

PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM

ON RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION

Authors: Brankica Janković, Tatjana Prijić, Ivana Filipov, Tatjana Buha Matić, Mladenka Morović





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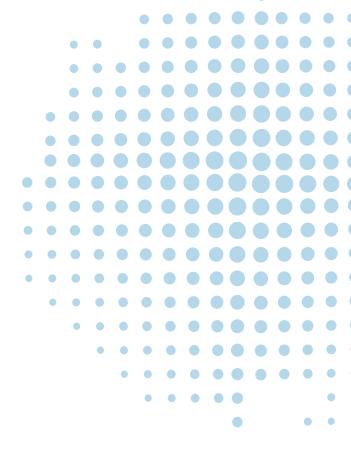
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PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM ON RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION

his program aims to provide children and young people (ages 12 to 18) with basic knowledge about the concept and forms of discrimination, as well as protection mechanisms. It is implemented by peer educators who possess sufficient knowledge to conduct lectures and lead discussions on the given topic, and who are familiar with the interests of their peers, given that information is more easily transmitted and adopted within peer groups.

The program consists of several segments that cover basic knowledge about peer education, discrimination and its forms in educational institutions, the consequences of discrimination, the legal framework, as well as mechanisms for protection against discrimination.

The program also includes a detailed set of workshops that can be implemented during educational sessions, depending on the available time, number of participants, topics covered, and other relevant factors.

This program also provides: a list of recommended literature, educational viParts that can be used during sessions, as well as relevant campaigns that participants can join.

Part 1 **INTRODUCTION** TO PEER EDUCATION

OF PEER EDUCATION

eer education, or collaborative learning, is a process of non-formal learning in which peers learn from one another. Peer education involves young people engaging in informal, organized activities with their peers, with the goal of jointly improving knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that enable them to take responsibility for themselves and others, as well as to create a space where they feel good, safe, and respected.

The importance of peer education lies in the fact that, when carefully implemented, it often enhances learning outcomes, builds partnerships, promotes collegiality, and fosters a sense of mutual responsibility.

The term "peer" refers to "someone who holds the same status as another; someone who belongs to the same social group, especially based on age, grade, or social status." In modern usage, the term has come to mean a companion, equal, similar, or counterpart.

BASIC PRINCIPLES AND GOALS OF PEER EDUCATION

eer education is an increasingly important form of non-formal education for young people. It provides opportunities to empower youth through the development of self-awareness, social awareness, specific skills, or talents.

The basic principles of peer education include: psychological safety; equality; mutual support; and a growth mindset—the tendency toward learning, growth, and development.

In a psychologically safe peer learning group, members should feel comfortable, unafraid to admit mistakes or express differing opinions, willing to ask for feedback, open-minded to perspectives different from their own, actively listen, and accept all ideas equally and without judgment.

In a peer education group, every member has an equal opportunity to participate and share ideas. Regardless of their position or social status, members act as equal participants in the learning process and engage in constructive interaction, regardless of group hierarchy.

Each member should also feel supported and be open to working with others in order to achieve the best possible outcome through sharing knowledge, skills, and ideas. Successful collaboration requires a spirit of community, mutual support, and respect.

In these groups, learning is a transformative process in which failures, mistakes, new information, and new experiences are embraced and turned into lessons that can be applied. For this to be possible, group members adopt a growth mindset, remaining open to new ideas—with a tendency toward learning, growth, and development. Ciljevi vršnjačke edukacije su:

Goals of peer education are:

- To learn how to understand ourselves and others;
- To discover something about others and ourselves;
- To develop a spirit of tolerance and community;
- To socialize and learn new skills;
- To learn how to resolve conflicts with both familiar and unfamiliar people;
- To learn things that we cannot learn anywhere else..

To facilitate peer learning, it is desirable to use various forms of knowledge and experience exchange, such as direct communication, conducting different workshops, showing short educational films, graphics, illustrations, and more, in order to maximize group engagement and encourage the exchange of ideas and opinions. For this reason, the appendix of this program includes a wide range of tools that can be used as aids during education, depending on the instructor's preferences, the number of group members, prior knowledge, age, training duration, and other factors.

ADVANTAGES OF PEER EDUCATION COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL LEARNING METHODS

the advantages of peer education compared to traditional learning methods; here, we will mention only a few:

New perspectives for students: If a student learns exclusively from a teacher, they receive only one perspective. Learning from peers can add many useful perspectives, nuances, and layers to their knowledge.

Social interaction makes learning enjoyable: Humans are naturally social beings who have a need to connect with others and be part of a group. The added element of social interaction in peer learning can be exciting and enriching. Students who may hesitate to communicate with a teacher might be more willing to open up to their peers.

Teaching others helps students learn: Nothing requires you to be confident in your knowledge more than when you teach what you know to someone else. Transferring knowledge demands a deeper level of understanding of the subject.

RADIATE CONFIDENCE

When you enter a room, it's important to radiate confidence. You need to show both your peers and anyone else that you're confident in your knowledge of the topic you're discussing. If you don't believe in yourself, your peers won't believe in you either.

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ROLE AND COMPETENCIES OF PEER EDUCATORS

Characteristics and Responsibilities of a Peer Educator

t is important for peer educators to have undergone some training in group facilitation or peer education. To respond clearly and accurately to questions, a peer educator should also have sufficient knowledge about the subject/topic of the training, although it is not necessary to be an expert. Additionally, they should know where to access information and support, and be able to convey that information to workshop participants. Over time, they should work on improving their knowledge of the subject and incorporate insights on related topics. Continuously updating knowledge and skills about peer education methods increases the value of the peer educator to the group.

A peer educator should be empathetic, open-minded, a good listener, and possess strong communication skills. They should also develop the ability to lead and motivate, as well as the capacity to encourage and

maintain interpersonal relationships within the group.

People often tend to judge others. Peer educators should remain open-minded and never judge, and they should ensure that they guide group members to think in the same way.

BE AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGE THEM

Explain to your peers that it's okay to ask questions during or after the lecture.

Clarify misunderstandings:

Be patient with those who may have difficulty understanding, and try to explain the concepts in different ways if necessary.

KEY SKILLS OF PEER EDUCATORS (COMMUNICATION, LEADERSHIP, EMPATHY)

eer education is a unique and effective approach that enables individuals to share knowledge, skills, and experiences with their peers. Whether at school, in the workplace, or in the community, peer educators can play a very important role in promoting learning and personal development. To succeed in this role, three basic skills are needed: communication, leadership, and empathy.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of every successful peer education experience. A peer educator must be able to clearly articulate ideas, instructions, and feedback. This includes not only speaking but also active listening. Understanding the needs and concerns of peers helps to frame the message in a way that is easily understood. Nonverbal communication, such as body language and facial expressions, also plays a role in creating a supportive environment.

ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

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Ask questions: This makes the session more interactive and shows that you value their input.

Use real-life examples: Connect theory to practical, everyday situations to make the topic easier to understand and more relevant.

A good leader possesses a range of qualities that inspire and guide others. They show courage, face challenges despite fear, and demonstrate visionary thinking by imagining positive outcomes and directing their peers toward them. Additionally, they are willing to accept different ways of thinking and make decisions. Their confidence and self-discipline enable them to stay focused, while their honesty and sense of humor foster a positive environment for everyone.

Empathy is the ability to understand what another person is experiencing, how they feel, and the capacity to see a situation from their perspective. An empathetic educator listens carefully to the group and individuals, respects their distress and fears, does not force them to participate actively in the education if they do not wish to, but strives to include them to the extent that they feel comfortable. Additionally, it is very important for the educator to acknowledge the group's contributions and to celebrate their successes.

A good peer educator also:

- acts as a guide,
- provides consistent and reliable support to young people,
- gives constructive and useful feedback,
- behaves as a role model,
- builds trust and independence among youth,
- is tolerant, accepts and respects others' choices even when they differ from their own,
- is open to new experiences and people..

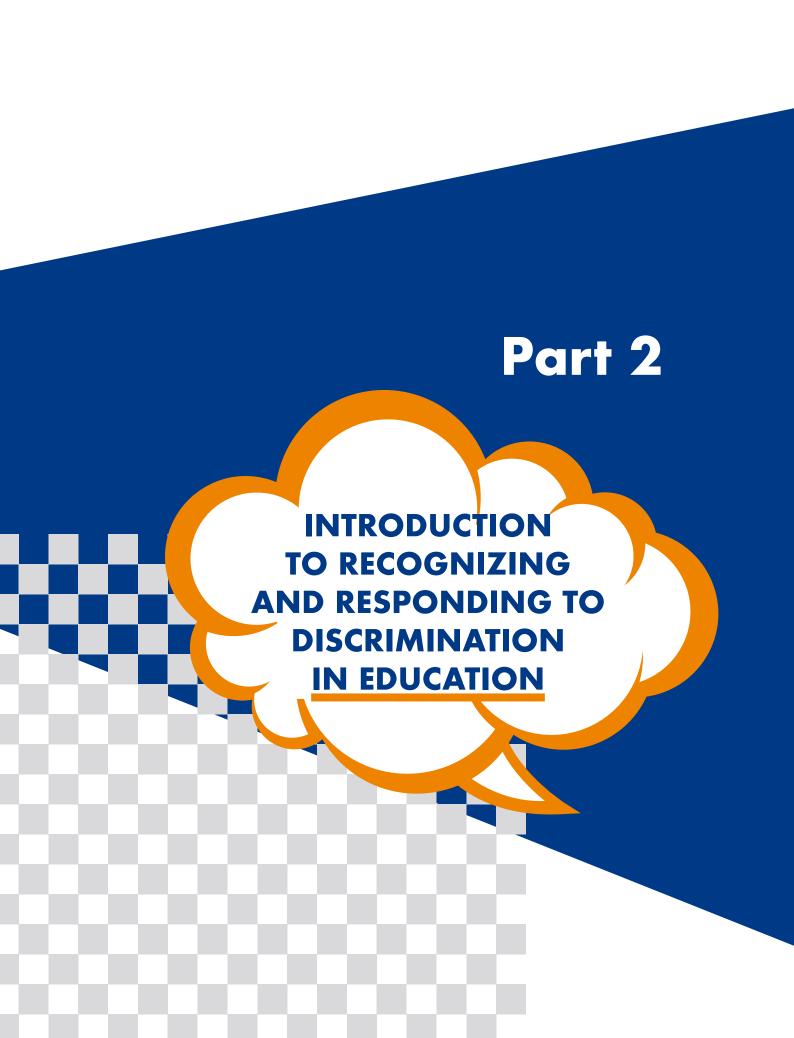
ETHICS AND BOUNDARIES IN PEER EDUCATION

thics in peer education are of utmost importance because they ensure that training participants acquire knowledge through collaboration in an environment full of respect, where everyone has the opportunity to progress. In such learning methods, it is very important to nurture values like honesty, integrity, and mutual respect. These kinds of relationships build trust among peers, encourage open communication, and foster an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and supported.

Guidelines for ethical behavior of peer educators:

- Peer educators should respond within the limits of their training and knowledge. If they receive a question they do not know the exact answer to, it is best to openly acknowledge their limits and direct participants to where they can find answers or provide the response later.
- When in doubt, peer educators should consult their advisor or check the literature.
- Peer educators should show respect toward others and preserve their dignity.
- Peer educators should be aware of their personal biases and never impose them on others.

- Peer educators should promote understanding, tolerance, and equality.
- Peer educators should treat all training participants equally, regardless of personal preferences or feelings toward them.
- Peer educators should be able to manage their emotions and their expression in the educational process.
- Peer educators are role models and should behave accordingly.



hroughout the history and development of human society, the idea of human rights has emerged, belonging to all people regardless of their origin, appearance, or other characteristics. The concept of human rights and freedoms is based on the principle that human rights are universal, meaning they belong to all people. People are born and live free and equal in rights.

It is important to note that equality and equity are not the same concepts. Those who are equal are identical, while those who are equitable have the same rights. For example, men and women are not equal because they differ biologically in significant ways (women can become pregnant and give birth, women can breastfeed, men tend to have more muscle mass, men and women have different sexual organs and different concentrations of certain hormones in the body, etc.). Men and women are equitable because they have the same legal rights and freedoms (the right to life, freedom of thought, freedom of movement, the right to healthcare, the right to education, the right to property, the right to work, the right to vote, and more).

However, throughout the history of human society, and unfortunately still today, individuals, entire social groups, and even nations have been denied basic human rights and freedoms.

In slave-owning societies, slaves were considered the property of slave owners and had no right to freedom of movement or any other rights to independently make decisions about themselves and their lives. Today, in some countries, women are not allowed to move freely, girls are prevented from attending school, and people with disabilities are not enabled to move freely, receive education, or work. These are just some examples of basic rights being denied to people because of certain personal characteristics.

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

iscrimination is a word often used in everyday speech and heard in the media. However, this term is sometimes used to describe any injustice, insult, or violation of rights, which is not always an accurate usage.

Simply put, discrimination is differentiation—unlawful unequal treatment of people based on their personal characteristics.

The law prohibiting discrimination defines it as unjustified distinction and unequal treatment based on a personal attribute of an individual or group.



SUGGESTED ONLINE SEARCH:

Learn more about concepts such as – slavery-based societies, racism, apartheid, the struggle for women's rights, suffragettes...

terms "discrimination" The "discriminatory treatment" refer to any unjustified differentiation or unequal treatment, or omission (exclusion, restriction, or giving preference), in relation to individuals or groups, as well as their family members or persons close to them, in an open or covert manner, based on race, skin color, ancestry, citizenship, national affiliation or ethnic origin, language, religious or political beliefs, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, income level, property status, birth, genetic traits, health status, disability, marital and family status, criminal record, age, appearance, membership in political, trade union, and other organizations, and other actual or presumed personal characteristics (Article 2 of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination).

Discrimination can also be described as different, unequal treatment of equals, or as treating equals differently. Discrimination differs from other rights violations because it is always based on a person's personal characteristics.

ELEMENTS OF DISCRIMINATION

he elements that distinguish discrimination from other violations of rights are: 1) a personal characteristic of the individual; 2) a cause-and-effect relationship between that characteristic and the act of discrimination; and 3) the unjustified nature of the differential treatment. For an action to be considered discrimination, all three of these elements must be present.

1. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC

Personal characteristics are individual traits of a person or a group of people. These are the qualities that define our physical, psychological, spiritual, economic, or social identity. Some of the personal characteristics on the basis of which we can be discriminated against, as listed in the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, include: race, skin color, ancestry, citizenship, national affiliation or ethnic origin, language, religious or political belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, income level, property status, birth, genetic traits, health condition, disability, marital and family status, criminal record, age, appearance, membership in political, trade union, and other organizations, and other personal characteristics.

A personal characteristic can be actual or perceived. This means that someone can discriminate against us based on a characteristic we truly possess, but also based on a personal characteristic we do not have but the discriminator believes we do.

Example:

An actual personal characteristic exists when a person is treated unequally solely and precisely because of their national or ethnic background (e.g, an employer refuses to hire a Roma person).

A perceived personal characteristic exists when a person is treated differently or unequally because the discriminator believes that the person belongs to a certain social group or political party (e.g., a restaurant owner refuses to rent a hall for a birthday party to two young men because he thinks they are gay).

A personal characteristic is the key element that distinguishes discrimination from other forms of prohibited behavior.

2. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC AND THE ACT OF DISCRIMINATION

The second essential element of discrimination is the cause-and-effect relationship between the personal characteristic of the individual and the act of discrimination.

Therefore, for an act to be considered

discrimination, it is necessary that the personal characteristic is the reason or cause for the different treatment. The person must be treated differently solely and precisely because of their personal characteristic, a part of their identity. Sometimes, a person who is treated differently does have a personal characteristic, but the reason for the different treatment is not that characteristic.

IMPORTANT: Each of us has multiple identities that define who we are. For example: we are defined by our sex, gender, religion, nationality, marital status (husband, wife, widower, etc.), family status (parent, child, single parent, child without parental care, relative, etc.), our financial situation, political and other beliefs, health condition, disability, and more.

Example:

A court bailiff who is a member of the court's trade union and used his days off to prepare for a sports competition wanted to enter the courthouse, but the security refused to let him in because he was dressed in sportswear (wearing shorts and sneakers). He believes he was discriminated against based on his trade union membership. However, the dress code for entering the courthouse applies equally to everyone, and his union membership (a personal characteristic) was not the reason he was denied entry.

3. UNJUSTIFIED NATURE OF DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT

The third element of discrimination is the unjustified nature of different treatment. For different treatment to be considered discrimination, it must also be unjustified. How is it determined whether the treatment is justified or not?

Sometimes it is easy to establish that differential treatment is justified. For example, it is justified for people with disabilities to have special parking spaces located near the entrance of publicly accessible buildings (shopping centers, hospitals, post offices, etc.). People with disabilities have difficulty moving, so it is reasonable to ensure that the distance from the parking space to the building entrance is as short as possible.

Sometimes it is necessary to conduct a very complex analysis to determine whether a specific differential treatment is justified. Differential treatment will be justified if it aims to achieve a legitimate goal, the means of making the distinction are necessary, and the consequences it causes are proportionate to the goal intended to be achieved.

Example:

The law requires the prevention of the spread of dangerous (deadly) infectious diseases, which is why patients suffering from such illnesses must be isolated. Placing such a patient in a separate hospital room or ward, so they have no contact with other patients, is justified and serves the intended purpose. However, if such patients were placed in isolated buildings outside the city or kept in prison cells, that measure would not be necessary or proportionate, because the goal could be achieved in another way - less stressful for the patient.

MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION

ince each of us has multiple personal characteristics, multiple parts of our identity, we can be discriminated against based on more than one personal characteristic. This is called multiple discrimination. For example, a woman who is blind may be discriminated against in employment either because she is a woman or because she is a person with a disability. However, she can also be discriminated against specifically because

she is a woman with a disability, which is an example of multiple discrimination.

Sometimes, in particularly complex cases, it is not possible to separate which of the multiple personal characteristics caused the discrimination, and this is known as a special form of multiple discrimination—intersectional discrimination. For example, if the blind woman from the previous example were a Roma who was refused employment, we could not definitively isolate a single personal characteristic as the basis for discrimination, because it is most likely a combination of all three characteristics (ethnic origin, disability, and gender) that caused her to be less desirable or undesirable in the job market. Such cases are common and very complex since the grounds for discrimination overlap. For instance, an employer fired female employees over 55 years old. He did not fire women under 55, nor men over 55, which created the impression that the employer did not discriminate against women (since he employed women) nor against people over 55 (since he employed older men). However, when these two personal characteristics (gender and age) are combined, it becomes clear that the employer discriminated against women over 55.

WHY DOES DISCRIMINATION HAPPEN?

he cause of different treatment toward some individuals or entire groups of people are stereotypes and prejudices.

Stereotypes¹ are defined as generalizations, schematic and rigid representations of the traits and personalities of members of a certain group, which are rigidly applied to every individual from that group. Stereotypes are unjustified generalizations based on incomplete assessment and limited experience (and therefore often contain some element of truth) and represent a rationalization of prejudices (i.e., characteristic attitudes), as they form an integral part of them.

Example: Stereotype – all girls and women are gentle and caring

Such a stereotype leads to the prejudice that women are better caregivers and educators than men, which results in discrimination against men who want to work as nurses or preschool teachers.

Prejudices are defined as specific types of attitudes through which a relatively lasting subjective (positive or negative) stance is expressed toward certain objects (groups, nations, individuals, institutions, etc.). At the root of prejudices lie stereotypes. Prejudices are opinions or attitudes we hold about certain people based on their belonging to particular groups. These are attitudes not based on factual and logical arguments, are resistant to change, and involve a strong emotional component.

Prejudices and stereotypes are widespread because they help us:

- da osmislimo i razumemo svet oko make sense of and understand the world around us (in situations that are unclear or where we lack sufficient information, stereotypical thinking "fills in the gaps," completes incomplete data, and gives us a sense of certainty, security, and clarity);
- evaluate the group we belong to (for example, when we think other groups are "bad," it implies that our group, being different, is "good");
- assess other groups, their characteristics, and ways of functioning (good/bad, dangerous, unpredictable, friendly, warm, etc.);
- justify discrimination against members of other groups. For instance, if we label another group negatively—as bad in any way—we then believe it's acceptable for that group not to have the same rights as our group, which is seen as "good.".

The process of forming stereotypes and prejudices takes place in three steps:

¹ More about stereotypes and prejudices: "Za razliku bogatije" (Richer for Differences), Handbook on Interculturalism, Center for Children's Rights, Belgrade 2006, available at https://cpd.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/za_razliku_bogatije.pdf

1. Creation of "salient" categories

When we meet people, we focus on characteristics that are the most "noticeable," often ignoring all others. What counts as a "salient category" often depends on the context—the environment or setting we are in. For example, in a setting where learning is the primary activity, we focus on traits important for that activity (e.g., someone being "smart"), while in a social environment where interaction is the focus, we categorize people based on traits like sociability, openness, etc..

2. Making inaccurate generalizations about a group (stereotypes and prejudices)

Based on those salient traits, we draw conclusions about the individual and then generalize those conclusions to the entire group they belong to. Prejudices and stereotypes lead to incorrect generalizations about individuals when we assume that the groups they belong to are homogeneous (e.g., they're all..., none of them..., they always...).

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

iscrimination occurs in two basic forms: direct discrimination and indirect discrimination.

Discrimination occurs in two basic forms: direct discrimination and indirect discrimination.

Direct discrimination, or "unequal treatment of equals," occurs when individuals in the same or similar situation are treated unequally based on a personal characteristic..

When examining whether direct discrimination has occurred, it is necessary to have a "comparator" — a person in the same or similar situation as the victim of discrimination, but who does not possess the personal characteristic that the victim has. We compare whether the discriminator would behave the same way toward the person who lacks that specific personal characteristic in the same or similar situation.

3. Treating people differently based on those conclusions (discrimination)

What we think about an individual or group affects how we behave toward them. If we believe that a group is "bad," we tend to justify discrimination against its members—i.e., denying them rights. For example, based on the belief that Roma children are dirty, one might think it is "okay/justified" to deny them access to a swimming pool, while allowing children from other groups to enter without any prior hygiene check.

Prejudices are harmful even when seemingly "positive" (e.g., Roma are talented musicians, women are caring and good caregivers, men are strong...)

When guided by prejudice, individuals are denied freedom of choice and self-expression. They are pressured by society to "live up to" imposed expectations. For example, a woman who wants to be a professional truck driver may not receive support because she has chosen a "male" profession. Such societal pressures push people to make life decisions based on what is expected of them, not what they truly want.

participants dictate to the educator "male" and "female" professions, and the educator writes them down on a flipchart. After that, everyone together analyzes why some jobs are considered female and others male.

Example:

an employer refuses to send an employee to training for a new machine because he is "too old to learn new skills"; a landlord refuses to rent an apartment to a Roma person; an employer requires a job applicant to be of a specific gender or age, even though the job can be performed by any person; a bank stipulates that individuals over the age of 65 cannot receive a loan.....

Indirect discrimination, or "equal treatment of unequals," occurs when, despite the fact that not all people are the same but all have equal rights, the application of a rule that applies to everyone or equal treatment towards all places an individual or group at a disadvantage due to a personal characteristic. The rule being applied disadvantages certain individuals because of their personal characteristics. People in different situations should be treated differently to the extent necessary to ensure they have equal access to social goods and equal opportunities to enjoy rights and freedom.

The test is the same for everyone: climb the tree!

Example:

A university introduced a rule that all students and professors must wear masks during lectures due to the COVID-19 virus, which prevented a student who is hard of hearing and follows the lectures by lip reading from keeping up with the lessons;

A university refused to issue a diploma in a new name to a person who has undergone gender transition, justifying it with the rule that new diplomas are not issued after a name change (as with marriage...);

A person with a disability was not allowed to sign with a facsimile (a stamp with their name and surname), because the general rule requires a personal signature. Persons with disabilities who are unable to sign in any way other than with a facsimile are discriminated against.

In this type of discrimination, it is mandatory to analyze whether such differentiation is justified. If the analysis shows that the rule or action is justified by a legitimate aim, and the means to achieve that aim are appropriate and necessary, then there is no discrimination.

The law also prescribes other forms of discrimination that are subtypes of these two basic forms. The most common other forms of discrimination encountered in practice are hate speech, harassment, and humiliating treatment.

Hate speech is the public expression of messages of hatred or intolerance toward a racial, national, ethnic, religious, sexual, or other social group or its members. Hate speech encourages, justifies, or glorifies discrimination. For this form of discrimination, it is important that the call for hatred is publicly expressed, whether through media such as newspapers, websites, or public speeches, as well as by writing or displaying messages or symbols. For example, hate speech occurs through graffiti on a building wall, carrying a banner that calls for hatred, or when a public speech at a gathering incites violence against a certain group of people.

Harassment and humiliating treatment are forms of discrimination very similar to hate speech, but they do not necessarily involve a call for violence and do not have to be expressed publicly. This form of discrimination also occurs when an offensive comment is made to a person sitting next to us in a classroom or at work. It involves behavior aimed at hurting or that has hurt the dignity of an individual or group based on their personal characteristic, especially if it creates an environment of fear, hostility, humiliation, or offense.



AFFIRMATIVE MEASURES

As we have already mentioned, not every differentiation is discrimination. Affirmative measures are actions introduced by law or other regulations to achieve full equality, protection, and advancement of individuals or groups who are in an unequal position, and they are applied until the goal for which they were prescribed is achieved. Certain social groups (women, Roma, persons with disabilities) have had their rights denied for centuries, resulting in their disadvantaged position in society, including unequal opportunities for employment, education, access to various forms of social protection, and advancement to influential positions. To correct these historical injustices, it is necessary to undertake special (affirmative) measures that remove the consequences of long-standing, centuries-old inequality. Affirmative measures place these social groups in a more favorable position, "privileging" them compared to others to reach an equal "starting position." This creates real equality and conditions for members of these groups to enjoy all guaranteed rights, just like all other members of society.

To some, affirmative measures may seem like an injustice toward other members of society who do not belong to the discriminated group. However, the truth is that this is a measure by which the state tries to correct centuries of injustice done to members of the discriminated group and help them overcome obstacles placed before them by that position. It is similar to how runners in a 400m race running in the outer lanes of an athletic track appear to have an advantage because their starting point is ahead of the runners in the inner lanes, but this is actually a way to equalize the length of the lanes for all runners, since the outer lanes are longer.

The term used for affirmative measures in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination is — special measures. In literature, the outdated term — positive discrimination — can still be found. This term is avoided because affirmative measures are not discrimination, as they lack the third element of discrimination — the unjustified nature of different treatment. Also, discrimination can never be positive; it is always a negative phenomenon that harms both the individual and society as a whole. In contrast, affirmative measures lead to the improvement of the position of discriminated social groups.

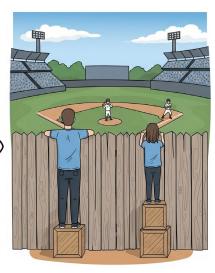
Example:

special measures for the enrollment of Roma students in secondary schools and universities; special measures for the enrollment of students with disabilities in higher education; special measures for the employment of persons with disabilities; special measures (quotas) for the participation of the less represented gender in political life (stipulated by electoral laws).

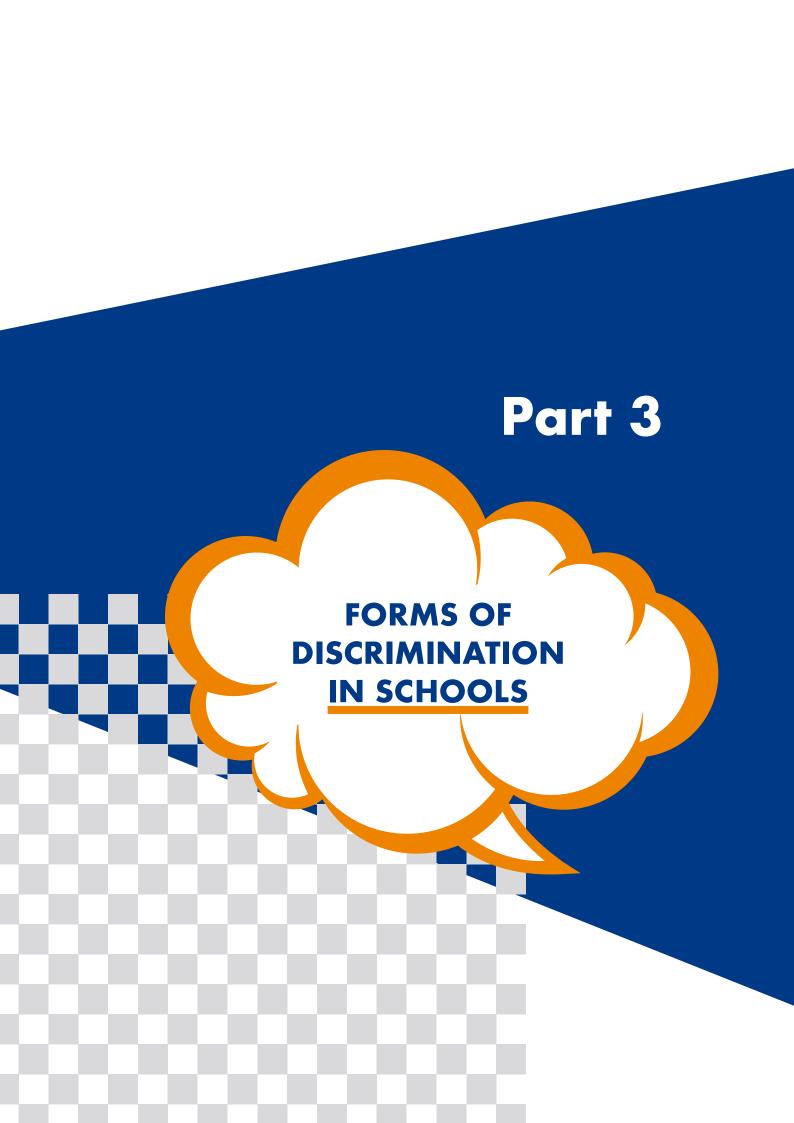
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EQUITY



iscrimination in schools and kindergartens manifests in various ways.

Practice has shown that the most common forms of discrimination in education are:

- discrimination based on sex and gender,
- discrimination based on national affiliation and ethnic origin,
- discrimination based on disability, developmental difficulties, and
- health conditions.

Also, children from families with lower economic status, as well as children of different sexual orientation than heterosexual, are in a particularly disadvantaged position.

GENDER EQUALITY

hen we talk about gender equality, it is necessary to first learn the difference between the concepts of sex and gender and the basic differences between these two terms.

Sex represents a biological characteristic based on which people are classified as female or male. It is important to point out here that our society, as well as the entire Western European society, recognizes only two sexes – male and female..

Example:

 A 22-year-old woman, Masha Amini from Iran, was arrested in 2022 by the morality
 police in Tehran for not covering her head according to religious rules and was killed.

Intersex is a general term used for various conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definitions of male or female. For example, a baby may appear externally female but have typically male internal anatomy (e.g., born without a uterus and ovaries as female sex organs). Or a

person may be born with sexual organs that look somewhere between typical male and typical female. Previously, the term "hermaphrodites" was used for these individuals, a term originally used to describe animal species in which one individual produces both male and female sex cells. This term is now considered outdated and offensive when referring to humans.

INTERNET RESEARCH

suggestion: In gender studies, the term "heteronormativity" is used to express the idea that people are divided only into two different and complementary categories: men and women; that sexual and marital relations are normally only between these two sexes; and that people should perform social roles assigned to them based on gender. You can also research other terms related to the concepts of sex and gender.

Gender - this term refers to socially determined opportunities, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men, including the mutual relationships between men and women and the roles within those relationships that are socially defined based on sex. For example, for a person born female, society expects them to dress and behave in a certain way, engage in "women's" jobs, express emotions, have children, etc. If a person does not behave according to the expectations of their environment and society, the sanction can be mild (mockery, ridicule) or very severe (social exclusion, death).

The concept of gender is closely connected with the terms gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender-sensitive language, and gender equality.

Gender roles - a gender role is a set of social norms that determine which patterns of behavior are considered appropriate, acceptable, and generally desirable for a person

according to their biologically assigned sex. These behavior patterns are organized around traditionally opposite concepts of masculinity and femininity. Gender socialization is the process of adopting or learning gender roles through social factors. The system of gender roles varies somewhat from society to society, and the rules related to these roles also change over time. For example, the traditional male attire in Scotland is the kilt – a male skirt, as well as the sarong in some Asian cultures.

Gender stereotypes - are ideas formed and deeply rooted in tradition, according to which arbitrary characteristics and roles are assigned to women and men that define and limit their possibilities and position in society. For example, women are gentle and caring, men are strong and do not show emotions, women care about their appearance and hairstyle, women spend more money, men do not do "women's" jobs, and so on.

Gender identity - refers to an individual's personal construct of their own identity that affirms, denies, and/or gender identity transcends socially assigned biological sex and gender roles. it can also be described as a persistent subjective experience of belonging or not belonging to a particular gender. obviously, the category of gender is not necessarily based on biological sex or sexual orientation. For example, a person who is a woman, identifies as a woman, and is sexually attracted to men, may not recognize her gender identity through socially assigned biological sex and gender roles imposed on women by society, and therefore expresses her identity in a way different from what is expected (e.g., does not wear makeup, wears pants instead of traditionally female clothing, etc.).

Gender equality - equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities; balanced participation and representation of women and men in all areas of social life; equal opportunities to exercise rights and freedoms; utilization of personal knowledge and abilities for personal development and societal progress; equal access to goods and services; as well as achieving equal benefit from the results of work, while respecting biological, social, and culturally formed differences between women and men, and the different interests, needs, and priorities of women and men when making public and other policies, decisions on rights, obligations, and provisions based on law and constitutional provisions.

Gender-sensitive language is language that promotes equality between women and men and serves as a means to influence the awareness of those who use that language toward achieving equality, including changes in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors within the language they use in their personal and professional lives. Using gender-sensitive language greatly contributes to the visibility of women in fields traditionally considered "male professions"—such as science, economics, and banking. It also helps break down gender stereotypes.

WORKSHOP EXAMPLE FOR EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT OF SEX AND GENDER: The

trainer asks participants to list the characteristics/facts they use to determine someone's sex or the trainer's own sex. These are written on a board — on the left side, traits related to sex (bodily features, secondary sexual characteristics), and on the right side, traits related to gender (clothing, hairstyle, makeup, behavior, body posture, way of sitting, speaking, gesturing, etc.). When participants finish listing, the trainer writes "sex" above the left column and "gender" above the right one, and explains the difference between the two concepts.

After that, the trainer explains the concept of gender roles and asks participants to name some "female" and "male" jobs, professions, as well as gender stereotypes..

In connection with that, the trainer moves on to explaining the concept of gender identity, clarifying that gender identity is not necessarily based on biological sex nor on sexual orientation. At this point, a connection is made with gender stereotypes that relate to the expression or manifestation of gender.

GAME SUGGESTION: The educator can ask participants to each draw or describe how they imagine a surgeon, firefighter, police officer, school principal, pilot, soldier, teacher, judge, architect, etc., and next to the drawing write a made-up first and last name, age, and whether the person has a family. then, the educator can invite someone to present their work, helping participants become aware of the presence or absence of gender stereotypes related to professions.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Gender mainstreaming - represents a tool for achieving and promoting gender equality by integrating a gender perspective into all public policies, plans, and practices;

Gender perspective - refers to taking into account gender differences, differences based on sex, and the distinct interests, needs, and priorities of women and men, incorporating them in all phases of planning, preparation, decision-making, and implementation of public policies, regulations, measures, and activities;

Gender analysis - represents the assessment of the impact of every planned activity, including legislation, measures and activities, public policies, and programs, on women and men and on gender equality in all areas and at all levels:

Gender-responsive budgeting - Public authorities are obliged to conduct gender analysis of the budget and to plan revenues and expenditures with the aim of promoting gender equality, in accordance with the law regulating the budget system and the principle of gender equality in the budget process.

DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NATIONAL AFFILIATION AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

erbia is a multiethnic country inhabited by members of more than 20 national or ethnic minorities. Some of them are territorially concentrated in specific areas of the country, while others are spread throughout the entire territory of Serbia.

Discrimination based on national or ethnic origin in education can manifest in various forms; however, the most common are offensive and degrading treatment, which in some cases escalates into physical violence. Discrimination in education is also often



expressed through a form known as the violation of the principle of equal rights and obligations, when members of certain national minorities are denied, for example, the right to education in their mother tongue.

Roma students are most often subject to discrimination, starting from verbal peer violence, through low expectations from

teaching staff regarding their academic performance, to one of the gravest forms of discrimination – segregation. Segregation occurs when students in schools and kindergartens are separated based on personal characteristics. The segregation of Roma students is a frequent phenomenon in Serbia for various reasons. One of the main reasons is that the parents of children from the majority population, due to prejudices they hold about Roma men and women, do not want their children to attend the same school or class as Roma children. Segregation in Serbia appears in three forms. The most drastic form of segregation are the so-called Roma schools when Roma children and students are separated into special schools or buildings within one

school. In such cases, the majority or nearly all of the students are Roma children. The second form is the separation of Roma children into special classes, so that within one school there are classes made up almost entirely of Roma children. The third case involves the separation of Roma students within a single class, where the students sit apart in the classroom, with Roma children usually sitting together, often in the back rows. Although the last two forms of segregation still allow for students within the same school or class to interact, these forms of segregation also create a strong division among students and reinforce existing prejudices.

DISCRIMINATION BASED ON NATIONAL AFFILIATION AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

tudents may face discrimination based on disability, developmental difficulties, and health status. All children are guaranteed education based on the principles of equality and accessibility in exercising the right to education and upbringing, social justice, and the principle of equal opportunities without discrimination. The law stipulates that a person with developmental difficulties and disabilities has the right to education and upbringing that respects their educational and developmental needs within the education system, with individual or group additional support in teaching and learning, or in a special educational group or school, in accordance with this and other relevant laws.

Nevertheless, in practice, it often happens that students with disabilities or developmental difficulties do not receive the necessary additional support in teaching and learning, which prevents them from fully exercising their right to education. The law provides several ways in which additional support can be offered to students with disabilities



and developmental difficulties, depending on the specific challenges the student faces. For example, some may only need a personal assistant; others may require the school environment to be made accessible for wheelchair use. Some students need special reading software, others textbooks with large print, some may need to give oral responses instead of taking written tests, while others may require adapted lesson texts — and many other forms of support.

School buildings, hallways, classrooms, and restrooms in Serbia are often not adapted for

use by students with mobility difficulties. Many school buildings have numerous stairs, lack elevators, and have narrow classroom doors that wheelchairs cannot pass through. As a result, some students have been unable to enroll in the high school of their choice simply because it was not accessible for wheelchair users, and instead had to enroll in a school that was.

Example:

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Peers recorded on their mobile phones a student who has difficulty walking (she staggers due to pain in her feet), then shared the viPARTs in their groups and mocked the student (peer violence). Some schools discriminated by refusing to enroll a student who has a condition that might cause them to feel ill or lose consciousness during class (such as diabetes or epilepsy), and also required the child to have an aide at school. In some schools, children with allergies were not allowed to go on excursions or recreational trips.

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality has encountered cases of discrimination against children due to their health conditions in practice. Some of these students were mocked by their peers because of the way they move or the medication they take (for example, a student who needs to measure their blood sugar level or inject insulin during class).

Students from low-income families are also discriminated against in schools, which can expose them to peer violence. These students are at great risk of being unable to continue their education because they need to help their families through work (collecting recyclable materials, taking care of younger siblings so parents can work, etc.).

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION

TOPIC: Is the school accessible to people who use wheelchairs? Are there students with disabilities in the school? Are there any teachers with disabilities? Are the participants' favorite places in the city (cafés, pastry shops, cinemas, boutiques, shopping malls, etc.) accessible to people with disabilities? And similar questions.



ducation represents one of the key systems through which children's rights are ensured. The recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Republic of Serbia from 2008 and 2017, as well as data collected from various studies, indicate that mechanisms to ensure the effective realization of children's rights in all areas, including the education system, have not been fully established².

When it comes to the field of education and upbringing, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality has for years emphasized the need to implement programs for children aimed at fostering values that promote a culture of tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity, gender equality, intergenerational solidarity, and non-discrimination, by eliminating numerous entrenched stereotypes and prejudices about various social groups and phenomena.

Many studies indicate that children are highly likely to experience discrimination at school, where they spend most of their waking hours from early childhood to late adolescence. These studies also show that the experience of discrimination among children and youth is strongly associated with various negative consequences.

Specifically, students who are exposed to discrimination exhibit lower levels of self-confidence and life satisfaction, as well as symptoms of hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. In addition, discriminated children often suffer from poorer health, inadequate nutrition, and lower academic achievement. They are more likely to end up incarcerated and tend to have lower employment rates and earnings in adulthood. They fall behind their peers, which further increases inequality.³

THE IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Students who feel discriminated against often perform worse in school compared to their peers. This includes lower grades, a higher likelihood of early school leaving, and reduced motivation to learn and engage in school activities. It also affects their self-confidence and the extent to which they associate themselves with their academic success, i.e., their grades. Discrimination by teachers has the greatest impact on these outcomes, although discrimination by peers also contributes to such consequences.⁴

When students feel discriminated against, they are more likely to experience stress, feel a lack of belonging at their school, and show less interest in engaging with their studies. This can reduce their self-esteem and academic performance. Research shows that even when taking into account students' previous academic achievement, those who experience discrimination by teachers often feel less capable and less connected to their school.

Early school leaving and student dropout from the education system refer to those students who leave school or the education system before obtaining a certificate of completed primary education or a diploma of completed secondary education. Numerous studies show that individuals who drop out before earning a high school diploma have more difficulty finding employment, are more likely to resort to criminal behavior, and more easily fall into the "vicious cycle" of social exclusion. Students coming from

² Special Report on Discrimination Against Children, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Belgrade, december 2021, https://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Poseban-izve%C5%A1taj-o-diskriminaciji-dece-za-web.pdf

³ Rights Denied The impact of Discrimination on children, UNICEF, november 2022. https://www.unicef.org/media/130801/file/rights-denied-discrimination-children-EN.pdf

⁴ Aprile D. Benner and Sandra Graham, "The Antecedents and Consequences of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination during Adolescence: Does the Source of Discrimination Matter?" Developmental Psychology vol. 49, no. 8 (2013): 1602

poorer backgrounds and families are more likely to leave school, thereby reducing their chances of securing better living conditions for themselves.

In our country, there is a high rate of school non-attendance and dropout, which continues to be a problem for a large number of students in many parts of the country. There is also an equality gap that prevents children, especially those from groups at higher risk of discrimination—including children with developmental disabilities, migrant children and asylum seekers, children from rural areas, vulnerable children, and Roma children—from accessing quality education.

The participation of Roma children, especially girls, in preschool, primary, secondary, and vocational education remains low, with a large number of Roma children continuing

to face segregation within the school system. The educational status of Roma children is still less favorable compared to children from the majority population. A significant percentage of Roma children continue to drop out of school, the transition rate between primary and secondary school is low, as is the enrollment of children in early education programs and the preschool education system.



SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

Social exclusion is a process in which certain individuals or groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from fully participating in it, as a result of their poverty, inadequate education, or discrimination. This distance them from employment, income, educational opportunities, as well as social networks and activities within society and the community. Quality education is one of the factors that significantly contributes to reducing social exclusion. In other words, education plays a key role in ensuring social inclusion (equal opportunities and active participation in society).⁵

Social exclusion and peer rejection are highly influential phenomena in the social interactions of children and adolescents. Exclusion and rejection can occur for countless reasons, and although exclusion does not always aim to cause psychological harm, social exclusion can negatively affect emotional health, behavior problems, school performance, and low self-confidence.

Gender and other stereotypes in education limit students' potential and contribute to an increased risk of social exclusion. Therefore, the educational system must ensure a sensitized approach focused on encouraging the development of interests, talents, and potential of every student, regardless of individual and social differences.

For example, young people who have experienced discrimination, such as exclusion and rejection, also show a higher prevalence of substance use/abuse, risky behaviors, mental health issues (such as depression), and negative school-related outcomes in terms of achievement and absenteeism. Research also shows that adolescents who experience intersectional discrimination are

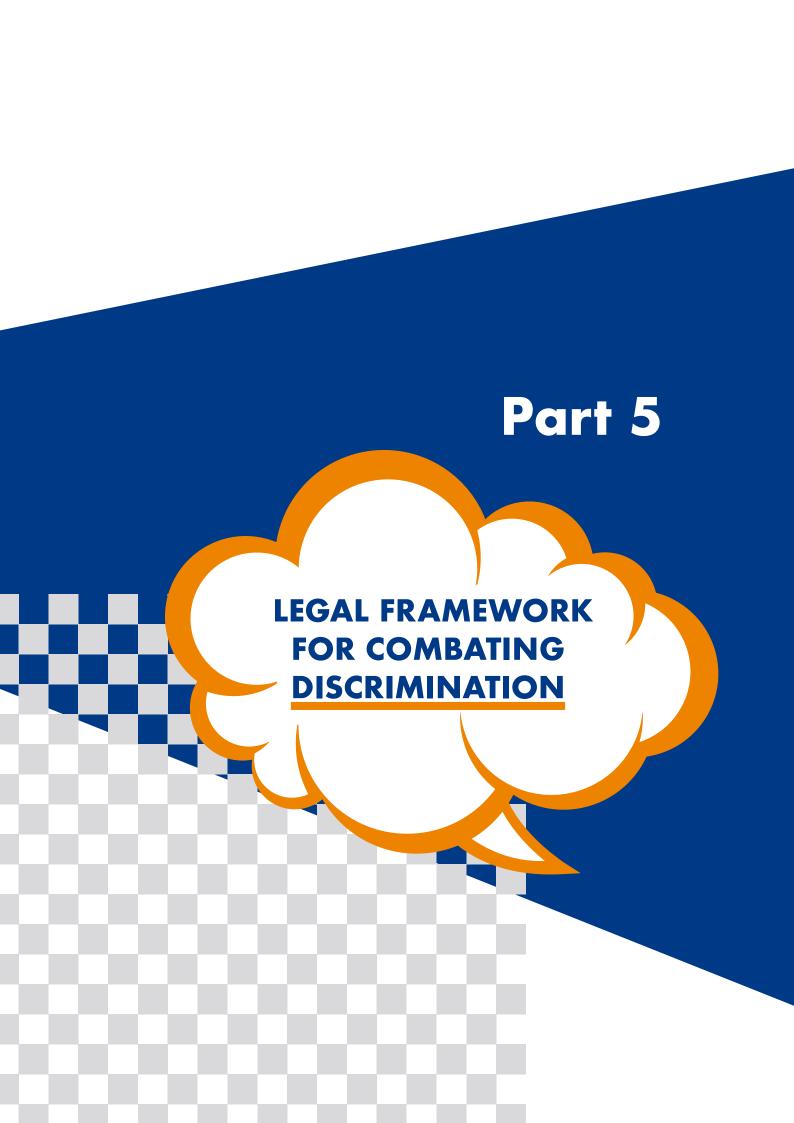
at greater risk of engaging in self-harm and suicidal thoughts, and experience higher rates of depressive symptoms compared to those who do not experience these forms of intragroup conflict.⁶

Moreover, some studies show that experiences of discrimination in youth are linked to symptoms of depression later in life. Similar associations have been identified between discrimination and self-esteem, sleep disorders, and behavioral disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Reactions to such stressors can cause lasting psychological effects and lead to changes in sociocultural adaptation.⁷

Social Exclusion and Education, Vesna Jokić, Ksenija Petovar, Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of Serbia, Belgrade, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade, November 2009, https://raf.arh.bg.ac.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/1104/KPetovarSocijalna.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁶ Causes and Consequences of Social Exclusion and Peer Rejection Among Children and Adolescents Kelly Lynn Mulvey 1, Corey Boswell 1, Jiali Zheng , 2018 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6085085/#S1

From childhood to adulthood: examining the long-term effects of racial discrimination on mental and physical health, European Public Health Alliance, and Luna Ali, January 2024, https://epha.org/from-childhood-to-adulthood-examining-the-long-term-effects-of-racial-discrimination-on-mental-and-physical-health/



The Republic of Serbia has established an adequate anti-discrimination framework which, recognizing the importance of respecting human rights and the principle of equality, encompasses not only the most important universal and regional agreements in this field but also a wide range of domestic regulations concerning the prohibition of discrimination and other related areas.

The highest legal act in every country is the constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia⁸, in Article 21, stipulates that all are egual before the Constitution and the law, that everyone has the right to equal legal protection without discrimination, and that any discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is prohibited on any grounds—especially on the basis of race, gender, nationality, social origin, birth, religion, political or other beliefs, property status, culture, language, age, and mental or physical disability. Furthermore, the Constitution provides that special measures introduced to achieve full equality for individuals or groups who are fundamentally in an unequal position compared to other citizens shall not be considered discrimination.

The constitution regulates that children enjoy human rights appropriate to their age and mental maturity. Every child has the right to a personal name, registration in the birth registry, the right to know their origin, and the right to preserve their identity. Children are protected from psychological, physical, economic, and any other exploitation or abuse, and children born out of wedlock have the same rights as children born within marriage. The rights of the child and their protection are governed by law (Article 64).

Parents have the right and duty to support, raise, and educate their children, and they are equal in this regard (Article 65). All or some of these rights may be withdrawn or restricted from one or both parents only by a court decision, if it is in the best interest of the child, in accordance with the law.

Special support and protection are provided to the mother before and after childbirth, and special protection is given to children who are not cared for by their parents and to children with mental or physical developmental disabilities. Children under the age of 15 cannot be employed, and those under 18 years old are not allowed to work in jobs harmful to their health or morality (Article 66 of the Constitution).

Parents and legal guardians have the right to provide their children with religious and moral education in accordance with their beliefs (Article 43 of the Constitution).

Everyone has the right to education (Article 71 of the Constitution). Primary education is compulsory and free, while secondary education is free. All citizens have access to higher education under equal conditions. Successful and gifted students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds are provided with free higher education, in accordance with the law.

The Republic of Serbia has also adopted numerous international conventions, making them an integral part of the country's legal system and granting them the same force as domestic laws.

The most important international conventions relevant to protection against discrimination include: the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention.

The constitutional prohibition of discrimination is further elaborated in the **Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination**⁹, which regulates in detail the general ban on discrimination, the forms and cases of discrimination, as well as the procedure for protection against discrimination. This law is largely harmonized with the regulations of the European Union in this area. More information on the concept and forms of discrimination can be found in Section 2 of this manual.

This law provides that everyone has the right to preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as vocational training, under equal conditions. It prohibits making it more difficult or impossible for an individual or group of individuals, based on their personal characteristics, to enroll in an educational institution, or excluding them from such institutions, hindering or denying their ability to attend classes and participate in other educational activities, segregating students based on personal characteristics, abusing them, or otherwise unjustifiably differentiating or treating them unequally. Discrimination against educational institutions operating in accordance with the law and other regulations is also prohibited, as is discrimination against individuals who use or have used the services of these institutions (Article 19).

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As a specific case of discrimination, Article 22 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination regulates discrimination against children, stipulating that every child, i.e.,

minor, has equal rights and protection within the family, society, and the state, regardless of their own personal characteristics or those of their parents, guardians, and family members. It is prohibited to discriminate against a child or minor based on health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, ethnic origin, national affiliation, marital or nonmarital birth, public calls for giving preference to children of one gender over another, as well as making distinctions based on health status, financial status, profession, and other features of social position, activities, expressed opinion or belief of the child's parents, guardians, or family members.

The prohibition of discrimination is also regulated by the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities¹⁰, which, among other things, provides for the prohibition of discrimination based on disability at all levels of upbringing and education (Article 18), which includes:

- Denial of admission of a child of preschool age, a pupil, or a student with a disability to an educational institution that corresponds to their previously acquired knowledge or educational capabilities;
- Exclusion from an educational institution already attended by a child of preschool age, a pupil, or a student with a disability for reasons related to their disability.;
- Setting non-disability as a specific condition for admission to an educational institution, including the requirement to submit a certificate of health status and prior assessment of psychophysical abilities, unless such a condition is determined in accordance with regulations governing the field of education..

Discrimination in education on the grounds of disability, in accordance with Article 19 of this Law, shall not be considered as:

- testing the specific aptitudes of preschool children, pupils and students, or candidates for enrollment in an educational institution, related to a particular subject or group of subjects, their artistic inclinations or forms of exceptional talent;
- organization of special forms of instruction or education for pupils or preschool children who, due to insufficient intellectual abilities, cannot follow the regular curriculum, as well as referring pupils or preschool children to such forms of instruction or education, if the enrollment is carried out based on an act of the competent authority determining the need for such a form of education for the pupil or preschool child..

^{9 &}quot;Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 22/09 i 52/21

^{10 &}quot;Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 33/06 and 13/16"

A particularly severe form of discrimination on the grounds of disability, according to the law, includes harassment, insult, and humiliation of a child with a disability of preschool age, a pupil, or a student because of their disability, when such acts are committed by an educator, teacher, or other person employed in an educational institution.

The prohibition of discrimination is also regulated by a number of other laws, such as: the Law on Social Protection 11, the Law on Youth 12, the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities 13, the Law on Sports 14, the Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts 15, the Law on the Use of Sign Language 16, the Law on Gender Equality 17, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence 18, etc. For the position of children, regulations in the field of education and upbringing are of particular importance.

The fundamentals of the education system, which include preschool, primary, and secondary education, as well as adult education, are regulated by the **Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System**¹⁹. This law stipulates that everyone has the right to education and upbringing and that all individuals are equal in exercising this right.

Furthermore, this law also prescribes the prohibition of discrimination and discriminatory behavior, which, either directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, unjustifiably creates distinctions or results in unequal treatment or omission (exclusion, restriction, or giving preference) with respect to an individual or group of individuals, on any grounds, whether openly or covertly. The law also prescribes the obligations of institutions to protect against

discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect, as well as the methods for implementing preventive and intervention measures..

Tother laws related to education also prescribe the protection of children and students from discrimination: *The Law on Preschool Education and Care*²⁰, *The Law on Primary Education and Upbringing*²¹, *The Law on Secondary Education and Upbringing*²², *The Law on Higher Education*²³, *The Law on Dual Education*²⁴, *The Law on Pupil and Student Standards*²⁵.

The two most important rulebooks applied by educational institutions are: The Rulebook on More Detailed Criteria for Recognizing Forms of Discrimination by Employees, Children, Students, or Third Parties in Educational Institutions²⁶, which prescribes more detailed criteria for identifying forms of discrimination within educational institutions...

Another important rulebook that an educational institution must apply is the Rulebook on the Procedure of the Institution in Cases of Suspected or Confirmed Discriminatory and Offenses **Behavior** Against Reputation, Honor, or Dignity of a Person²⁷, which prescribes the procedures to be followed when discriminatory behavior is suspected or confirmed, the methods for implementing preventive and intervention activities in cases of discrimination, the obligations and responsibilities of the child, student, adult, parent or other legal quardian, employee, third party in the institution, institution's bodies and committees, as well as other matters relevant to protection from discrimination.

- 11 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 24/11
- 12 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 50/11
- 13 Official Gazette of the Federal Republic of Serbia", No. 11/02, No. 1/03 Constitutional Charter and Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 72709 other law, 97/13 CofRS I 47/18
- 14 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 10/16
- 15 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 45/91, 53/93, 48/94, 101/05 other law, 30/10, 47/18 i 48/18 amended by another law.
- 16 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 38/15
- 17 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 52/21
- 18 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 94/16
- 19 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 88/17, 27/18 other law, 10/19, 27/18 oter law, 6/20, 129/21, 92/23 and 19/25)
- 20 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 18/2010, 101/2017, 113/2017 other law, 95/2018 other law, 10/2019, 86/2019 other law, 157/2020 other law, 123/2021 other law, 129/2021 and 19/2025 other law.
- 21 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 55/2013, 101/2017, 10/2019, 27/2018 other law, 129/2021, 92/2023, and 19/2025.
- 22 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 other law, 6/2020, 52/2021, 129/2021, 129/2021 other law, 92/2023, and 19/2025.
- 23 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 88/2017, 73/2018, 27/2018 other law, 67/2019, 6/2020 other law, 11/2021 authentic interpretation, 67/2021, 67/2021 other law, 76/2023, and 19/2025.
- 24 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 101/2017, 6/2020, and 76/2023.
- 25 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 18/2010, 55/2013, 27/2018 other law, and 10/2019.
- 26 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 22/16.
- 27 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 65/18.





ith the aim of protecting against discrimination and promoting equality, the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination established the **Commissioner for the Protection of Equality** as an independent, autonomous, and specialized state authority.

The Commissioner is authorized to:

- provides information and advises individuals who believe they have been subjected to discrimination;
- acts upon complaints of discrimination, issues opinions and recommendations in specific cases, and imposes measures;
- files lawsuits and initiates misdemeanor proceedings for violations of rights under the law;
- submits annual and special reports to the National Assembly on the state of equality protection;
- alerts the public to the most frequent, typical, and severe cases of discrimination;
- monitors the implementation of laws and other regulations, initiates the adoption or amendment of regulations, and provides opinions on provisions of draft laws and other regulations with the aim of promoting equality and protection from discrimination;
- establishes and maintains cooperation with public authorities and organizations in the territory of Serbia, as well as with regional, international, and other bodies;
- issues recommendations of measures to public authorities and other entities for achieving equality and protection from discrimination;

- cooperates with associations that have an interest in participating in the fight against discrimination;
- organizes and conducts independent research, publishes expert publications, announcements, and information, and performs other duties.

The procedure before the Commissioner is initiated based on a **complaint**, which can be submitted by any person, including a child, if they believe they have been discriminated against. It is important to emphasize that this procedure is completely free of charge. The complaint must be submitted in written form and must contain information about who was discriminated against, by whom, a description of the discriminatory act, and evidence of the act of discrimination suffered (documents, witnesses, etc.). It is also important that the complaint must be signed.

In the procedure based on a complaint, the Commissioner determines whether there has been a violation of the right to equality and issues an opinion, which may include a recommendation on how to eliminate the discriminatory conduct and its consequences.

discrimination, contact your homeroom teacher, any other teacher, the school psychologist, pedagogue, or you can also file a complaint with the Commissioner.

To facilitate the complaint submission process, there is an appropriate form available in various languages, including a child-friendly version, on the Commissioner's website - https://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/diskriminacija/prituzba-zbog-diskriminacije/.

GENDER EQUALITY OMBUDSPERSON

Other countries in the region also have national bodies that serve as mechanisms for protection against discrimination.

In the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the Gender Equality Act, the Gender Equality Ombudsperson operates independently and autonomously and monitors the implementation of the Gender Equality Act and other regulations related to gender equality in Croatia.

The Gender Equality Ombudsperson acts upon citizens' complaints regarding discrimination based on gender, marital or family status, and sexual orientation. It examines cases of violations of the principle of gender equality, cases of discrimination against individuals or groups committed by state administration bodies, units of local and regional self-government, other bodies with public authority, employees of these bodies, as well as other legal and natural persons.

In performing tasks within her jurisdiction, the Gender Equality Ombudsperson is authorized to issue warnings, make proposals, and give recommendations. The bodies to which such warnings, proposals, and recommendations are addressed are obligated to inform the Ombudsperson in writing of the measures they have taken in accordance with them, no later than 30 days from the date of receipt of the warning/proposal/recommendation. the event of non-compliance with the request or failure to submit the required information prescribed within the timeframe, Ombudsperson may request oversight by the body responsible for supervising their work.

If the Ombudsperson, while performing her duties, becomes aware of a violation of the provisions of the Gender Equality Act that bears the characteristics of a criminal offense, she shall submit a report to the competent public prosecutor.

If she deems that the principle of gender equality has been violated, she has the right to submit a proposal to initiate proceedings for the assessment of the constitutionality of a law or the compliance of other regulations with the constitution and the law..

You can find more information about the Gender Equality Ombudsperson on the website https://www.prs.hr/cms

Example:

Tdshe Gender Equality Ombudsperson acted upon a complaint concerning the textbook "Politics and Economy" for the fourth year of high school. The complaint referred to the textual and visual contribution regarding the topic of women in politics. Upon reviewing the textbook, it was determined that the content • overall contains useful, informative, and affirmative material related to human rights and gender equality. However, it was also found that women were noticeably underrepresented and portrayed inappropriately, considering that out of five images showing people in politics, men are shown as politicians in four, and women in only one, under the title *Women in Politics*, with the selected photo depicting a female politician with a frowning expression, as if she were nagging or "acting" smart." The biggest issue lies in the awkwardly phrased caption under the photo, which is open to interpretation in a gender nonaffirmative context, since questions such as "Do you want women in politics?" and "What could be the advantages and disadvantages of involving women in politics?" prompt students to consider the negative aspects of women's involvement in politics and suggest that it • is understandable and entirely legitimate to weigh the pros and cons and question whether greater representation of women in politics should be encouraged — something that is not questioned for men.

In this way, women in politics are perceived as a foreign element and an unusual phenomenon that should be analyzed in the context of the desirability of their representation..

The Ombudsperson recommended that the ministry and the publisher revise the highlighted sections in the new edition of the textbook. The publisher accepted the recommendation, informing the Ombudsperson that in the new, third edition of the textbook, the controversial questions were replaced with new ones: "What obstacles do women face when entering politics? How can the participation of women in politics be promoted?" Additionally, the visual section "Woman in Politics" was replaced with a more appropriate photograph..

ANNEX WORKSHOP SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this exercise is to, through roleplay and "walking in someone else's shoes," help children understand the importance of respecting equality. This practical activity enables them to perceive the unequal positions of different people in society, as well as to recognize the value of special (affirmative) measures that need to be applied to eliminate existing inequalities and achieve real equality and equal opportunities for all members of society (regardless of gender, age, nationality, skin color, religion, financial status, physical appearance, health status, ancestry, marital and family status, genetic traits, membership in political, trade union, or other organizations, etc.).

The exercise begins with the facilitator assigning roles to the workshop participants. All participants stand in a line, side by side (slightly spaced apart), with enough space in front of them to move..

ROLES:

1. A 12-year-old girl from Syria, living in a refugee camp, speaks little Serbian and does not attend school;

- 2. A 13-year-old boy, Roma, lives in an informal settlement outside the city, collects secondary raw materials (cardboard and scrap metal) with his parents, and often misses school.;
- **3.** A 15-year-old girl with a visual impairment, attends a special school for children with visual impairments which is not in her hometown, so she lives in a dormitory;
- **4.** A 9-year-old boy, uses a wheelchair for mobility, has a personal assistant;
- **5.** A 15-year-old girl, lives in a remote mountain village, walks daily and uses intercity bus transport to attend school located in another town.
- **6.** A 16-year-old boy, son of the municipal president, an excellent student and successful athlete:
- **7.** A 12-year-old girl, excellent student, lives in a small town with her mother who works in retail;
- **8.** You can add more similar roles that reflect the situations in which certain students find themselves, if needed.

After the roles have been assigned, the educator reads one statement at a time—each describing a situation from everyday life. After each statement is read, they pause and invite the children playing the roles to take a step forward if the statement applies to them or to the role they've been assigned. If it does not apply, they should stay in place. The educator makes sure the children understand the meaning of each statement, providing clarification and guiding the flow of the exercise as needed. The educator can also invite other children, if any are in the audience, to comment on the situation after each statement and movement of the participants.

The educator also plays the role of the "tester"—a person to whom all of the stated opportunities are available—and after each statement, they take one step forward. They should ensure there is enough space in front of them to take a total of 10 steps, and that the size of the children's steps is consistent...

STATEMENTS:

- 1. I can go to school on my own, without anyone's help.
- 2. I follow regular classes without any difficulties.
- 3. I can go to the doctor without any problems when I'm sick.
- 4. I can enter the bus on my own and freely when I buy a ticket.
- 5. I can walk down the street alone at night without fear.
- 6. In my free time, I can go to the library and borrow books.
- 7. Every summer I go to the seaside with my family.
- 8. I often go to McDonald's with my family for ice cream.
- 9. I have new sneakers/a new jacket.
- 10. I often play football/basketball (some sport) with my friends...

When all the statements have been read, there should be a significant difference in the positions where the participants now stand compared to the "tester."

The educator should explain why the starting positions are now different compared to the beginning of the exercise. Together with the participants and the children in the audience, the educator should discuss how certain differences among people create barriers that limit the enjoyment of some rights, and how certain everyday situations/statements—almost taken for granted in the case of the "tester"—represent a challenge for certain social groups.

For example, the statement "I can go to school independently, without anyone's help" presents a challenge for the boy in a wheelchair, but also for the girl with visual impairment (and to some extent, the girl who lives in a remote mountain village).

The statement "I can follow regular classes without difficulty" does not apply to the girl who is a migrant and speaks little Serbian, the girl in a special school who needs textbooks in Braille, as well as other adapted teaching materials, without which she cannot follow lessons without difficulty.

Going to the doctor without problems is not possible for children from a refugee camp or informal settlement, and often also for children living in rural areas where there are no healthcare facilities. Meanwhile, due to the inaccessibility of public spaces and transport, independent use of public transport is questionable for children with various types of disabilities (roles 3 and 4)...

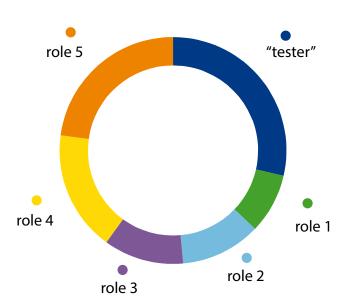
The possibility of moving safely after dark certainly does not apply to the girl who lives in a remote area, nor to the girl from the refugee camp. The opportunities children have in their free time are also conditioned by the financial status of their families. Going to the seaside, having new clothes, and for some groups of children, going to a restaurant or pastry shop is limited and often not accessible. Children with disabilities often cannot participate in extracurricular and other leisure activities (such as sports), either due to architectural barriers or because

optional programs are not adapted in a way that would allow participation by children from this social group..

This is precisely the purpose of special or affirmative measures, which are introduced to ensure that individuals or groups of people who are in a disadvantaged and unequal position in terms of employment, education, advancement to influential positions, etc., become fully equal. This means that special measures give these people and groups a certain advantage in order to bring them to the same "starting position" as other citizens (e.g. designated parking spaces for persons with disabilities, study support for Roma men and women, etc.).

It is important to also address systemic problems that cause discrimination and unequal opportunities for certain individuals in society — working on accessibility of buildings and public spaces to facilitate movement for people with disabilities (access ramps, elevators, curb cuts...), adapted textbooks and teaching materials (Braille publications, in minority languages, sign language interpreters for people with hearing impairments...), continuity and coverage of social services (personal assistants, financial assistance for the socially disadvantaged...), social inclusion and inclusion in the education system (qualitative and quantitative support), availability of healthcare services, etc..

STARTING POSITIONS



STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE²⁸

Duration of the activity: 90 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the ways in which differences are perceived.
- Recognize the mechanisms behind the formation of stereotypes and the

- speed at which generalizations are made.
- Understand how stereotypes function: how the way others perceive us influences how we perceive ourselves.
- Distinguish observation from interpretation as a means of overcoming stereotypical thinking..
- Materials needed:
- Bell/whistle
- Stickers in three colors

²⁸ Some games are taken from the manual *Richer for the Difference*, available at: https://cpd.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/za_razliku_bogatije.pdf

- Behavior rules for each of the three cultures
- Excerpts: "On Prejudices and Stereotypes", "The Process of Forming Stereotypes and Prejudices", "Functions of Prejudices and Stereotypes".

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- 1. Have participants draw stickers of different colors (three colors total) and instruct them to divide into three groups based on the color. Each group should stand in a different part of the room, as far apart as possible.
- 2. Ask participants to place the stickers visibly and explain that the stickers help distinguish them and make them recognizable.
- 3. Explain that each group represents a different culture, then privately give each group its specific cultural behavior rules, ensuring that the other groups do not hear them. You can also give each group a note with the description of the behavior. It is important to emphasize that everyone must strictly follow the written rules and adhere to their culture's behavior regardless of what happens.
- 4. Give each group a few minutes to prepare.
- 5. Once everyone is ready, explain that all three cultures will go for a walk with the goal of meeting others and asking them questions of interest while strictly following the rules of their own culture. They are free to move around, meet whomever they want, and talk about anything they like.
- 6. Occasionally ring the bell (or blow the whistle). Let the activity run for 10 to 15 minutes (the length of the activity can be adjusted by the facilitator based on participants' reactions, but it should not be shorter than 10 minutes).
- 7. When the game ends, ask participants to return to their original groups and

- write down observations about the other two groups (whom they met, what they were like...) and suggest names for the other cultures.
- 8. Also, ask them to write something about themselves their own culture, what they're like, and what their culture could be called..
- 9. Organize a group exchange by having each group talk about the others. Write down everything they say on a flip chart. While one group is speaking, the others should stay silent and listen.
- Once the exchange is done, let each group talk about themselves, and continue recording their statements.
- 11. Invite participants to comment on the lists created to explain how they formed conclusions about others, where they got so much information, what they based their assumptions on, etc.
- 12. Conclude the activity by explaining that stereotypes are formed based on some truth, around which generalizations are made that cluster into prejudices. The main function of stereotypes is to simplify the understanding of reality by categorizing phenomena through generalization.
- 13. Summarize the activity by explaining to them that stereotypes arise from some truth around which generalizations are made, which cluster together as prejudices. The primary function of stereotypes is to simplify the understanding of reality by categorizing phenomena, which is created through generalization.

Through interpretation and generalization of truths, stereotypes are formed as a form of protection that grows into a limitation; introduce comments on distinguishing observation from interpretation, as well as the concept of positive stereotypes (distribute material on the topic and discuss it).

Behaviors of members of different cultures

Behavior of members of Culture 1:

- they count to 6 silently before saying something;
- at the sound of a bell (or whistle), they fall silent and listen attentively.;
- When asked "How are you?", they cover their eyes with their hands.

Behavior of members of Culture 2:

- As soon as they meet someone, they ask "How are you?" and get close to the other person's face;
- At the sound of a bell (or whistle), they stretch (perform a sun salutation);
- When the interlocutor speaks quietly or remains silent, they become loud, shouting in order to establish contact..

Behavior of members of Culture 3:

- They speak quietly;
- At the sound of a bell (or whistle), they bow deeply;
- They keep a distance of half a meter from the interlocutor (they move away)..

Three steps:

- 1. Creating "salient" categories when we meet people, we focus on the characteristics that are the most "salient," while ignoring the rest.
- Making inaccurate generalizations about a group (stereotypes and prejudices) - based on those salient attributes, we make assumptions about the person and generalize them to the groups they belong to. Prejudices and stereotypes lead to incorrect generalizations about individuals when we believe the groups they belong to are homogeneous. This way of thinking denies the right to individuality. When reality does not align with our prejudices and stereotypes, we tend to "distort reality" in order to preserve what we want to believe.
- 3. Treating people differently based on those conclusions (discrimination)..

MUHAMMAD

Duration of the game: 90 minutes Objectives:

- Gaining insight into the importance of context and its role in observation, understanding, and forming attitudes.
- Gaining insight into the importance of stepping outside fixed frameworks for interpreting reality.
- Raising awareness of the difficulties in interpreting data based on insufficient information.
- Recognizing how interpretations limit the true understanding of people, events, and the world around us..

Materials:

- Leyla and Muhammad, Story 1
- Leyla and Muhammad, Story 2

Activity description:

- Tell the participants that you will read them a story. While reading, illustrate the content of the story as you go (it's also helpful to give each participant a copy of the story, so they can reread it during the evaluation later).
- 2. After reading, ask the participants to rank the characters individually. The most negative character should be ranked 1, and the most positive 5.
- Create a large table with the names of participants and the characters from the story. Let each participant read their rankings aloud, and you record them in the table..

- 4. Divide the participants into small groups based on the similarity of their rankings and ask them to define, within their groups, the criteria by which each character received a certain rank.
- 5. Then tell them that you have new information about Lejla and Muhamed and that you would like to share it with them. Give each participant Story No. 2 and have them read it individually.
- 6. Give them a little time for a spontaneous reaction—laughter, anger, disbelief.
- 7. Ask them to stay in their small groups and discuss whether their rankings would remain the same after receiving the new information. What would they change?
- 8. Organize a large group discussion: Ask them whether they changed anything or not. What did they change? Why? How did they arrive at the rankings after reading the first story, what led them to judge the characters that way, and what makes them want to change it now? Can they still confidently say they know what is happening in the story? How do we name and make sense of what we perceive or hear? What would happen if they had yet another piece of information?
- 9. Encourage them to recall something similar from their personal experience (professional or private) or from their surroundings. Let them briefly share this in pairs.
- 10. Comment on how we often make incorrect assumptions when we only see part of the picture, and how important it is to consider the whole in order to draw conclusions. Remind them that it's crucial to take the entire context into account when making judgments, and to be aware that we often lack all the information when we form conclusions. It's important to treat conclusions as hypotheses to be tested, rather than as absolute truths (since we can never be fully certain that we see the whole picture). We can never completely rid ourselves of prejudices

and stereotypes, but it's important to hold back from reacting until we've tested our assumptions. Also, emphasize how our cultural lens colors our reactions (e.g., if we judge Lejla's behavior, we tend to evaluate all other characters in relation to her and her ranking...)..



LEYLA AND MUHAMMAD (1)

The Nile is a large, long river inhabited by many crocodiles, and there are only a few bridges that allow crossing.

LEYLA lives on one side of the river. She is 17 years old and madly in love with MUHAMMAD, who lives on the other side. LEYLA decides to visit her beloved and goes to AHMED to ask him to take her across. Although AHMED has both time and a boat, he refuses to take LEYLA across...

LEYLA doesn't give up and goes to TARIK, begging him to take her to the other side of the river.

TARIK agrees, but only on the condition that LEYLA spends the night with him and that they leave early in the morning. And so it was. LEYLA wanted to see MUHAMMAD so badly that she agreed to spend the night with TARIK, and early in the morning, he took her across to the other side.

Overjoyed, LEYLA ran into her beloved's arms and told him about all the hardships she faced to reach him. MUHAMMAD pushed her away.

Heartbroken, LEYLA walked along the riverbank, fighting back tears. That's when she met JAFAR. JAFAR asked her why she was crying and why she was sad. LEYLA told him her story..

JAFAR went to MUHAMMAD and struck him hard in the face twice without saying a word..

LEYLA AND MUHAMMAD (2)

Leyla is a seventeen-year-old high school student, and Muhammad is her teacher. He is happily married. Ahmed is also a teacher at the same high school—Muhammad is his colleague. Tarik is Leyla's grandfather, who hadn't seen his beloved granddaughter in a long time. The two of them spent the whole night together drinking tea and talking. Jafar is a psychopathic murderer—it's pure luck that he only hit Muhammad in the face.

WORD ASSOCIATIONS WITH WOMEN AND MEN²⁹

Overview:

Through individual work and pair discussions, participants will express their views on what the main associations are in their environment/culture with the words "men" and "women."

Objective:

 Raising participants' awareness of gender differences and similarities.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: flip chart paper, blank A4 paper, markers

Preparation: No prior preparation needed.

Instructions:

 Divide participants into two mixed groups. Each participant in both groups receives two sheets of paper.

They have 5 minutes to write down their first thoughts/word associations on the given topic. The first topic is: What associations come to mind when you hear the word "Man"? And "What are men like?"

Then, the sheets of paper are collected and posted on the board.

- Next comes the second topic: What associations come to mind when you hear the word "Woman"? And "What are women like?" Once all the sheets are posted on the boards, the facilitator reads the given responses aloud. Participants are given the opportunity to add more if they wish...
- Participants are encouraged to engage in discussion by responding to some of the following questions: What do you think about these responses?; Where do they come from?; What does equality mean to you?; What does equity mean to you?; Can you give examples of equality and equity? Do you believe they can be achieved in your environment?;

Key debriefing discussion points

- How did you feel during the exercise?
- How much did you censor yourself? How surprised were you by what you wrote?
- Where did these word associations come from? How much are these associations related to prejudice?
- Have you witnessed strong negative attitudes toward women/girls in your environment?
- What would it be like for women to adopt gender characteristics traditionally associated with men? Would it be difficult or easy? What would it be like for men to adopt gender characteristics traditionally attributed to women?
- Are men and women raised in the same way? Why or why not? Which characteristics attributed to women and men are valued by our society as positive or negative?
- Did this exercise inspire you to reflect on gender stereotypes?
- What have we learned from this activity?
- Is there anything we can apply to our own lives or relationships?

²⁹ Some games are taken from the Training Manual on Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination, available at: https://smartbalkansproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Manual-for-gender-equality-Serbia.pdf

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE IDEAL MAN AND THE IDEAL WOMAN?

Overview:

This activity involves participants defining expectations for the ideal man and woman, encouraging discussion about social gender norms, stereotypes, and the impact of these expectations on individuals, followed by reflection on personal impressions and their connection to broader social attitudes.

Objective:

 To explore and reflect on social gender norms and stereotypes related to expectations of the ideal man and woman

Time: 50-60 minutes

Materials: flip chart paper and marker

Preparation: No prior preparation needed.

Instructions:

Divide participants into 4 groups and give them 20 minutes to discuss in small groups and write on flip chart paper what the expectations are for an ideal man and an ideal woman.

- When the process is complete, the facilitator asks one representative from each group to read/explain what they discussed in their groups and what expectations they identified for the ideal man and the ideal woman. This is followed by a discussion with the questions: How does the ideal man cope with these expectations? How does the ideal woman cope with these expectations?
- Where do we learn about these expectations for women and men? Are these expectations the same in every country/region? Do you notice people breaking these roles and still being happy/successful/fulfilled? Does this portrait fit the stereotypical image of men and women that exists in society?

Key debriefing discussion points

- What are your impressions after this exercise?
- How do you feel when you see all the expectations placed on ideal women and ideal men?
- What does this exercise remind you of?

BAROMETER

Overview:

Participants take part in the "Barometer" activity, using gender-related statements to physically position themselves in the room. Through discussions and debriefing questions, the exercise aims to raise participants' awareness of gender-based discrimination and encourage understanding of different perspectives. The given statements relate to various beliefs about gender, prompting exploration of social attitudes and biases.

Objective:

 Raise awareness about gender issues and gender-based discrimination

Materials: A4 paper, pens, colored paper, 2–3 markers, list of statements (see annex for activity).

Preparation: Prepare one sheet of paper with "Agree" written on it and place it at one end of the room, and another sheet with "Disagree" at the opposite end. Print out the list of statements..

Instructions:

 Place the signs "Agree" and "Disagree" at opposite ends of the room. The facilitator reads the statements aloud, and participants choose which side of the room to stand on, representing their agreement or disagreement with the statement. Plan approximately 5 minutes for discussion on each statement.

Key discussion points:

- How did you feel during this session?
- Is there anything you didn't say that you would like to share??

Notes for the facilitator:

This method is called the "barometer." Two extremes are defined in the room—for example, one wall represents one extreme: full agreement with the statement, while the opposite wall represents the other extreme: full disagreement. Additionally, a piece of paper with "Agree" is placed at one end of the room and "Disagree" at the other.

There are several positions between these two extremes. The facilitator reads the first statement, and participants stand at a point along the "barometer" that reflects their opinion—that is, their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Then, several participants explain why they chose their position. Explanations can come from any point on the barometer, and the direction (from "Agree" to "Disagree" and vice versa) can vary with each statement. The exercise then continues with the next statement.

An important guideline is to avoid focusing on what others have said, and instead to articulate your own thoughts without expressing agreement or disagreement with others in the barometer. The person leading the exercise does not ask follow-up questions or enter into dialogue with participants. The goal of using this method is not to find the correct answer, but to share perspectives and understand that seemingly similar positions may be based on fundamentally different beliefs, while seemingly opposing views may share common roots. Understanding others is essential for recognizing both connection and difference...

The barometer is usually not moderated, and no follow-up questions are asked to the speaker. If someone in the barometer starts expressing agreement or disagreement with

what another person has said, they should be stopped and reminded of the rule to express only their own opinion. Otherwise, this creates a need for discussion, which is not feasible in the barometer setup, and participants begin to look at each other (which is the basic posture of communication).

Annex for this activity:

List of statements:

- Men have more work experience.
- Real men don't take paternity leave.
- Men are more suited for business leadership.
- Mothers are more important than fathers in raising children.
- Women should take their husband's last name.
- Women are "victims" of the family.
- Daughters care more for their parents than sons do.
- A career-oriented woman is not a devoted mother.
- Men have the right to demand sex from their wives whenever they want.
- Women have the right to demand sex from their husbands whenever they want.
- Women have the right to say "no" if they don't want to have sex with their husband.

WOMEN'S AND MEN'S DAILY SCHEDULES

Overview:

In this activity, participants will explore and discuss gender roles, traditional tasks, and the challenges related to gender stereotypes by creating and analyzing group-generated schedules that highlight differences in the daily lives of men and women.

Objective:

- Explain the types of work traditionally done by men and women.
- Identify the challenges that women and men face due to gender stereotypes and inequality.

Time: 50 minutes

Materials: flip chart paper, marker

Preparation: No prior preparation needed.

Instructions:

- Ask participants to reflect on how most women and men in their community spend their time what they do every day (e.g., work, housework), every week (e.g., going to the market), or less frequently (e.g., traveling to the city/village, visiting friends).
- Divide participants into four groups and ask them to create schedules showing what most women and men in their environment do each day. Groups one and two will create schedules for women, and groups three and four will create schedules for men. Give them 20 minutes for this.
- Bring the groups back together to compare the schedules.

Key debriefing discussion points:

• Are there differences in the schedules of women and men in the following areas: work, responsibilities, free time, and learning?

- Do you think women and men have equal responsibilities?
- Are there activities you would like to change?
- Are there ways women and men can support each other in daily life? Give examples.
- Why do we think women should do only certain things, and men only others? (Culture, tradition related to gender roles.)
- What have we learned from this activity? (Boys and girls – and men and women – can do most things in this world.)

PREJUDICES – WEARING A LABEL³⁰

Workshop objective: The aim of this workshop is to raise students' awareness of their tendency to group people based on various characteristics—sometimes even trivial ones.

Duration: 45 minutes (adapted to a single school period)

Participants: students aged 12 and older

Materials:

• Prepared stickers with messages described in the workshop content.

Workshop structure:

Introductory part (5 minutes):

Presentation of the topic and the objective of the workshop.

Introductory exercise: Circles on the Forehead

The facilitator should prepare one sticky note for each participant and place it on their forehead. Most of these notes should be marked with red, blue, or green circles (indicating group affiliation), etc. One note should be marked with a double-colored circle (indicating the possibility of joining two groups), and one should have a completely different symbol (indicating an outsider).

Taken from Collection of Workshops for Group Work with Children and Youth in the Educational System, https://www.unicef.org/bih/media/6086/file/Zbirka%20radionica%20za%20grupni%20rad%20sa%20djecom%20i%20mladima%20u%20vaspitno-obrazovnom%20sistemu,%202021.pdf

The group is asked to sit in a circle and not make any comments, though they may look at the notes on others' foreheads. Then, the facilitator asks participants to stand up and explains that this is a game in which they need to form groups, but they may communicate only through nonverbal signals.

Main part (30 minutes):

Prepare stickers with the following 8 messages written on the forehead area (or use plain stickers). Four messages carry a positive connotation, and four carry a negative one, creating a balance within the group:

- Respect me.
- Praise me.
- Tell me I'm right.
- Oefend me.
- Avoid me.
- Criticize me.
- Tell me I'm wrong.
- Mock me.

Participants are asked to leave the room, and then they are invited in one by one. Each participant is given a sticker on their forehead so that others can see what is written on it, but they cannot see their own label. They are also instructed not to tell each other what is written on anyone's forehead.

Participants sit in a circle so that each person can clearly see the messages on the others' foreheads. Then they are given instructions to try to start a discussion on the topic: "Do you think plant-based food is healthier than food of animal origin?" During the discussion, they should address and treat others according to the message on each person's forehead.

Once the participants begin discussing the given topic, the facilitator steps back and remains only an observer.

After no more than 10 minutes, the facilitator interrupts the discussion. Participants are asked to try to guess what message they had on their forehead and to say how they felt.

Afterward, they are allowed to see what their message was. Each participant is also asked how they felt while addressing others based on their labels, and how they responded to being treated according to their own label.

At this point, the facilitator explains that this exercise demonstrates a typical example of how prejudice operates..

Further discussion continues in the direction of:

- Do you know what prejudices are? (if not, the facilitator explains)
- Can you give an example of prejudice?
- What do you think, how can prejudices toward certain people be reduced?

Final part (10 minutes):

Meeting participants' expectations. Closing game of the facilitator's choice.

Appendix:

Basic information about prejudices

Note: The theoretical section that follows should be adapted to the participants' age.

What are prejudices?

- 1. Types of positive and negative attitudes that arise toward a person based on their belonging to a certain group.
- 2. They are emotionally charged.
- 3. They are not based on logic.
- 4. They are resistant to change and persist stubbornly..
- 5. They influence behavior.
- 6. They are acquired through learning, most often through modeling.

How do they develop?

- Social stratification
- Traditional beliefs and ways of life
- Conformism
- Personal traits of individuals, personal insecurity, accumulated aggression (used as a way to cope with personal difficulties—these are the hardest to overcome).

They are reduced by:

- 1. Direct positive contact with groups
- 2. Systematic information about the groundlessness of prejudices
- 3. Proper upbringing within the family
- 4. Equal legal regulations, etc.

WHO ARE YOU TRAVELING WITH?³¹

Workshop objective: The goal of this workshop is for students to recognize various prejudices toward different ethnic and other groups.

Duration: 45 minutes (adapted to a single school period)

Participants: students aged 12 and older

Materials:

Worksheet "Passenger List"

Workshop structure:

Introductory part (5 minutes):

Presentation of the topic and objective of the workshop. Opening game of the facilitator's choice.

Main part (30 minutes):

Facilitators distribute the "Passenger List" worksheet to all students. Tell them to imagine they are going on a train trip and have the opportunity to choose which three passengers from the list they would most like to travel with, and which three they would not. Once everyone has made their individual choices, form small groups of 4–5 students who now must make a group decision together. Once the groups have reached their decisions, representatives from each group present their choices along with the reasons behind them, including which "cases" caused the most disagreement within the group.

After the group presentations, the facilitator encourages discussion:

- How realistic did this situation feel to you?
- What were the main reasons behind your individual decisions?
- Which characters caused the most debate?
- Which prejudices were the strongest?

How would you feel if no one wanted to share a train compartment with you?

Final part (10 minutes):

Fulfillment of participants' expectations. Closing game of the facilitator's choice.

Appendix:

Passenger List

You are going on a train journey from Belgrade to Moscow aboard the "Balkan Express," which takes several days. You will be traveling in sleeper compartments to be shared with 3 other people.

Which 3 people would you most like to travel with, and which 3 would you least like to travel with?

- 1. A foreign soldier
- 2. An overweight Swiss banker
- 3. An African woman who sells leather goods
- 4. A young artist with AIDS
- 5. A Roma
- 6. A blind pianist from Austria
- 7. A Ukrainian student who does not want to return home
- 8. A Romanian woman with a baby
- 9. A muscular, feminist-minded Dutch woman
- 10. An English rocker who is visibly intoxicated
- 11. A football fan from Ireland traveling to a match
- 12. A Polish sex worker from Berlin
- 13. A French farmer who only speaks French and carries a basket of smelly cheese.
- 14. A Kurdish refugee living in Germany, returning home from Libya.

³¹ Taken from Collection of Workshops for Group Work with Children and Youth in the Educational System, https://www.unicef.org/bih/media/6086/file/Zbirka%20radionica%20za%20grupni%20rad%20sa%20djecom%20i%20mladima%20u%20vaspitno-obrazovnom%20sistemu,%202021.pdf

THE BAG OF FATE

- Duration: approximately 40 minutes
- Objectives
- Shifting perspective;
- Strengthening the capacity for empathy;
- Questioning how much information we actually have about certain groups;
- Challenging the sources of our information or our stereotypical views about members of certain groups;
- Raising awareness of discriminatory barriers;
- Promoting the benefits that equality brings.

Materials

- Worksheet (see below)
- "Fate Cards" (see optional list below): write one "fate" for each participant on a small piece of paper and place them in a bag (or bowl, hat...)
- Pens
- Circle of chairs.

Procedure

Tell participants that this activity requires them to imagine everyday situations under circumstances that may be quite different from their own reality.

First, each participant should draw a fate card. Ask them to imagine that they woke up the next morning and realized that the trait described on the card had suddenly become part of their identity. (If someone draws a "fate" that is already part of or very similar to their real life, allow them to draw another card.) Emphasize that nothing else has changed—only this new trait has been added. Distribute the worksheets and ask them to answer the questions.

Second, ask them to form small working groups to share their results and experiences.

Third, start the group discussion.

Fate Cards: Woman / Man (gender change); Lesbian; Gay man; Child; Unemployed person; Russian; Deaf person; Eighty-yearold; Drug addict; EU citizen; Alcohol addict; Migrant / Refugee; Chinese person; Muslim; Blind person; Delinquent; Vegetarian; Homeless person; HIV positive; Person in a wheelchair; Black / White (change of skin color); Transgender person; Single mother; Person with a rare disease.

Discussion

- Was it easy or difficult to imagine your life changing because of this attribute?
- How big was the change?
- Do you think some fates are harder than others?

During the conversation, it's important to explore how participants came to understand the role — the fate card they represented, specifically::

- Was it through personal experience or some other source of information? Are you sure the information and perceptions you have about certain roles are reliable? Are the sources based on prejudice and stereotypes?
- Did you learn something new?
- Was it difficult to answer any of the questions? Why?
- Do you need additional information? Are there any pieces of information you feel are missing?

You can focus on certain questions by revisiting participants' answers during the discussion for example: "Who would like to answer this question in front of the group: 'Is there something you can contribute to society as this new person that you couldn't before?



The Bag of Fate

When you wake up tomorrow, the trait on your card has suddenly become part of your identity. Imagine what your life will be like and how it will unfold from now on. Think about what you would need to change and how others would react to this change and to you.

Try to answer all or some of the following questions as fully and honestly as possible:

- How will your life change with the new identity? List at least five changes.
- Will your attitudes/behavior change, and how?
- Try to predict how others might react to your new identity. Pay special attention to possible reactions from your family, close friends, colleagues, and the wider society.
- Do you think your position at school or in society will become stronger or weaker?
- Now, as a new person, is there something you could offer to society that you couldn't before?
- Do you now need something or expect something from others that you didn't need or expect before?
- Will it be easier or harder to live in the neighborhood of your choice compared to your previous circumstances?
- Do you think you could be happy with your new life?

LIST OF RECOMMENDED LITERATURE

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality has published several different materials aimed at bringing the concept of discrimination and mechanisms of protection closer to specific social groups. In the course of its work, the Commissioner has prepared and published numerous expert publications on the position and protection of children from discrimination, as well as several thematic publications intended for children and youth that present and explain the complex phenomenon of discrimination and the importance of respecting equality.



Children's Rights in International Documents (2011)

The publication was developed in cooperation between UNICEF and the Protector of Citizens and provides a comprehensive and thorough overview of contemporary international

standards in the field of children's rights. In addition to human rights documents, it includes the texts of universal documents on children's rights, organized by the order in which they were adopted, documents related to specific areas of children's rights, as well as the most important European documents in the domain of human rights and children's rights.

The publication is intended for all those involved in the realization, protection, and promotion of children's rights in Serbia. (link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/prava-deteta-u-medunarodnim-dokumentima/)



Don't Tolerate
Discrimination! Seek
Protection and Take
Action! (2012/2017)

The publication is intended for youth aged 12 to 16, and its content, format, and design are specifically adapted to this target group. It is

rich in examples that help children easily understand what constitutes discrimination and what does not, and it also explains the ways in which they can seek protection. Panel members of the Commissioner also participated in the preparation of this brochure by providing comments and suggestions on the text.

(link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/nemoj-da-tolerises-diskriminaciju/)



We Are All Equal and Can Be Together! (2012/2013/2018)

The publication is intended for preschoolaged children. It takes the form of a coloring book and allows children to learn about the importance of

tolerance and respecting diversity through creative play. It is the first coloring book of its kind in Serbia, specifically designed for the youngest with the goal of promoting equality. It features various illustrations that, among other things, break down gender stereotypes and promote equality regardless of personal characteristics such as nationality, skin color, and disability.

link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/svi-smo-jednaki-i-mozemo-zajedno/)



Special Reports on Discrimination Against Children (2013 and 2021)

The reports provide insight into the prevalence of discrimination against children in Serbia, as well as data on the spread of stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory attitudes

among youth. They include an overview of the state of equality in the realization of children's rights, a review of international and domestic legal frameworks, the Commissioner's practices in protecting children from discrimination, and a list of recommendations for improving their position.





(link: 2013 - http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/poseban-izvestaj-o-diskriminaciji-dece/i 2021

http://ravnopravnost. gov.rs/wp-content/ uploads/2022/03/ Poseban-izve%C5%A1tajo-diskriminaciji-dece-zaweb.pdf)



Prevention of Segregation,
Development of Inclusive
Enrollment Policies,
and Desegregation of
Schools and Classrooms:
International Experiences
and Proposals for
Improving Practice in
Serbia (2016)

The publication was created with the aim of identifying the problem of segregation, as well as considering measures for its prevention, primarily through the development of inclusive education. The manual also includes a comparative overview of desegregation models in several European countries, as well as a proposal for implementing the desegregation process in Serbia through concrete steps that various actors can take to transform the entire educational environment into an inclusive, non-discriminatory educational context.

(link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/prevencija-segregacije-razvoj-inkluzivnih-upisnih-politika/)



Collection of Papers "Bridge of Understanding – Intergenerational Solidarity" (2022/2023)

The Commissioner, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Serbia, published a collection of children's works on the

topic of intergenerational cooperation. The collection features the best literary works, visual art, and photographs submitted to the competition traditionally organized by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality

to mark October 1st – the International Day of Older Persons.

(link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/most-razumevanja-medjugeneracijska-solidarnost-zbirka-najboljih-radova/)

Comic Book Collection for Children and Youth (2014)



The Commissioner, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), published the first comic book collection intended for children and youth. The comics depict real cases from the Commissioner's practice in which children were subjected to discrimination. The authors of the comics are renowned artists and comic book illustrators: Aleksandar Zograf, Vuk Palibrk, Uroš Begović, and Nikola Vicković.

(link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/zbirka-stripova-namenjena-deci-i-mladima/)

All procedures, publications, reports, and research by the Commissioner are available on the official website: www.ravnopravnost.gov.rs (ravnopravnost.upr.srb).

EDUCATIONAL CLIPS ON PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION – RECOMMENDED VIPART MATERIAL

The short animated educational films *"What is Discrimination"* and *"How to Systematically Fight Discrimination in Serbia"* explain the competencies and areas of work of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and guide victims of discrimination on how to use protection mechanisms.

- EDUCATIONAL CLIP What is Discrimination? (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pL1rfwsv9wc
- EDUCATIONAL CLIP How to Systematically Fight Discrimination? (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTEpp2t7g6g)
- Audio book "Manual for Protection Against Discrimination" (link: https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=wm2F5ole26k&list=PLTLOt-NJ4eMFybB EN9otlB4jSWW Szfi "Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover – The LIVING LIBRARY in Serbia" – Since

2012, the Commissioner has been implementing the project *"Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover – Living Library in Serbia"*, aimed at reducing the impact of negative stereotypes and prejudices, which are key causes of discrimination in society. The project can be implemented in schools. The "books" are living people, selected from social groups that are often subject to prejudice and negative stereotypes, stigmatized, or discriminated against. The Living Library functions just like a real library, where readers come to borrow a "book" for a limited time. In this way, through direct communication, the "books" share their life experiences with the readers. ViPart: "LIVING LIBRARY - Promo Film" (link: https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wOV C2bLoU)



CAMPAIGNS FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY

The Commissioner has carried out several media campaigns to promote equality and combat discrimination. Under various slogans ("Serbia: Zero Discrimination!", "Discrimination Is No Joke – Let's Talk About Equality", "Equal in Difference", "Let Equality Become Reality"), and with the participation of numerous public figures, various TV spots were produced addressing discrimination against the Roma national minority, women, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, the LGBT population, and others. These spots were broadcast on national, as well as multiple regional and local television stations.

Campaign "SERBIA: ZERO DISCRIMINATION" – 2011 (link: https://www.youtube.com/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmKazWGoUQg&list=PLTLOt-NJ4eMHB3NHa0SuFtGmcZKLQ9L3o

Campaign "DISCRIMINATION IS NO JOKE" - 2014 (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0uma-_0AzE&list=PLTLOt-NJ4eMEVMU7Je8dwVEfgedBJongl)

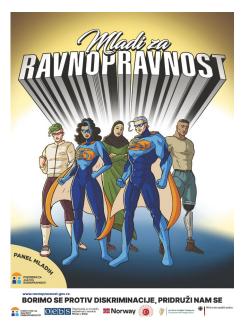
Campaign "LET EQUALITY BECOME REALITY" - 2018 (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdyrbgpbd-k&list=PLTLOt-NJ4eMEec_c64m5w2mbOtYyqpwNS)



YOUTH PANEL OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION OF EQUALITY

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality established the Youth Panel back in 2012 with the goal of involving children and young people in social life, promoting the values of human rights, tolerance, and equality, as well as enabling direct influence of youth on the institution by highlighting topics that interest them and the problems they face.

The panelists are a group of young people, educated and sensitized to the issue of discrimination, capable of passing on the knowledge they have gained to their peers in schools and local communities.



The role of the Youth Panel is twofold:

- to advise the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on issues concerning discrimination against children and youth;
- to share their knowledge and ideas about non-discrimination with other children in schools and the local community.

The Youth Panel has a clear identity that is built together with the youth and includes a defined vision and mission, visual identity, and group culture. The formation of the Panel follows the principle of equality by including young people from diverse socio-cultural and geographical backgrounds, different groups facing discrimination, as well as a variety of life experiences, interests, and skills.

Through regular meetings and thematic activities, the Youth Panel discusses topics and issues that young people identify as particularly relevant and important. They design and plan activities related to the promotion of equality and tolerance.

Membership in the Panel provides children and youth with the opportunity to express their views on the occurrence and causes of discrimination, as well as to propose preventive programs and activities to promote equality that will have the greatest impact on their peers...

If you want to learn more or join the Youth Panel:



CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији Народна библиотека Србије, Београд 37.018.4(035) 316.647.82(035) 364.4-053.6(035) 37.014.511:316.647.8

PEER education program on recognizing and responding to discrimination / [authors Brankica Janković ... [et al.]]. – Belgrade: Commissioner for the protection of equality, 2025 (Beograd: Dosije studio). – 57 str.: graf. prikazi, tabele; 30 cm

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