountering discrimination as a serious ethical issue. At the same time, one should not apply any lightweight tariffs for ethical breaches, especially for persons in broadly-understood authority positions.*



*[...] I am proposing the use of appropriate sanctions followed by launching a unit consisting of students and employees, which would deal with prevention (informing, trainings on discrimination, equality; discussions, mediations with students, before a given case was submitted i.e. to the Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson), and in case of signalled conflicts with lecturers, supervision over exams for the difference in characters not to have any impact on the final grade [...]. It is hard for me to say how many cases requiring reactions by special authorities there are in place but there's a good chance that some of them could be resolved without the interference of the above-stated ombudsperson. Hence the idea of a unit that would get involved in such things as discussions or mediations between the conflicted parties. Yet another task of such a unit would be to inform about ways of reacting to problems with which we cannot cope; writing reports for students to see the effects of actions and not just promises of such actions; in more complex cases, supervising the course of oral exams for the attending students to be sure that they can, without the fear about their views, present the knowledge they gained during a given course and, in justified cases, submit a request for re-verification of a written exam by another examiner (such requests might also be considered by the above-stated unit).*

*In my opinion, discussions ought to be held regarding such matters and trainings might be organised regarding discrimination, tolerance and equality for those members of the university community.*

*I think that, above all, it is worth carrying out anonymous surveys on academic teacher's behaviours or behaviours of other employees of the university with authority over others or over handling various matters. Thanks to this, the University will be updated on an ongoing basis about the situation of each employee.*

*[...] What is more, I think the University ought to maintain a conservative-liberal approach that ensures freedom of own views while at the same time promoting the right values and prohibiting ostentatious manifestations of individual views. In line with the principle of freedom, everyone has the right to have their own views, beliefs and orientations, but no one should manifest them too transparently as it might constitute a breach of the same principle of freedom of others. Each person ought to have the right to equal treatment, thus, each person has the right to peace, own beliefs and free movement inside the student community without "being attacked" in any way, especially in a negative way due to their beliefs.*



# 3. Summary and conclusions

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The conducted survey revealed that discrimination and unequal treatment are undoubtedly present at the University of Silesia, which was confirmed by the declarations that they had been directly experienced by every fifth respondent, and which was further witnessed by every third student participating in the survey. Sadly, the level of knowledge regarding possible ways to react in situations of experiencing discrimination and/or unequal treatment among students is insufficient (more than half of the respondents did not know how to react in such situations, especially when witnessing such situations).

Moreover, one may point out the following findings as significant conclusions drawn from the obtained results:

## 01

The suggestions of reacting to discrimination and unequal treatment proposed by students may be divided into three categories: **reporting, independent reaction and other.**

## 02

The students who declare their readiness to report the acts of discrimination or unequal treatment indicated that such reporting would be directed by them to the representatives of different university bodies, frequently copying the submissions made in parallel, i.e. to the Student Government, faculty authorities, Rector and Vice-Rectors and to the ombudsperson, which signifies the lack of universal and transparent procedure of accepting such actions undertaken in these situations.

## 03

The key cause of concealing discrimination and unequal treatment experienced at the University in the perception of the survey respondents is the fear of negative consequences of such reporting and, as a second priority, the lack of faith in successful resolving of the case. When it comes to the passivity of witnesses, a crucial role is additionally played by the fear that the discriminated person, and not the perpetrator, will be victimised for their behaviours.

## 04

The factor that, in the opinion of students, would most facilitate the reporting of discrimination and unequal treatment in case of experiencing them would be a certainty that the matter would not be underestimated, and that data would not be disclosed.

## 05

Students consider the factors related to perpetrators' personality (i.e. stiffness of attitudes, lack of openness, level of sensitivity) that stem from the manner in which they are socialised and their various deficits, manifesting themselves mainly in the cognitive and social zone as the key causes of discrimination and unequal treatment at the University.

## 06

The respondents expect that the University of Silesia will, most of all, undertake actions directed at implementing disciplinary consequences towards the person who commit discrimination and unequal treatment at the University, and ensuring support for those who became the object of such actions.

## 07

The surveyed students indicated significant involvement by often giving very extensive replies to the survey questions and indicating various ideas for actions intended to counteract discrimination at the University of Silesia.

## 08

The majority of students at the University of Silesia have never encountered discrimination or unequal treatment at the University, and some of them emphasized some positive experiences in contact with other members of the academic community.

# Appendix

## – survey form

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**Dear Students,**

Our University strives to be a place free from all manifestations of discrimination and unequal treatment. We have thus undertaken a task to elaborate on the standards that will counteract the occurrence of such type of situations. This will, however, be almost impossible to achieve without you – we would like to learn about your fears, opinions, reflections, and proposals of possible solutions.

Discrimination and unequal treatment constitute unjust, harmful, worse treatment of a person or a group of people on account of their certain features. This might involve gender, age, disability, psychosexual orientation, affiliation to an ethnic or national group, political beliefs, material status, and so on, and so forth – it is not possible to create a close-ended catalogue of such features. The cause of discrimination at the University might also be the major of studies, the mode of studies (full-time, part-time, extramural) or student results (i.e. the grade average).

Whilst discrimination is an intentional action, unequal treatment may occur as a result of various, insufficiently thought-out, impersonal decisions. Behaviours of discriminatory character and unequal treatment may be directed at students not only in their relations with university employees or doctoral students, but also with other students.

The survey comprises 8 questions and it is anonymous. We are eager to hear you out. Don't be afraid of honesty and openness, as otherwise it will be extremely hard for us to work out the effective standards of counteracting discrimination and unequal treatment. Thank you in advance for your input in the development of our academic community.

Equality Policy Elaboration Team  
and Student Government of the University of Silesia



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

NO  
YES

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

NO  
YES

**3. What are, in your opinion, the main causes on account of which students experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment decide not to report them?**

*Select 3 answers as a maximum.*

- lack of knowledge about the possibilities of reporting such cases to specific bodies of the University (i.e. faculty/major authorities, Student Service Centre, Department of Education, Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson)
- fear of negative consequences, i.e. perpetrator or their environment's retaliation
- lack of faith in successful resolving of the matter and/or ceasing of negative practices
- lack of protection of the persons reporting discrimination and unequal treatment
- fear that the person accepting the report will fail to maintain confidentiality
- lack of awareness or equal treatment and respect towards all is an obligation of each member of the University community
- insufficient promotion of equality attitudes by the University
- other, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What is the source - in your opinion - of the passivity on the side of persons who witness discrimination and unequal treatment of others?**

*Select 3 answers as a maximum.*

- they fear that they will cause even more harm to the discriminated or mistreated persons
- they are convinced that there are no chances for positive resolving of the matter anyway
- they fear negative consequences of reporting
- they are unaware that it is possible to report such a matter to the University bodies



- they fear that the person accepting the report will fail to maintain confidentiality
- they are convinced that one should not interfere with other people's affairs even if they are discriminated or mistreated
- they fear that the offered help and support may be incorrectly or wrongly understood
- they are unaware that equal treatment and respect towards all is an obligation of each member of the University community
- The University insufficiently promotes equality attitudes
- other, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What would help you in reporting discrimination or unequal treatment if you experienced such phenomena at the University?**

*Select 3 answers as a maximum.*

- easy formula for reporting
- guarantee that my submission will not be left unattended
- guarantee that the person who collects a report will not disclose my data to anyone without my consent
- surety that my report will not be ignored and that actions will be undertaken in order to resolve it
- the fact that I will be able to submit discrimination or unequal treatment to a person who has real chances to repair the situation (i.e. lecturers, major director, Dean, Student and PhD Student Ombudsperson)
- my impact on the choice of discussion participants - i.e. ensuring participation of a psychologist, a lawyer or a relative
- knowledge about the support that students may obtain after reporting discrimination or unequal treatment
- informing me which actions will be undertaken and enabling me to make a decision whether I agree to such intervention
- preventing the perpetrator from undertaking retaliatory measures towards me
- other, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_



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

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

*Select 3 answers as a maximum.*

- elaboration of a transparent procedure of accepting reports in a safe manner for the person experiencing or witnessing the indicated behaviours
- effective response to the reports
- protection of persons experiencing or witnessing discrimination and unequal treatment
- applying sanctions towards employees conducting such behaviours
- providing help for the person who reports the event, i.e. change of group, change of lecturer, legal assistance
- 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
- informing all members of the academic community about 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, which ones?

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**Thank you for your involvement and for your answers! 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

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

NO  
YES

**Thank you for participating in the survey.**



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