

Introduction to Student Discrimination

Research on student perception of discrimination at state
universities and faculties

Publisher

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Introduction

Human beings are born with certain rights – these are universal and belong to all of us. According to the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, one of UN's goals is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and the fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language and religion. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the following rights: the right to work, rights relating to work in just and favourable conditions, the right to form trade unions, the right to social insurance, the right to protection for mothers, children and family, the right to adequate living standards, the right to health, the right to education, the right to participate in the cultural life and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress.

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to education. Education is free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education is compulsory. Technical and professional education should be made generally available and higher education should be equally accessible to all based on merit. As a basic human right, education must be provided without discrimination on any ground. Therefore, it is important that the Republic North Macedonia, on all levels of governance, recognizes discrimination in education and fights against it. Three decades after gaining independence, many young people – students in RNM still face discriminatory practices in education, in addition to lacking inclusive and quality education.

There is little information on discrimination in higher educational institutions as a phenomenon in terms of occurrence, making it even more deeply rooted. A 2013 research,¹ conducted by MOF and the Coalition Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities indicates that students quite often face discrimination in higher education, i.e. 36.9% had heard that someone was discriminated on the ground of sexual orientation, while 34.4% on ethnicity and language. Furthermore, 51.5% of the respondents had noticed discrimination in the process of acquiring the title professor/assistant on the ground of political affiliation, while 53.8% had witnessed at least once discrimination related to affiliation with a political party in the student housing application process. A 2016 research conducted by MOF² indicates to only two specific petitions against discrimination in higher education, one submitted by a professor for being discriminated on the ground of age, and the second submitted by civil society organizations due to discriminatory contents in a textbook. However, data from the research shows that only 9.4% of students would report discrimination to the

¹ Бошкова, Н. и Трајановски, Ж. *Анализа на документи и на политики на Универзитетот „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ во Скопје за степенот на вклученост на принципот на еднакви можности и на недискриминација*, 2013. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3bXnRMd>

² Живковиќ, А. И Филипова, А. *Потребата од менување правни акти во насока на воведување тело за заштита од дискриминација на Универзитетот „Кирил и Методиј“, 2016 – Скопје. Available at: https://issuu.com/aleksandravivkovic/docs/mof_zastita_od_diskriminacija_ukim*

competent bodies, 4.6% to the Student Ombudsman, 1.4% to the Ombudsman and 2.3% to the police.

According to a 2019 research conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, young people believe that sexual orientation and native language were the least frequent reasons for discrimination, while political affiliation and ethnicity the most common ones.³

A specific discrimination source in education are textbooks with discriminatory and disturbing contents on different grounds expressing negative stereotypes and prejudices towards certain groups. Various legal actions have been undertaken so far in the form of petitions to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, to the Ombudsman and the Court, requesting removal of the disputed textbook contents.⁴ Essentially, such discrimination brings into question the students' right to education. Educational policies and practices in RNM still lean towards ethno-national divisions as opposed to promotion of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity. There is a necessity for a mechanism that would provide systematic revision of textbooks and prevent discriminatory content from being part of curricula on all levels of education.

Bearing in mind the abovementioned, the analysis aims to determine the level of discrimination in higher educational institutions in North Macedonia, to discern student perception on the extent of discrimination, to locate subjects who discriminate most often, and to offer specific recommendations to the competent bodies – universities and faculties – on how to act in such cases in order to prevent or decrease this negative phenomenon.

Finally, the analysis in front of you offers an overview of the existing mechanisms for protection against discrimination on a national level, and the mechanisms for protection of students' rights at universities.

Considering that this is the first analysis on policies in all four state universities from a non-discrimination aspect, and on the perception of students studying at all four state universities, we believe it would be useful to do a comparative analysis on the findings.

³ Латковиќ, Топузовска, М. и соработниците. *Студија за млади во Северна Македонија*, 2018/2019, 2018. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/skopje/15292.pdf>

⁴ The Coalition Margins from 2011-2018 submitted several petitions to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsman with regards to discriminatory and disturbing contents towards LGBT people, people who use drugs and people living with HIV, in the textbooks: Social Pathology by Zoran Sulejmanov and Nelko Stojanovski; Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence – Developmental Psychology I; Psychology of Adults and Aging – Developmental Psychology II and Psychology of Gender: Gender Identity and Gender Roles by Olga Murgeva - Shcaric.

Research Methodology

The research *Introduction to Student Discrimination* attempts to shed light on the issue of discrimination in higher education, as well as to contribute towards decreasing this negative occurrence in the academic community. MOF's research is conducted within the project "Student Perception on Discrimination", supported by the Foundation Open Society - Macedonia.

The research is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research procedures, analysing primary but also secondary data. More specifically, the following research techniques for data collection were applied:

- Reviewing literature;
- Sending requests for accessing public information;
- In-depth Interviews;
- Online survey to an adjusted, national sample, with a questionnaire previously developed for the research objectives.

The survey questionnaire is comprised of three thematic sections: demographic data, academic and faculty environment, perception of discrimination.

An adequate sample was designed for the needs of the survey, i.e. a sample including people who are easily available. Official data on the number of students enrolled at the four state universities in North Macedonia was used. According to data of the State Statistical Office⁵ received in the replies to our requests for public information, in the Republic North Macedonia, in the academic 2020/2021, 50,881 students were enrolled. The number of female students was 29,482 or 57.9%. Most of the students (83.8%, i.e. 42,383 students) were enrolled at state higher educational institutions, our target group. At the St. Cyril and Methodius University (UKIM) more than 50% of the students were enrolled, i.e. 22,489, at the St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola (UKLO) – 3,485, at the State University in Tetovo – 7,631 (SUT) and at the Goce Delcev University (GDU) – 6,951 students.

The sample design in the research was developed in accordance with the research subject and data available for selecting the sample. The research population were students enrolled at the four state universities in the Republic North Macedonia.

The research was conducted on a sample of 790 respondents. A sampling unit was student at the state universities in the Republic North Macedonia, regardless of the student's status (regular or part-time) and the cycle of studies the student was enrolled

⁵ <https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSooopstenie.aspx?rbtxt=29>

at. The research was conducted from June 1st to June 30th, 2021. A bilingual version (Macedonian and Albanian) of the questionnaire was created for this purpose. The average time necessary to complete the questionnaire was 25 minutes.

Legal Framework

The legal definition of discrimination refers to every differentiation, exclusion, limitation or prioritizing based on discriminatory grounds (personal characteristics), by doing or failing to do so, towards or resulting with prevention, limiting, recognizing, exercising or applying the rights and freedoms of a certain individual or a group on equal grounds with the others.⁶ Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional, the result of individual actions or a certain state policy, or even part of the legislative framework. However, any discrimination always implies different, or more specifically, more disadvantageous behaviour towards a certain individual who is a member of a group only due to a specific characteristic the individual possesses or shares with the group, as opposed to other members of society.

The right to equality and freedom from discrimination is one of the basic human rights and therefore the prohibition of discrimination is defined in a number of international documents on human rights protection and is incorporated in internal systems of numerous states as a fundamental value of the constitutional order. Discrimination is among the more severe forms of human rights violation, disadvantageous for individuals as well as society as a whole.

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, skin colour, national and social origin, political affiliation and religion; property and social position.⁷ Citizens are equal before the Constitution and laws, and equality is guaranteed in the realization of the rights related to employment and the right to access to education.

The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, social or ethnic origin, belonging to a national minority or community minority, language, religion or conviction, politics or other opinions, sex, change of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and/or intersexual characteristics, health condition, disability, age, property, marital or family status, affiliation with a group or an assumption thereof, political party or other organizations, as well as other personal characteristics.⁸

⁶ Official Gazette of the Republic North Macedonia, No. 258/2000. Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, Article 6.

⁷ Constitution of the Republic North Macedonia, Article 9, available at <https://www.sobranie.mk/content/Odluki%20USTAV/UstavSRSM.pdf>

⁸ Official Gazette of RNM, no. 258 from 30.10.2020. Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, available at <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/2019/27.5-Zakon%20za%20zastita%20od%20diskriminacija.pdf>

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men prohibits discrimination, disturbance and sexual harassment on the ground of sex in the public and private sector in employment, education, science and sport, social security, including social protection, pension and disability insurance, health insurance and health protection, judiciary and management, housing, public information and media, information-communication technologies, defence and security, membership or activities in trade unions, political parties, associations and foundations, other membership-based organizations, culture and other fields determined with this or another law.⁹ Measures in education and professional training are considered as basic in the provision of equal opportunities for women and men.

Exceptions in discrimination are foreseen with regards to measures and actions (the so-called affirmative measures) aiming solely to remove unequal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms until factual equality of the individual or group is achieved, if the discrimination/differentiation is justified and unbiased, and the means to achieve the difference is proportional, i.e. adequate and necessary. These measures and actions are time restricted and are applied until factual equality of the individual or group in the enjoyment of their rights is achieved. An affirmative action example in higher education are the special scholarships quota awarded to marginalized ethnic communities.¹⁰

The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination prescribes a list of characteristics and features not allowed to be grounds for differentiating in the equal access to rights, position in society and advancement opportunities in different spheres of life. Personal characteristics, as a ground for discrimination, are congenital or acquired. Congenital characteristics, for instance, are skin colour or sex. Acquired are those we accept or acquire in life, but can be changed, such as political affiliation, property, marital status and similar. Whether congenital or acquired, personal characteristics cannot be the basis for unequal treatment. For instance, the fact that a person is of a different sex cannot create a justified ground for differentiating in terms of being paid for the same job or grade awarded for a certain subject. On the other hand, the lack of measures and activities in the section on protection against discrimination in higher education in the 2018-2025 Education Strategy of the Republic North Macedonia and its Action Plan is obvious.¹¹

Namely, pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic North Macedonia, universities enjoy autonomy in their actions, however, protection against discrimination and the equal opportunities principle are equally binding for them as well as for other public

⁹ Official Gazette of RNM, no. 6/2012, 166/2014. Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, available at

https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/zakoni/2017/precisten%20tekst%202015%20na%20ZEM_nov.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Education Strategy of the Republic Macedonia for 2018-2025 and Action Plan, available at <https://mon.gov.mk/page/?id=2048>

and private institutions and individuals. The principles of prohibition against discrimination, protection against discrimination, as well as the equal opportunities principle are incorporated in documents regulating higher education. Therefore, pursuant to Article 3 from the Law on Higher Education, one of the basic principles in higher education is respect for human rights and freedoms and the guarantee of the equality principle and protection against discrimination.¹² The university, i.e. the independent higher educational school, determines the enrolment procedure to guarantee equality for all candidates regardless of race, skin colour, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other affiliation, ethnicity, nationality or social origin, property, birth, social position, disability, sexual orientation and age.¹³

The university's mission is a university open for all students on the basis of equality and merit, regardless of their ideological, political, ethnic, cultural and social origin. Furthermore, higher educational institutions have the role and task to create the opportunity for everyone, under equal terms, to acquire higher education and life-long education.

Analysis of Universities' Policies

Apart from national policies, we also analysed documents adopted by the separate universities. Within the qualitative analysis, we sent requests for access to public information to the St. Cyril and Methodius University, St. Kliment Ohridski University, Goce Delcev University and the State University in Tetovo. In the requests for access to public information we also asked for the Statute of each university, other acts for discrimination prevention and the Annual Report of the Student Ombudsperson's Activities. The analysis of all documents received generally shows that universities recognize the discrimination issue in their highest acts and strive for its resolution through the adoption of additional documents aiming to decrease this phenomenon (such as an ethical code).

St. Cyril and Methodius University

At the public information access request, the St. Cyril and Methodius University indicated to the publically available Ethical Code on the University's website¹⁴ (subject of the Code are the basic ethic principles, commissions and implementation procedure of the Ethical Code, procedures for participation of the University, its faculty and collaborators, other staff and students in the professional and public activities); UKIM has elected a student ombudsperson, but since the Ombudsperson was appointed less than a year ago, an annual report on the activities is not available. One of the Student

¹² Official Gazette of RM, no. 82 from 8.5.2018. Law on Higher Education, available at <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Zakon%20za%20visokoto%20obrazovanie%20NOV.pdf>

¹³ Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia no. 82/2018. Law on Higher Education, Article 149.

¹⁴ Ethical Codex of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, available at http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_content.php?meni=134&glavno=32

Ombudsperson's role is to abide by the principles of objectivity, non-discrimination, confidentiality, availability, responsibility and legality in the execution of duties. Additionally, pursuant to the Statute of UKIM,¹⁵ a body has to be established on equality, non-discrimination and inclusion towards protection against discrimination and guarantee equality in higher education. However, such a body has still not been established.

According to Article 17 of the Statute, any kind of direct or indirect discrimination and harassment is prohibited at the University and its units during: the enrolment process; educational process; availability of services, benefits and buildings; employment, advancement in the career, election in titles and termination of employment pursuant to the law; benefits related to the University's work and development opportunities; transfers and training; student organization; content of student programs; management and participation in the bodies of the University and its units; financing higher education and any other field of higher education.

UKIM has also developed a Strategy for 2019-2023¹⁶ referring to improvement of the quality and relevance of higher education; strengthening the quality by creating mobility and international cooperation and creating a triangle of knowledge: connecting higher education, research and business towards achieving excellence and regional development. The Strategy includes ethical principles such as dignified execution of the functions academic institutions have; promotion of the teaching, scientific and artistic activities of the University in society; spreading academic culture; respecting academic traditions; guarding the dignity of academic teachers; good relations among the University's institutions and teachers; taking care of the young, the students and residents; maintaining and developing the ethics of noble behaviour, of not violating, offering help and developing general humanistic ideas.

Goce Delcev University

The Goce Delcev University in Shtip has an Ethical Code for Employees, Students and Administration, also available on the University's website.¹⁷ In addition, the University Statute guarantees protection against discrimination in higher education.¹⁸

The CGU Statute, similar to the one of UKIM, encloses a special section on protection against discrimination and guarantees equality in higher education. According to Article 35 of the Statute, the University ensures the respect of the non-discrimination principle

¹⁵ Statute of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, available at http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/264_STATUT_UKIM-6.6.2019.pdf

¹⁶ Strategy of UKIM, 2019-2023, available at http://www.ukim.edu.mk/dokumenti_m/Strategija_i_AP/Strategija_na_UKIM_2019-2023_MK.pdf

¹⁷ Student Ethical Codex of the Goce Delcev University in Shtip, available at <https://www.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/doma/info-javen-karakter/96-za-ugd/241-etichki-kodeks>

¹⁸ Statute of the Goce Delcev University in Shtip, available at https://www.ugd.edu.mk/documents/ugd/statut_na_UGD.pdf

for students and staff, on the grounds prescribed with laws and ratified international agreements. In discrimination cases, there is a possibility to submit a petition to the faculty and university bodies, which then form a commission for that purpose, and to the Student Ombudsperson. The University provides disability students with the means to express their abilities in full capacity and proper infrastructure, technical and procedural support. The University provides rational adjustment to the student's individual needs, depending on the type and level of disability. Contents and teaching aids encouraging discrimination or harassment on discriminatory grounds are prohibited. Regarding the Annual Report of the Student Ombudsperson, the response was that the Student Ombudsman's elections were being held at that moment.

University St. Kliment Ohridski

In the Statute of the University St. Kliment Ohridski,¹⁹ student discrimination or actions regarding these issues are not mentioned. In addition, an Ethical Code²⁰ is available at the UKLO's website stating that the University is dedicated to nurturing and providing equality at the University's units, students and teachers, collaborators and other staff at the University. Also available are the University's acts on protection against discrimination and a Report of the Student Ombudsperson.

State University in Tetovo

Unfortunately, we did not receive any information on documents related to protection against student discrimination from the State University in Tetovo.

Data analysis from the survey questionnaire

The data was analysed on a quantitative and qualitative level, whereupon the following methods were applied:

- Exploratory method,
- Descriptive method,
- Comparative method,
- Explanatory method.

A univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis were conducted on the quantitative data received from the survey with the application of adequate statistical procedures

¹⁹ Statute of the St. Kliment Ohridski University, available at <https://uklo.edu.mk/app/webroot/filemanager/2019/Statut%20na%20UKLO%20konecna%20verzija.pdf>

²⁰ Ethical Codex of the St. Kliment Ohridski University, available at <https://www.uklo.edu.mk/filemanager/2018/Eticki%20kodeks%20na%20UKLO.pdf>

processed with SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences), textually interpreted and visually presented through images, tables, graphs and diagrams.

Qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were made anonymous, narratively analysed and presented in the form of anecdotes and quotes.

Sample

The research sample ($N = 790$), according to the demographic features, is comprised of 25% male respondents, 72% female respondents and 3% respondents who feel otherwise regarding their gender identity. In terms of age, the youngest age is 18, and the highest 57, with the mean age of the respondents being $M = 22.75$, and standard deviation $SD = 4.45$.

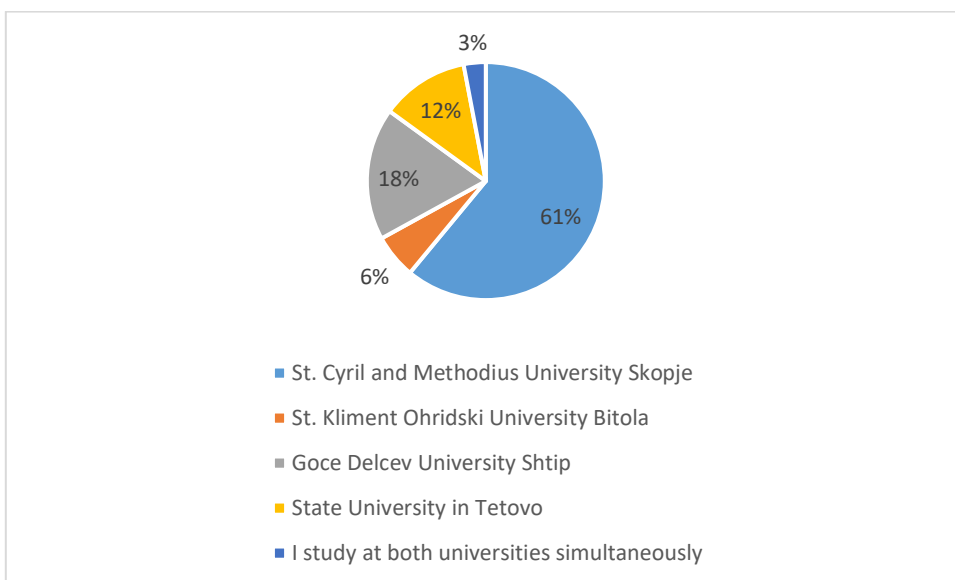
Limitations in sample derivation

The limitations in the sample refer to the period in which the research was conducted (COVID-19 pandemic and summer period), when students were not motivated to do any additional chores, in addition to the fact that the research was done online, therefore there were difficulties in establishing control over the sample regarding equal sample distribution in all relevant variables.

However, the sample size enables us to confirm that we have relevant data, which cannot be generalized, however.

Demographic Data

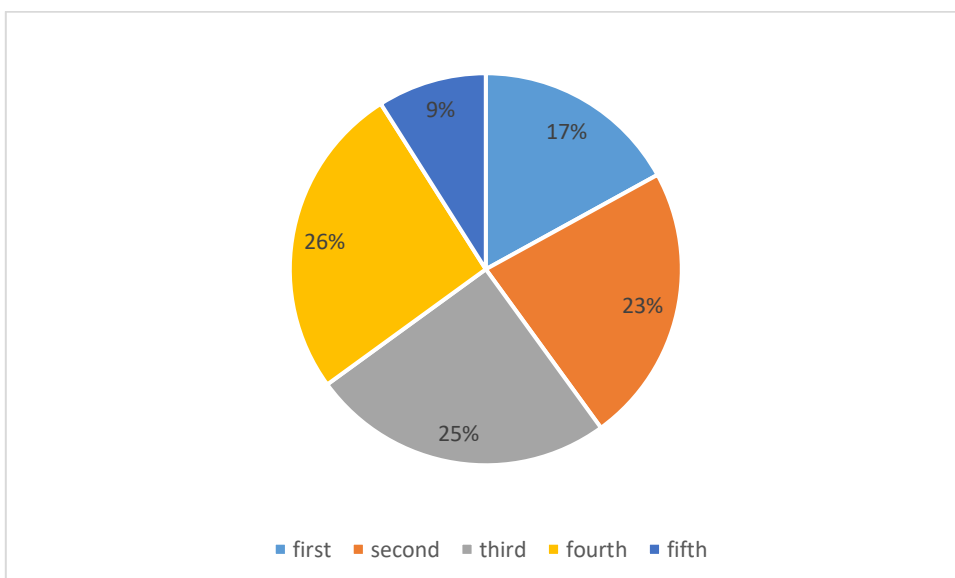
According to the university they attended, the respondents were divided into five groups. The largest percentage of the respondents, 61% – studied at the St. Cyril and Methodius University, 6% at the University St. Kliment Ohridski, 18% at the Goce Delcev University, 12% at the State University in Tetovo, and 3% of the respondents studied at two universities at the same time (graph 1).



Graph 1: Percentages of respondents according to the University they attend

Regarding the students' status, 91.3% of the respondents were regular students, 7.5% part-time, while 1.3% did not reply to this question. The biggest percentage or 88.6% of the respondents were from the first cycle of studies, 8.7% from the second and 2.4% were students from the third cycle of studies.

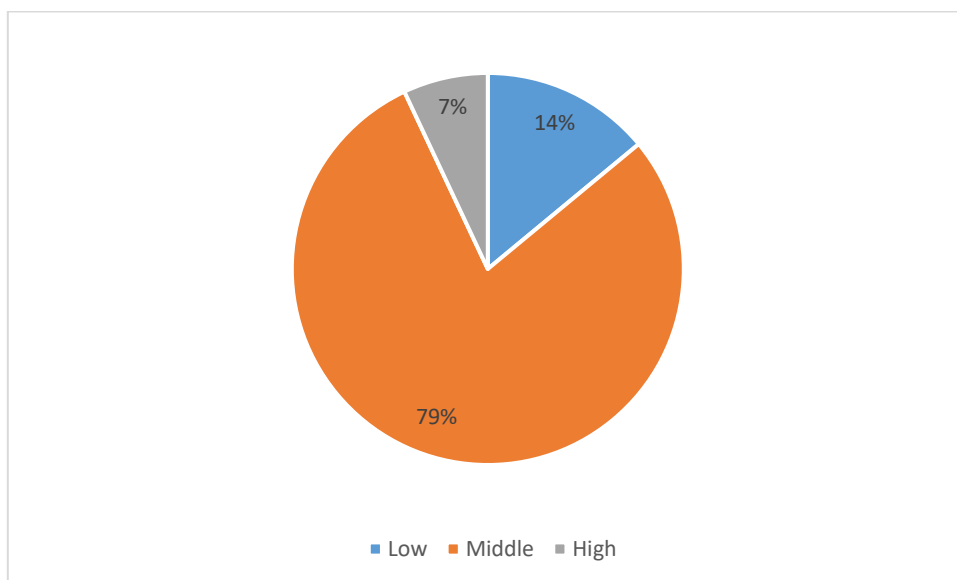
In terms of relevance of the data, the research included students from all years of studies, which allowed us to examine how students' perception on discrimination changes through the years of studies (see graph no. 2).



Graph no. 2: Percentages of respondents according to the year of studies

With regards to political parties, it is interesting to mention that only 12.8 % of the students stated they were affiliated with a political party (2.2% of whom named the party), while 84.2% of the respondents were not affiliated with a political party.

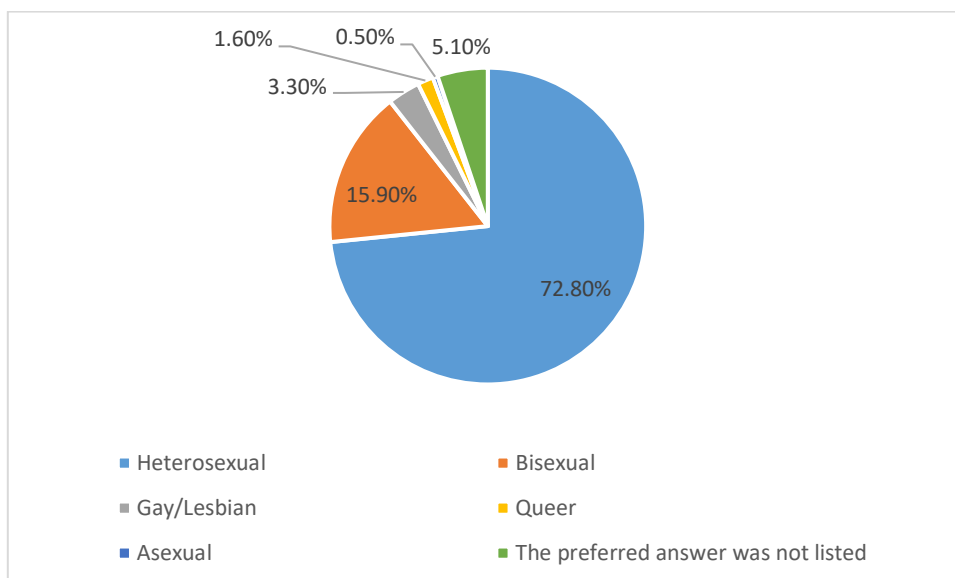
Regarding the students' socio-economic status, it can be noticed that the highest percent – 79% assessed their socio-economic status as middle, i.e. 8 out of 10 students perceived themselves as middle class, neither rich nor poor. These data are compatible with the ones received from the 2018 research conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FEF), where only 15% of the young people answered they were able to buy anything they needed in order to achieve a good living standard.²¹



Graph 3: Percentages of students' socio-economic status

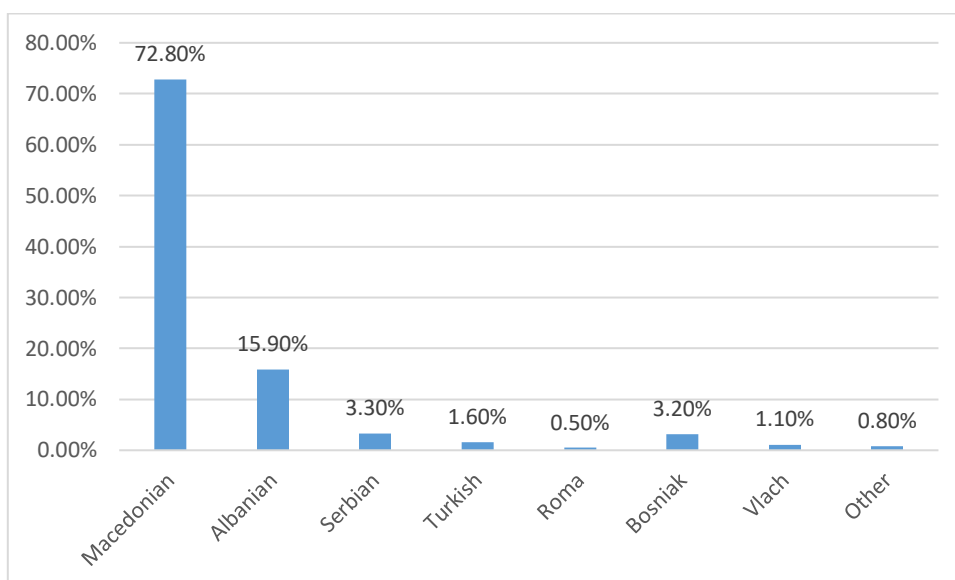
Regarding sexual orientation, it should be stressed that in the anonymous questionnaires student felt free to talk about it, and the largest percentage declared themselves as heterosexuals – 72.8%, 15.9% as bisexuals, 3.3% as gay/lesbians, 1.6% as queer, 0.5% as asexual, and 5.1% chose pansexual and demisexual (graph 4).

²¹ Латковиќ, Топузовска, М. и соработниците. *Студија за млади во Северна Македонија 2018/2019, 2018*. Available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/skopje/15292.pdf>



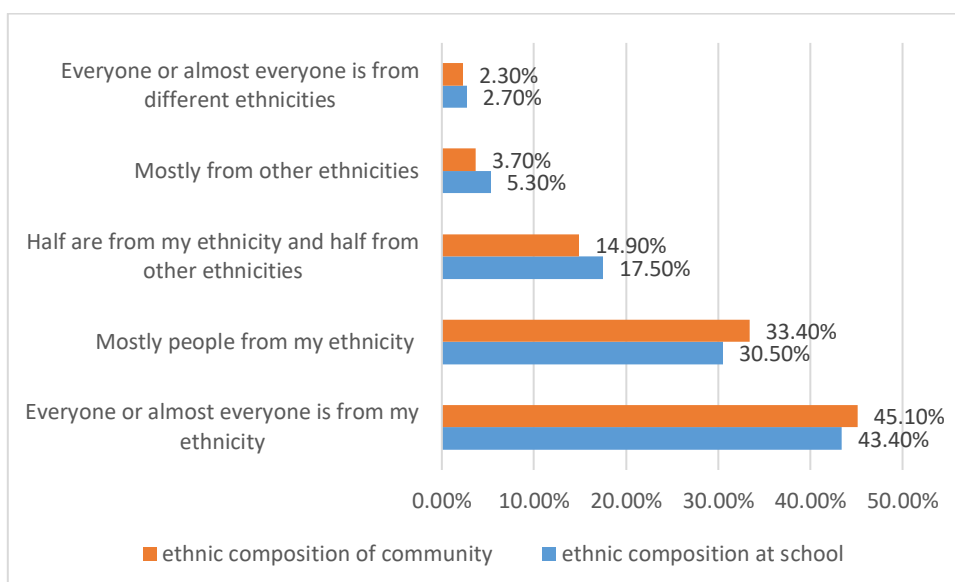
Graph 4: Percentage of students' sexual orientation

Regarding ethnicity, most of the respondents in the research were Macedonians – 72.8%, followed by Albanians – 15.9%, and the smallest percentage belonged to Roma – 0.5%.



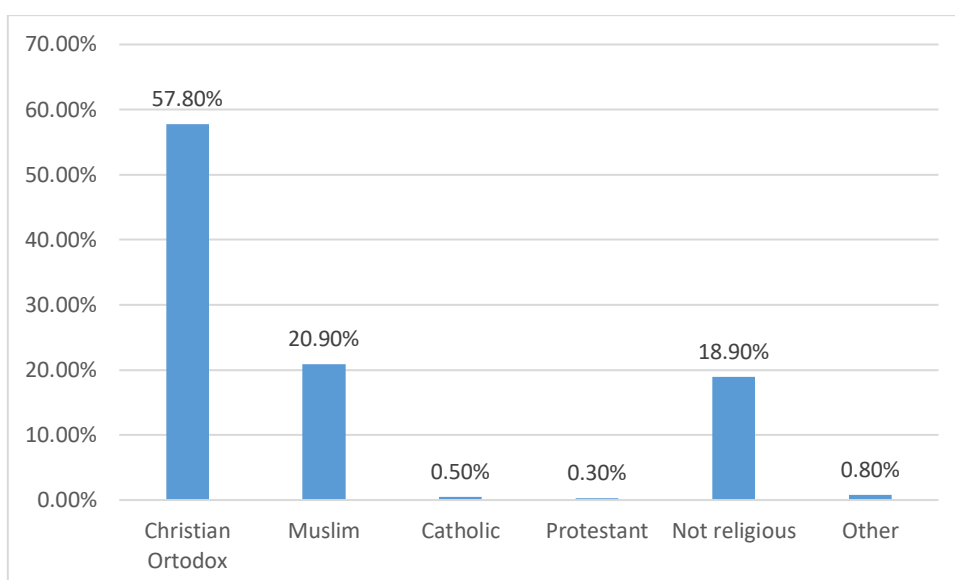
Graph 5: Percentages of students' ethnicity

Regarding place of living and place of studying – 45% of the students stressed that they lived and 43% stressed that they studied in ethnically homogenous environments, while only 2-3% studied and lived in an environment in which everybody or almost everybody belonged to the same ethnicity (graph 6).



Graph 6: Percentages on homogeneity of students' living/studying environment

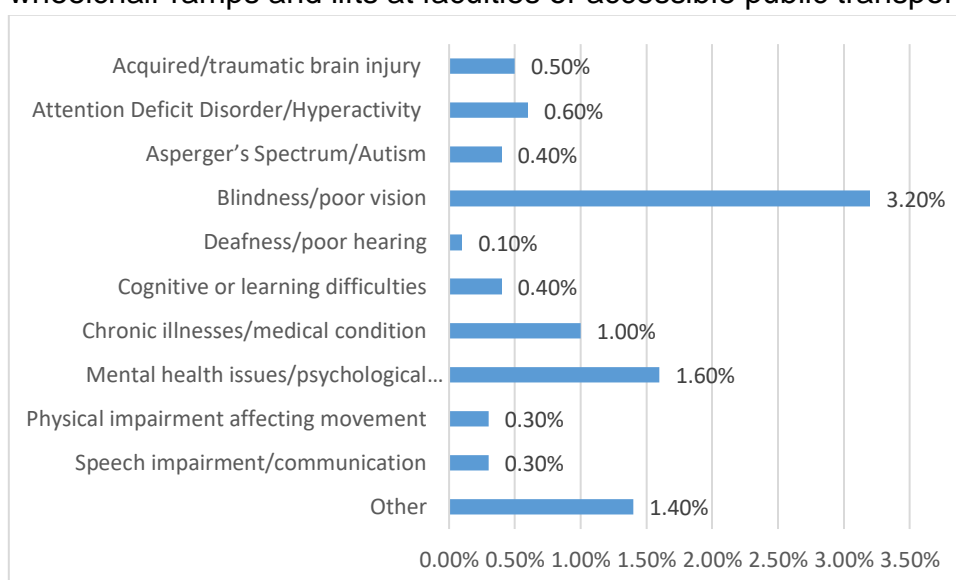
Regarding with which religion respondents identify, the largest percent were orthodox – 57.8%, 20.9% were Muslim, while as many as 18.9% responded they were not religious (atheists, agnostics) (graph 7).



Graph 7: Percentage of students according to religion

A total of 57 of the respondents (7.2%) said they had some type of disability, the largest percentage of whom had problems with poor sight/blindness (3.2%) and 1.6% suffered from mental health issues. These data demonstrate that our academic environment is opening more towards disability students, but that, for instance, 3.2% of the students with impaired eyesight have problems finding teaching materials (Braille alphabet or/and in audio form is rarely found), or deaf people with sign language interpretation of the course (graph 8).

In respect to education, according to statistics from the Employment Agency of the Republic North Macedonia, 989 unemployed individuals with disabilities were either without education or without any qualifications, while 47 were registered as having received a Bachelor's degree, and only 3 Master's degree, 2 of whom were women with disabilities.²² The communication barrier remains a huge challenge restricting access to education. Sign language interpreters are lacking on all levels of education, as well as literature printed in the Braille alphabet or alternative forms of accessible information technologies for people who have lost their vision completely, i.e. blind. A big challenge is also the ability to move freely, i.e. inaccessible infrastructure, such as wheelchair ramps and lifts at faculties or accessible public transport.



Graph 8: Percentage of students according to disability

Regarding parents' educational status, in 21.5% of the respondents both parents had higher education, while in 37.7% – neither parent had completed higher education.

According to place of living, 75.8% of the students lived in urban, while 23% in rural areas.

²² Overview of registered disabled unemployed individuals according to education level, EARNM, Available at: https://av.gov.mk/content/Statisticki%20podatoci/%D0%94%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8%202019/P3_invalidni%20lica_obrazovanie122019.pdf

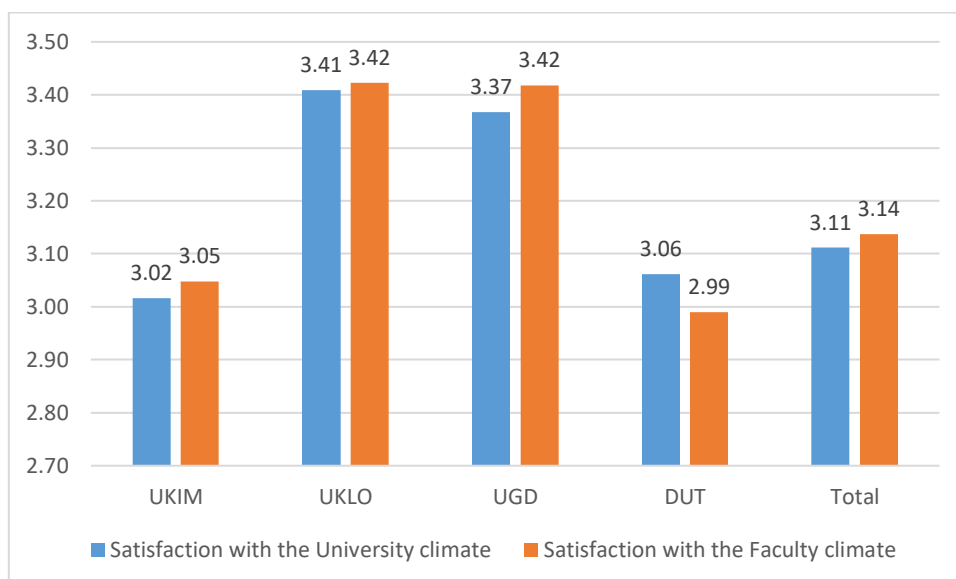
Research Findings

Responses related to the academic environment

This part of the research includes results from inferential statistics in order to determine the statistically significant differences among the groups compared.

In this direction, when testing the significant difference between two arithmetic means we apply the t-test,²³ while among more arithmetic means we used ANOVA.²⁴

The students who participated in the survey had the opportunity to assess their satisfaction with the university/faculty climate. Interestingly, on a scale from 1 (one being very unsatisfied) to 5 (5 being completely satisfied), the average satisfaction grade was near the mean ($M=3.11$), with the students from UKLO being the most satisfied,²⁵ followed by those from UGD with a similar grade, and the least satisfied being students from UKIM and SUT.



Graph 9: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with the climate at the university and the climate at the faculty

Bellow we present the answers of students with different demographic characteristics on their satisfaction with the university/faculty climate. Although no differences appear among the compared groups regarding gender, it can be noticed that female students were the most satisfied with the university and faculty climate, with the least satisfied being those who did not choose one of the two genders.

²³ Significant differences in arithmetic means between two compared groups.

²⁴ Significant differences in arithmetic means among more compared groups.

²⁵ It should be mentioned that the number of respondents at UKLO is small, hence the larger margin error.

Table 1: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with the university/faculty climate among students from different gender

Gender		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Male	M	3.04	3.05
	N	200	202
	SD	1.060	1.070
Female	M	3.14	3.17
	N	563	560
	SD	.909	.940
Refused to respond	M	2.77	2.77
	N	9	9
	SD	.833	.833
Total	M	3.11	3.13
	N	772	771
	SD	.950	.975

On the other hand, in terms of students' status (regular/part-time) and the satisfaction with the university and faculty climate, it must be mentioned that there was a statistically significant difference in favour of part-time students ($t = -2.187$, $p < 0.01$) about universities and ($t = -1.918$, $p < 0.05$) about faculties. It can be concluded that part-time students were more satisfied than regular students with the university and faculty climate.

Table 2: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with the university/faculty climate among students with different status

Status		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Regular	M	3.08	3.11
	N	711	710
	SD	.939	.971
Part-time	M	3.37	3.37
	N	56	56
	SD	1.054	1.019
Total	M	3.10	3.13
	N	767	766
	SD	.950	.976

It should be noted that we determined a significant difference among students from different cycles of studies in terms of satisfaction with the university climate ($F = 7,185$,

$p < 0,01$) and the faculty climate ($F = 4,313$, $p < 0,01$) with the application of one-way ANOVA²⁶. In both cases, the most satisfied were students from the second cycle of studies, and the least satisfied those enrolled at the third cycle of studies.

Table 2: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with the university/faculty climate among students from different cycle of studies

Cycle of studies		Satisfaction with university climate	Satisfaction with faculty climate
First cycle	M	3.11	3.13
	N	675	675
	SD	.948	.975
Second Cycle	M	3.27	3.31
	N	68	67
	SD	.861	.940
Third Cycle	M	2.33	2.55
	N	18	18
	SD	1.084	1.041
Total	M	3.11	3.13
	N	761	760
	SD	.952	.978

In addition, a one-way ANOVA helped establish a significant difference between students enrolled at different cycle of studies regarding satisfaction with university climate ($F = 3,042$, $p < 0,01$) and faculty climate ($F = 3,502$, $p < 0,01$). It is concerning that in both cases, the most satisfied were students enrolled at first year, with the least satisfied being those from the fifth year, which could indicate that students enrolled with higher expectations that remained unfulfilled until the end of their studies, with some students even being disappointed.

Table 3: Arithmetic means of the satisfaction with the university/faculty climate among students from different years of studies

Year of studies		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
First	M	3.27	3.36
	N	126	125

²⁶ ANOVA – Analysis of Variance

Second	SD	.873	.836
	M	3.10	3.10
	N	176	175
	SD	.928	1.000
Third	M	3.07	3.13
	N	191	190
	SD	.922	.944
Fourth	M	3.14	3.13
	N	201	203
	SD	.978	1.010
Fifth	M	2.79	2.82
	N	69	69
	SD	1.037	1.028
Total	M	3.11	3.13
	N	763	762
	SD	.947	.973

With the application of t-test for determining significant difference between two arithmetic means, statistically significant differences between the two groups compared were determined, hence students affiliated with political parties were more satisfied with the university climate than those not affiliated with any political parties ($t = 2,476$, $p < 0,01$) and the faculty climate ($t = 2,226$, $p < 0,01$).

Table 4: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with university/faculty climate between students who are and are not affiliated with a political party

Affiliated with a political party		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Yes	M	3.32	3.34
	N	97	97
	SD	.997	1.039
No	M	3.07	3.10
	N	654	653
	SD	.938	.964
Total	M	3.10	3.13
	N	751	750
	SD	.949	.977

With the application of one-way ANOVA it was determined that socio-economic status has a significant role in the satisfaction with the university and faculty climate. Therefore, the most satisfied with the university and faculty climate were students who

stated to come from a middle socio-economic status ($F = 6,393$, $p < 0,01$)/($F = 9,224$, $p < 0,01$), while the least satisfied were those coming from a low socio-economic status. Quite often socio-economic status is connected with the quality of life, and generally with satisfaction with life, probably the reason why the higher the socio-economic status the more satisfied students were with the academic climate.

Table 5: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with university/faculty climate among students with different socio-economic status

Socio-economic status		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Low	M	2.82	2.77
	N	112	112
	SD	.997	1.001
Middle	M	3.15	3.20
	N	604	603
	SD	.926	.945
High	M	3.23	3.21
	N	52	52
	SD	1.040	1.126
Total	M	3.11	3.13
	N	768	767
	SD	.952	.977

However, in terms of sexual orientation and the students' satisfaction with the climate, students were grouped in two groups – heterosexuals and members of the LGBT community.

With the application of t-test, a statistically significant difference was established only in terms of the university climate ($t = 3,133$, $p < 0,01$), students with heterosexual orientation being more satisfied. Regarding the faculty climate, there were no significant statistical differences between the compared groups, with the heterosexual group being notably more satisfied.

Table 6: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with the university/faculty climate among students with different sexual orientation

Sexual orientation		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Heterosexuals	M	3.14	3.14
	N	537	536
	SD	.919	.960

Members of the LGBT community	M	2.86	3.00
	N	153	156
	SD	1.043	1.034

With the application of ANOVA, a significant statistical difference was not determined between students with different nationality in relation to the satisfaction with the university climate or the faculty climate, with Roma being most evidently satisfied,²⁷ and Albanians the least satisfied.

Table 7: Arithmetic means of satisfaction with university/faculty climate among students from different ethnicities

Ethnicity		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Macedonians	M	3.14	3.18
	N	562	562
	SD	.936	.953
Albanians	M	2.92	2.87
	N	126	126
	SD	1.070	1.102
Serbs	M	3.11	3.20
	N	26	25
	SD	.816	.866
Turks	M	3.07	3.15
	N	13	13
	SD	.862	.800
Roma	M	4.00	3.75
	N	4	4
	SD	.816	.500
Bosniak	M	3.12	3.20
	N	25	25
	SD	.665	.816
Vlach	M	2.88	3.00
	N	9	9
	SD	.927	1.118
Other	M	3.20	3.20
	N	5	5
	SD	.836	.836

²⁷ Roma are the smallest percentage of the sample and there is a possibility for margin of error

Total	M	3.10	3.13
	N	770	769
	SD	.948	.974

By using t-test to determine if there is a significant difference between two arithmetical means, significant statistical differences between the two compared groups were determined, hence students with a disability were less satisfied with the university climate than those without ($t = -3,409$, $p < 0,01$) and with the faculty climate ($t = -2,794$, $p < 0,01$).

Table 8: Arithmetic means of the satisfaction of students with and without disability with the university/faculty climate

Disability		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Yes	M	2.69	2.78
	N	56	56
	SD	.932	.908
No	M	3.14	3.16
	N	712	711
	SD	.945	.977
Total	M	3.11	3.13
	N	768	767
	SD	.950	.977

By using t-test to determine if there is a significant difference between two arithmetical means, there were no significant statistical differences between students living in urban and those living in rural environments regarding their satisfaction with the university/faculty climate.

Table 9: Arithmetical means of the satisfaction with university/faculty climate of students with a different living place

Environment		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Urban	M	3.09	3.13
	N	589	588
	SD	.948	.961
Rural	M	3.16	3.14

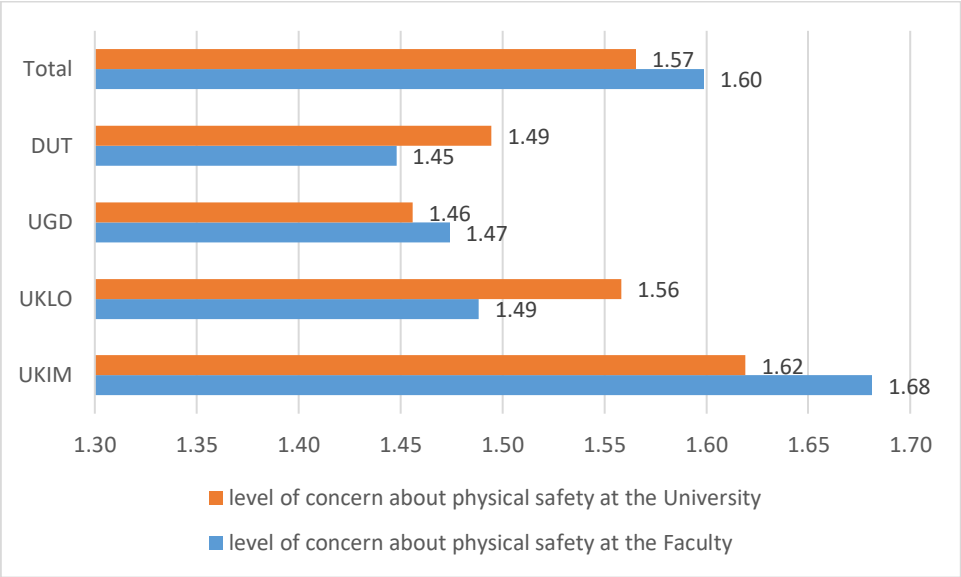
Total	N	178	178
	SD	.957	1.018
	M	3.11	3.13
	N	767	766
	SD	.950	.974

However, in terms of students' religion and their satisfaction with the climate, by applying AHOBA, a significant statistical difference was determined regarding university climate ($F = 4,397$, $p < 0,01$), where the most satisfied were orthodox students. Regarding the faculty climate ($F = 4,038$, $p < 0,01$), it was determined that the most satisfied students among the compared groups were Protestants, while the least satisfied responded with other.

Table 10: Arithmetical means of the satisfaction of university/faculty climate among students from different religion

Religion		Satisfaction with the university climate	Satisfaction with the faculty climate
Orthodox	M	3.25	3.27
	N	449	444
	SD	.903	.922
Muslim	M	2.98	2.95
	N	164	164
	SD	1.005	1.041
Catholic	M	2.33	3.00
	N	3	4
	SD	1.154	.000
Protestant	M	2.50	4.50
	N	2	2
	SD	2.121	.707
Not religious	M	2.83	3.00
	N	145	145
	SD	1.129	1.040
Other	M	2.60	2.60
	N	5	5
	SD	.547	.547
Total	M	3.11	3.14
	N	768	767
	SD	.949	.971

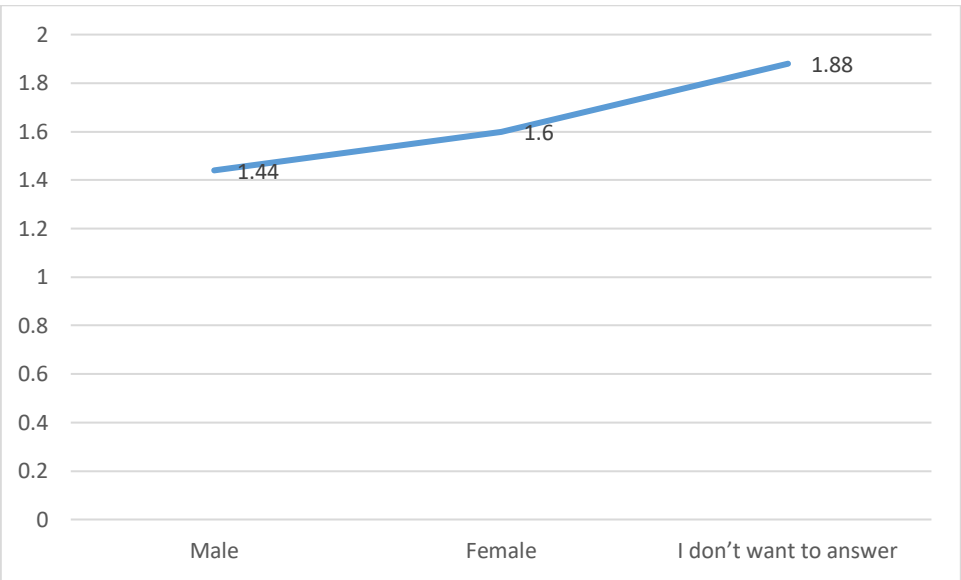
It should be noted that students felt physically safe at the university and faculty campus, meaning students perceived faculties and universities as a safe environment. Namely, on a scale from 1 (one being not worried about one's safety at all) to 5 (five being very worried about one's safety), the students' responses range from 1.45 at GDU to 1.68 at CMU.



Graph 10: Arithmetical means of level of concern about physical safety at the university/faculty among students

With regards to gender and feeling safe at the faculties, male students felt the safest.

The least safe felt students who did not want to reveal their gender. However, these differences are not statistically significant.



Graph 11: Arithmetical means of level of concern with physical safety at the faculty among students from with different gender

If we compare male students, since they felt the safest in terms of sexual orientation, we can notice that male students who were members of the LGBT community were more concerned about their safety at the faculty ($t = -3,347$, $p < 0,01$)

Table 11: Arithmetic means of feeling safe at the faculty among male students with different sexual orientation

	Sexual orientation	N	M	SD
Safety	Heterosexuals	383	1.53	.891
	Members of LGBTI community	111	1.88	1.181

By applying ANOVA, a significant statistical difference was determined among students with different sexual orientation regarding their physical safety at the faculty ($F = 3,064$, $p < 0,01$), and so asexual students felt the safest, while those who refused to reply about their sexual orientation felt the least safe.

Table 12: Arithmetical means of feeling safe at the faculty among students with different sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	M	N	SD
Heterosexual	1.49	528	.871
Bisexual	1.78	56	1.073
Gay/Lesbian	1.73	23	1.009
Queer	1.80	5	.836
Asexual	1.22	9	.440
No response	1.91	62	1.232
Total	1.56	683	.936

Significant statistical differences were also determined between students with and without a disability regarding their concern with physical safety, where those with disability were more concern about physical safety at the faculty ($t = 2,708$, $p < 0,01$)

Table 13: Arithmetical means of feeling safe at the faculty between students with and without a disability

Disability	M	N	SD
Yes	1.89	55	1.165

No	1.54	699	.901
Total	1.56	754	.927

Furthermore, on a scale from 1 (one being this does not relate to me at all) to 5 (five being this completely relates to me), students from the four universities were able to determine how they felt regarding certain statements. Almost all statements are within the average, however, it is interesting that students from UKLO felt the most appreciated, understood and accepted in their environment.

Table 14: Arithmetical means of the university's attitude towards students at different universities

	UKIM	UKLO	GDU	SUT	Total
I feel appreciated as an individual at the university	2.79	3.33	3.35	2.62	2.91
I feel I belong at the university	3.16	3.71	3.54	3.16	3.26
The university is deeply dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	2.74	3.49	3.16	2.58	2.85
I have been thinking about leaving university because I feel isolated	1.93	1.86	1.89	2.05	1.93
I am treated with respect at the university	3.06	3.59	3.43	3.22	3.18
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinion at the university	2.31	2.31	2.19	2.26	2.27
The university is a place where I can exercise my full potential	2.70	3.17	3.03	2.77	2.79
At the university I have the same opportunity for academic success as my peers	3.31	3.71	3.43	3.10	3.33
I found one or more communities or groups in which I feel like I belong at the university	3.06	3.36	2.95	2.81	3.03
Too much focus is placed on issues related to diversity, fairness and inclusion at the university	2.34	2.57	2.36	2.61	2.39
The university provides sufficient number of programs and resources to encourage success among the diverse student body	2.48	3.02	2.87	2.58	2.59
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the university	2.37	2.33	2.36	3.00	2.44

My experience at the university has a positive influence on my academic growth	3.15	3.28	3.49	3.24	3.22
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In terms of gender and how students feel in the academic environment, it is concerning that 9 students who did not disclose their gender felt unappreciated at the university, thought about leaving because they felt isolated and believed they could not fully realize their potential.

On the other hand, larger differences were not noted between male and female students.

Table 15: Arithmetical means of the university's attitude towards students from different sex

	Male	Female	I don't want to answer
I feel appreciated as an individual at the university	2.95	2.91	2.00
I feel I belong at the university	3.21	3.30	2.44
The university is deeply dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	2.88	2.86	1.67
I have been thinking about leaving university because I feel isolated	1.94	1.93	1.56
I am treated with respect at the university	3.26	3.15	3.22
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinion at the university	2.43	2.22	1.89
The university is a place where I can exercise my full potential	2.69	2.85	1.78
At the university I have the same opportunity for academic success as my peers	3.34	3.34	2.67
I found one or more communities or groups in which I feel like I belong at the university	2.89	3.10	2.22
Too much focus is placed on issues related to diversity, fairness and inclusion at the university	2.51	2.34	2.89
The university provides sufficient number of programs and resources to encourage success among the diverse student body	2.53	2.62	2.22
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the university	2.37	2.45	3.22

My experience at the university has a positive influence on my academic growth	3.25	2.23	2.44
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On the other hand, when comparing regular and part-time students, the latter felt much more appreciated at the university than regular students, and believed the university was dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion.

Contrary to them, regular students felt much more part of a group they belonged to, something to be expected considering the time they spend at the faculty as opposed to part-time students.

Table 16: Arithmetic means of the university's attitude towards students with different status

	Regular	Part-time
I feel appreciated as an individual at the university	2.88	3.22
I feel I belong at the university	3.26	3.35
The university is deeply dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	2.81	3.26
I have been thinking about leaving university because I feel isolated	1.93	2.00
I am treated with respect at the university	3.16	3.43
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinion at the university	2.27	2.42
The university is a place where I can exercise my full potential	2.77	3.06
At the university I have the same opportunity for academic success as my peers	3.34	3.30
I found one or more communities or groups in which I feel like I belong at the university	3.05	2.84
Too much focus is placed on issues related to diversity, fairness and inclusion at the university	2.36	2.68
The university provides sufficient number of programs and resources to encourage success among the diverse student body	2.56	3.02
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the university	2.43	2.49
My experience at the university has a positive influence on my academic growth	3.21	3.37

Comparison among students with different sexual orientation indicates that the academic environment was the least desirable climate for gay/lesbian students and these students actually thought about leaving because of feeling unaccepted. They

also felt the strongest that their opinions were not appreciated and they did not have the opportunity to express their full potential. Bisexuals felt the least appreciated and the least respected at the university.

Table 17: Arithmetical means of the university's attitude towards students with different sexual orientation

	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Gay/Lesbian	Queer	Asexual	Did not reply
I feel appreciated as an individual at the university	2.92	2.48	2.64	3.00	2.89	2.89
I feel I belong at the university	3.28	3.00	2.73	3.20	2.88	3.13
The university is deeply dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	2.88	2.30	2.18	2.80	2.88	2.81
I have been thinking about leaving university because I feel isolated	1.89	2.25	2.74	2.40	1.75	1.93
I am treated with respect at the university	3.16	2.89	3.23	3.80	3.67	3.18
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinion at the university	2.24	2.57	2.73	2.40	2.29	2.38
The university is a place where I can exercise my full potential	2.80	2.57	2.09	2.60	2.43	2.68
At the university I have the same opportunity for academic success as my peers	3.35	3.26	3.32	4.00	3.43	3.07
I found one or more communities or groups in which I feel like I belong at the university	3.08	3.08	2.82	2.60	2.43	2.75

Too much focus is placed on issues related to diversity, fairness and inclusion at the university	2.40	2.13	2.14	2.20	2.00	2.65
The university provides sufficient number of programs and resources to encourage success among the diverse student body	2.63	2.28	1.77	2.20	2.00	2.78
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the university	2.45	2.44	2.73	1.80	2.29	2.47
My experience at the university has a positive influence on my academic growth	3.25	2.96	3.09	3.40	2.57	3.05

It is alarming that on a scale from 1 to 5, Roma felt the least appreciated ($M = 1.00$), they felt like they do not belong at the university and that the university was not dedicated to fairness, equality and inclusion. On the other hand, students of Macedonian nationality felt the most appreciated and respected. Roma thought about leaving the university because of feeling isolated the most. Students of Serbian nationality stress the most that they could express their potential, but also that the experience at the university had a positive impact on their academic growth.

Table 18: Arithmetic means of the university's attitude towards students from different nationality

	Macedonians	Albanians	Serbs	Turks	Roma	Bosniak	Vlach	Other
I feel appreciated as an individual at the university	3.03	2.44	3.04	2.38	1.00	3.24	2.22	2.25
I feel I belong at the university	3.36	2.86	3.57	3.00	1.50	3.58	2.89	2.25
The university is deeply dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	2.95	2.43	3.00	2.54	1.75	3.13	2.33	2.00
I have been thinking about leaving university because I feel isolated	1.92	1.98	2.00	1.75	3.25	1.75	2.00	2.50
I am treated with respect at the university	3.21	2.98	3.78	2.92	3.00	3.22	2.67	3.00
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinion at the university	2.30	2.20	1.92	2.15	2.50	2.25	2.33	2.25
The university is a place where I can exercise my full potential	2.85	2.58	3.08	2.15	1.75	2.92	2.44	1.50
At the university I have the same opportunity for academic success as my peers	3.42	2.93	3.50	3.15	3.00	3.35	3.11	2.75
I found one or more communities or groups in which I feel like I belong at the university	3.12	2.70	3.17	2.62	2.25	3.17	2.50	1.50
Too much focus is placed on issues related to diversity, fairness and inclusion at the university	2.37	2.45	2.30	2.62	2.00	2.18	2.67	2.00
The university provides sufficient number of programs and resources to encourage success	2.67	2.37	2.42	2.23	1.75	2.86	1.78	2.00

among the diverse student body							
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the university	2.37	2.87	1.92	2.77	2.00	2.22	2.78 2.50
My experience at the university has a positive influence on my academic growth	3.27	3.03	3.67	3.17	2.00	3.46	2.56 2.00

In order to examine social distance (how distant or close a certain group is perceived as) within the university by applying the well-known Bogardus social distance scale, students were asked to answer how often they communicated with someone different in respect to several dimensions, such as: people with different religious, political or national affiliation, people from different sex, people with different sexual orientation, social class or people with disabilities. The possible answers ranged on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least frequent contacts and 5 being the most. It was concluded that the social distance was the smallest at UKIM and UKLO and the largest at SUT.

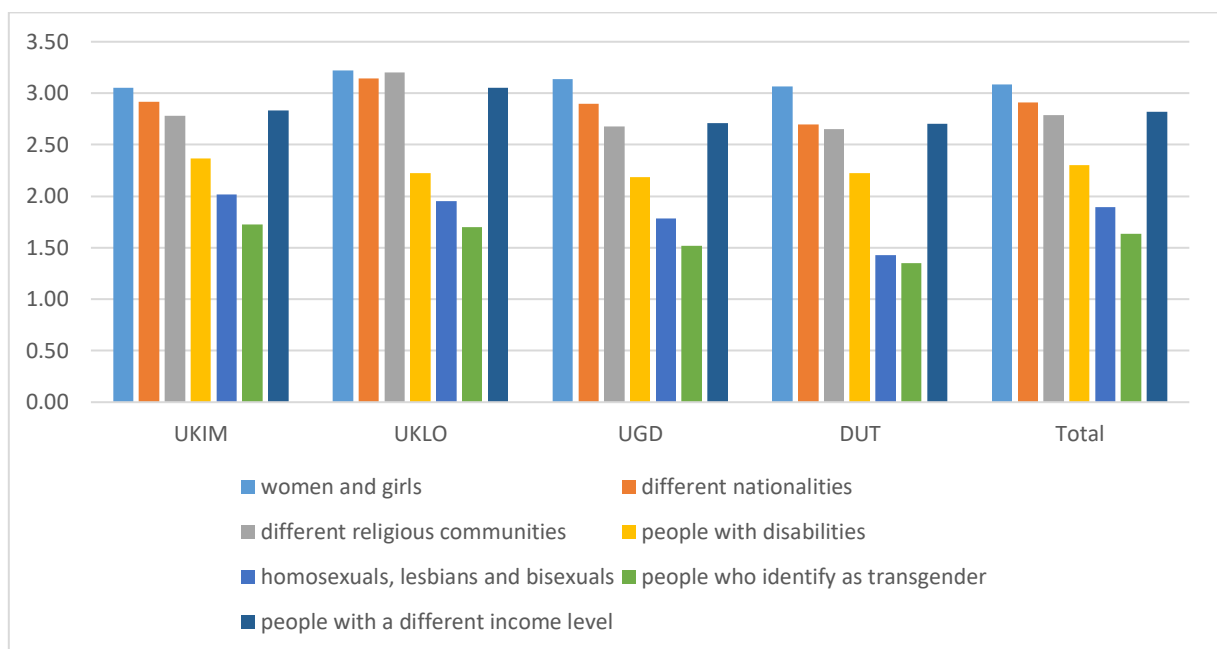
It is concerning that the least frequent contact was made with people with disabilities and with different sexual orientation within the campus, and with students who have learning difficulties, psychological or otherwise not visible to the eye, hence the continuity of the usual prejudices against these people. On the other hand, social distance is the smallest among students who have maintained contacts with people from different sex.

Table 19: Arithmetical means of social distance among students studying at different universities

How often have you been in contact with people	UKIM	UKLO	GCU	SUT	Total
... with different religious beliefs than yours	3.09	3.00	2.92	2.46	2.98
... with different political affiliation than yours	2.94	3.40	2.85	2.29	2.87
... from different nationality than yours	3.47	3.23	3.01	2.39	3.25
... with different sex than yours	3.93	3.88	3.71	3.14	3.78
... with different sexual orientation than yours	2.76	2.59	2.59	1.81	2.59
... from different social class	3.57	3.65	3.33	2.91	3.44
... with physical or other obstacles in their development	2.53	2.68	2.43	2.26	2.48

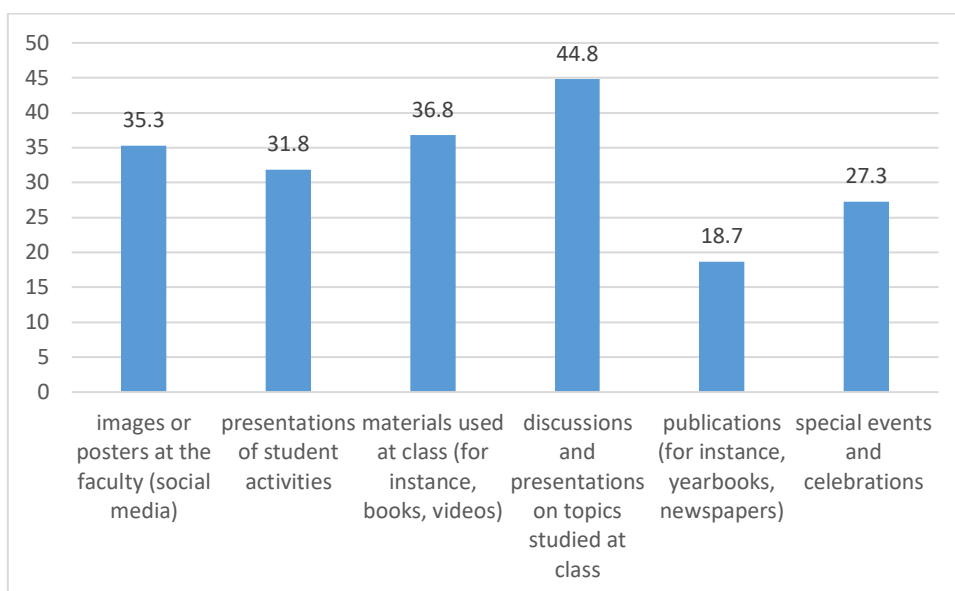
... with learning difficulties, psychological or other not visible difficulties	2.61	2.40	2.54	2.37	2.55
Total	3.11	3.10	2.92	2.45	2.99

However, when students were asked how often they heard about the experiences of others during their studies (women, other nationalities, LGBT...), the answers indicated that the biggest taboo at the four universities were transgender people and people with non-heterosexual orientation.



Graph 11: Frequency of other students' experiences respondents heard about

On the other hand, students were also asked to describe where at the faculty they heard about the people from different groups. Consequently, according to the answers, members of different groups (sex, national and religious affiliation, people with disabilities...) were discussed the most at classes and lectures, and the least in universities' publications. This leads to the conclusion that it is easier to talk (discuss, without any written material) than write about the different groups that are often marginalized.



Graph 12: Arithmetical means of where at the faculties one can hear about people from different groups

Table 20: Frequency on where at the faculties one can hear about people from different groups according to sex

	Male	Female	I feel otherwise	I don't want to answer
Discussions and presentations on topics studied at class	62	171	1	4
Publications (for instance, yearbooks, newspapers)	15	72	0	2
Special events and celebrations	25	56	0	1
Materials used at class (for instance, books, videos)	34	148	0	0
Images or posters at the faculty (social media)	35	58	0	2
Displays at the students' work place	35	68	0	3
Total	204	573	1	12

Hence, for instance, it could be noticed that male students believed one could hear mostly about marginalized groups at discussions and presentations at class, and the least through displays the students presented. Female students, on the other hand, could hear the most about marginalized groups at class discussions, and the least at special events and the faculty's social media.

Students were given the opportunity to answer whether they were ever victims of discrimination. It is concerning that 234 (29.7%) students responded they felt discriminated, out of whom 134 (16.96 %) were students at UKIM, 11 (1.39%) at UKLO, 42 (5.31%) at GDU, 42 (5.31%) at SUT and 5 (0.63%) of those studying at both

universities. Out of the total number of respondents, 7.9% did not answer the question, while 31.12% replied they had never been victims of discrimination.

In an attempt to make a comparison among students with different demographic characteristics, no differences were found in respect to disability or gender and ethnic identity. Regarding gender, 32.3% of the male students had been exposed to discrimination, and almost the same percentage belonged to female students (31.9%).

Table 21: Frequencies of students from different sex in respect to discrimination experienced

				Yes	No	Total
Gender	Male		N	61	128	189
			%	32.3%	67.7%	100.0%
	Female		N	169	360	529
			%	31.9%	68.1%	100.0%
	I don't want to answer		N	4	4	8
			%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		N	234	492	726	
		%	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%	

Regarding sexual orientation, within the same group, the largest percentage of students discriminated against were gay/lesbians (43.5%), and the smallest percentage belonged to students who did not state their sexual orientation (26.8%) and who declared themselves as heterosexual (31.8%). Consequently, it can be concluded that members of the LGBT community were discriminated more than heterosexuals.

Table 22: Frequency of students with different sexual orientation in respect to discrimination experienced

			Yes	No	Total
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	N	162	348	510
		%	31.8%	68.2%	100.0%
	Bisexual	N	21	35	56
		%	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%
	Gay/Lesbian	N	10	13	23
		%	43.5%	56.5%	100.0%
	Queer	N	2	3	5
		%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	Asexual	N	3	5	8
		%	37.5%	62.5%	100.0%

	The preferred response was not stated	N	15	41	56
		%	26.8%	73.2%	100.0%
Total		N	213	445	658
		%	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%

Regarding the students' status, i.e. part-time or regular, there is hardly any difference, and the percentage of discrimination is around 30%.

Table 23: Frequency of discrimination among students with different student status

			Yes	No	Total
Status	Regular	N	218	449	667
		%	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%
	Part-time	N	16	39	55
		%	29.1%	70.9%	100.0%
Total	N		234	488	722
	%		32.4%	67.6%	100.0%

Interestingly, students from the third cycle of studies perceive themselves to be the most discriminated. When analysing their responses, it should be considered that these students were older and with greater expectations from the universities, particularly due to the fact that PhD studies are several times more expensive than studies from the first cycle (5,000 Euro), and also, these students had had enough time to perceive that they had been discriminated.

Table 24: Frequency in discrimination among students from different cycle of studies

			Yes	No	Total
Cycle	First	N	203	438	641
		%	31.7%	68.3%	100.0%
	Second	N	20	41	61
		%	32.8%	67.2%	100.0%
	Third	N	5	10	15
		%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total	N		228	489	717
	%		31.8%	68.2%	100.0%

Students from the first year of studies perceived the least amount of discrimination, while students from fifth year the most.

Table 25: Frequency of discrimination among students from different years of studies

			Yes	No	Total
Year	First	N	31	87	118
		%	26.3%	73.7%	100.0%
	Second	N	51	113	164
		%	31.1%	68.9%	100.0%
	Third	N	67	114	181
		%	37.0%	63.0%	100.0%
	Fourth	N	58	133	191
		%	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
	Fifth	N	25	38	63
		%	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%
Total		N	232	485	717
		%	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%

Regarding political affiliation and whether students affiliated with one party felt more discriminated than other students– the percentage was identical - 32 %.

Table 26: Frequency of discrimination regarding students affiliated or not with a certain political party

			Yes	No	Total
Affiliated	Yes	N	31	65	96
		%	32.3%	67.7%	100.0%
	No	N	196	413	609
		%	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%
Total		N	227	478	705
		%	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%

With regards to the socio-economic status, it is evident that almost half of the students with low socio-economic status perceived themselves as discriminated against, which only proves that socio-economic status is one of the basic sources of discrimination.

Table 27: Frequency of discrimination among students with different socio-economic status

Total

			Yes	No	
SES	Low	N	52	56	108
		%	48.1%	51.9%	100.0%
	Middle	N	166	399	565
		%	29.4%	70.6%	100.0%
	High	N	15	34	49
		%	30.6%	69.4%	100.0%
Total	N		233	489	722
	%		32.3%	67.7%	100.0%

Apart from the socio-economic status, nationality is also one of the most common grounds for discrimination. Consequently, every second Albanian, Turk and Vlach were discriminated, which was not the case with Serbs, Bosniaks and Macedonians.

Table 28: Frequency of discrimination among students with different nationality

			Yes	No	Total
Ethnicity	Macedonian	N	149	388	537
		%	27.7%	72.3%	100.0%
	Albanian	N	63	53	116
		%	54.3%	45.7%	100.0%
	Serbs	N	6	17	23
		%	26.1%	73.9%	100.0%
	Turks	N	6	6	12
		%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Roma	N	1	3	4
		%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	Bosniak	N	3	17	20
		%	15.0%	85.0%	100.0%
	Vlach	N	5	4	9
		%	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	Other	N	1	3	4
		%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Total	N		234	491	725
	%		32.3%	67.7%	100.0%

In addition, every second student with a disability believed to have been discriminated, as opposed to the 31% of students without a disability.

Table 29: Frequency of discrimination among students with or without a disability

			Yes	No	Total
Disability	Yes	N	27	27	54
		%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	No	N	207	461	668
		%	31.0%	69.0%	100.0%
Total		N	234	488	722
		%	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%

In terms of place of living, it was concluded that there were no differences in discrimination among students from urban and students from rural environment.

Table 30: Frequency of discrimination among students from different living places

			Yes	No	Total
Environment	Urban	N	182	375	557
		%	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%
	Rural	N	51	115	166
		%	30.7%	69.3%	100.0%
Total		N	233	490	723
		%	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%

In respect of religion, it was determined that it was also a source of discrimination. Consequently, 46% of the Muslim students stated that they believed they were discriminated.²⁸ The least discriminated were Christian Orthodox students, i.e. every fourth student believed to have experienced discrimination.

Table 31: Frequency of discrimination among students from different religion

			Yes	No	Total
Religion	Christian Orthodox	N	108	312	420
		%	25.7%	74.3%	100.0%
	Muslim	N	68	79	147
		%	46.3%	53.7%	100.0%
	Catholic	N	3	1	4
		%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%

²⁸ This mostly refers to students from UKIM, UKLO, GDU.

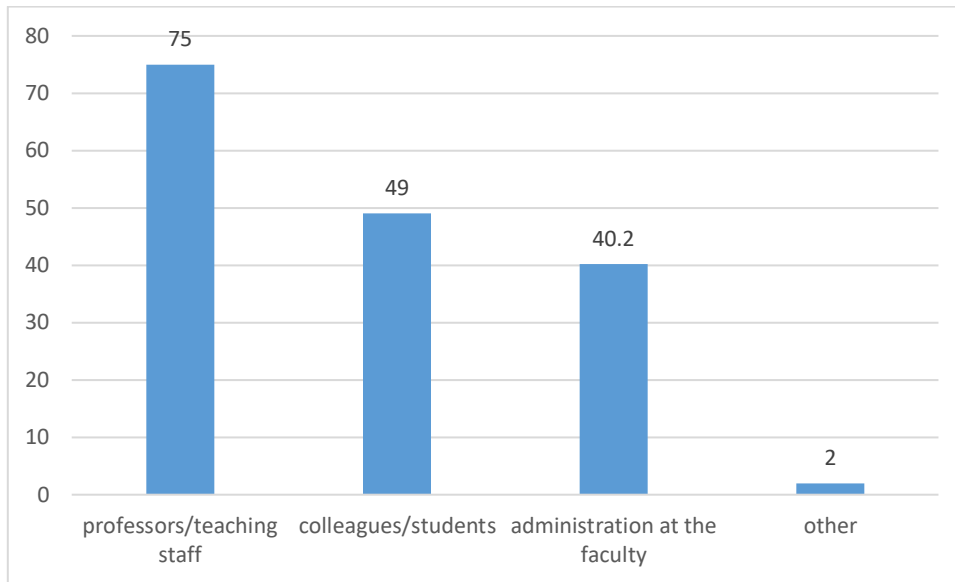
	Protestant	N	0	1	1
		%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Non-religious	N	50	95	145
		%	34.5%	65.5%	100.0%
	Other	N	3	2	5
		%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total		N	232	490	722
		%	32.1%	67.9%	100.0%

However, with regards to age, by applying the t-test for determining significant differences, we compared the arithmetic means (age average) between discriminated and not discriminated students. It was determined that age is not a relevant factor, meaning with time students probably are more prone to perceive discrimination or discrimination truly happens more often in the senior years. On the other hand, this finding is positive because it allows students, if they are really able to perceive discrimination more clearly, to break the vicious circle and speak up.

Table 31: Significant differences between students who were or not discriminated against with regards to age

	N	M	SD	T	P
Were discriminated against	227	22.69	3.741	-.615	.538
Were not discriminated against	486	22.91	4.907		

In addition, there was a positive correlation between how students rank discrimination (in terms of importance) and to what degree it was present at universities/faculties. Namely, students who ranked discrimination as important, largely perceive it was present at faculties and universities. As many as 75% of the students who were victims of discrimination, were discriminated against by professors, indicating that a certain number of students were not treated equally in certain or similar situations due to a personal characteristic, and that a certain number of professors, abusing their position of authority, discriminate against students.



Graph 13. Sources of discrimination against students

Students were able to rank the reasons for discrimination, and it was evident that the most frequent reasons for discrimination were above-average knowledge and grades, and the least was disability.

Table 32: Arithmetic means regarding reasons for discrimination

Reasons for discrimination	M
Disability	1.19
Above-average knowledge	1.70
Ethnicity	1.45
Sex	1.56
Sexual orientation	1.32
Gender identity or gender expression	1.29
Marital status	1.25
Age	1.44
Religion	1.40
Height or weight	1.46
Political orientation	1.36
Affiliation with a political party	1.32
Social class	1.53
Grades	1.95
Native language	1.51

In addition, students added their own statements and situations in which they were discriminated. It is interesting to note that some of them listed examples of affirmative action.

I was discriminated by students and professors for writing more slowly than other students. The most difficult thing was, and still is, that the professors advised me not to confront my colleagues for their behaviour towards me, which I believe only encourages them to continue doing so.

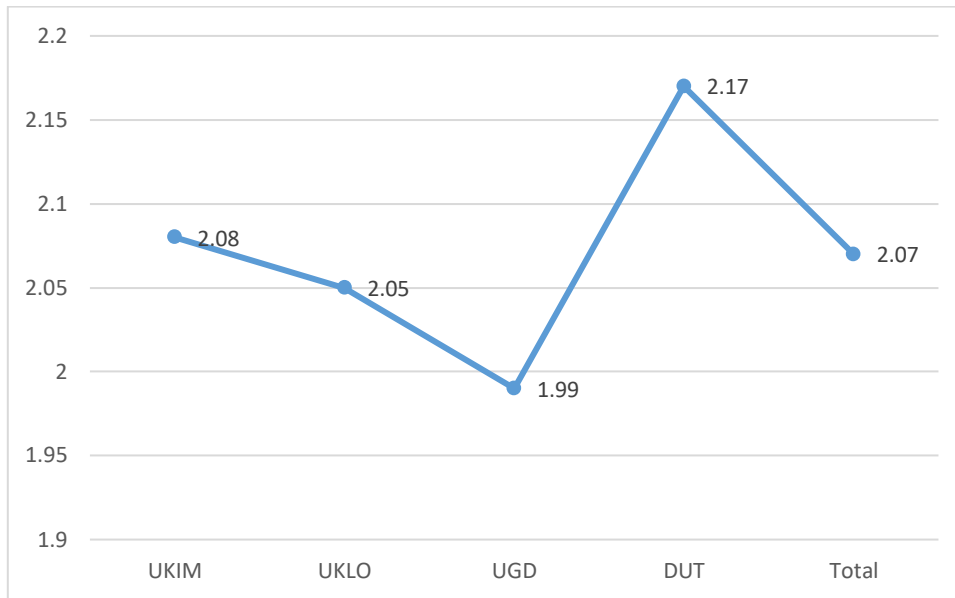
It might not qualify as standard discrimination, but I feel discriminated against by the teaching staff and administrative bodies for my efforts and hard work in comparison to students with lower grades. They always get more chances and attention in order to somehow graduate, while we, students who work hard to acquire new knowledge outside the curriculum and participate in activities which make us ambassadors of the faculty, are not appreciated enough. I would also like to add that this type of discrimination is not only present in higher education, but generally in society, and it's no wonder people who want to advance and make progress with their professional and personal life, seek their future abroad.

Public offenses and humiliation by a professor (even though other professors are aware of their problematic colleagues, they do nothing about it), a quarrel with a mentor (due to misunderstanding between the Student Affairs Office and the mentor), problems with the Student Affairs Office due to internal misunderstanding and transferring blame among each other for giving incorrect information that postpones the studying process and completion of studies, not responding to emails related to serious problems...

I was personally discriminated against at my faculty with regards to the grading methods as well as employment (assistant, demonstrator). For instance, the most privileged students (children of professors, rectors, members of political parties, influential families) are graded without even attending lectures or going to exams.

Furthermore, on a scale from 1 (the least important) to 3 (the most important), students were able to rank the discrimination issue in comparison to other issues at the university/faculty.

Students from SUT perceived this problem as the most important, and students from GDU as the least important, although it ranged above the mean at each university.



Graph 13: Arithmetical means of the importance of the discrimination problem among students from different universities

However, in an attempt to determine which groups perceived this problem as the most important, it was concluded that members of the LGBT community believed the discrimination issue to be particularly important in comparison to other problems at the university.

Table 33: Arithmetic means among students with different sexual orientation in regards to the discrimination issue

Sexual orientation	M	N	SD
Heterosexual	2.06	496	.616
Bisexual	2.16	55	.570
Gay/Lesbian	2.19	21	.680
Queer	2.00	5	.000
Asexual	1.88	8	.641
The preferred answer was stated	1.98	52	.610
Total	2.07	637	.612

In addition, this problem was more important for female students as opposed to male students.

Table 34: Arithmetic means between students from different sex in terms of the importance of the discrimination issue

Gender	M	N	SD
Male	1.91	177	.624

Female	2.13	511	.600
I don't want to answer	1.75	8	.886
Total	2.07	696	.617

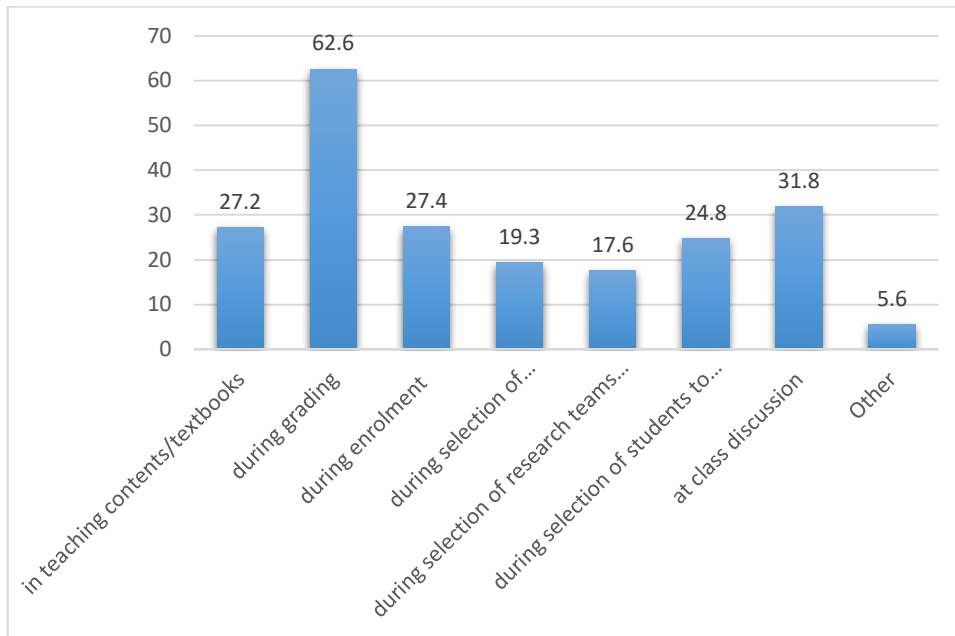
In terms of students with different ethnicity, the discrimination issue was the most important for Vlach and Turkish students, and the least important for Serbian students.

Table 35: Arithmetic means among students with different ethnicity in terms of how important the discrimination issue is

Ethnicity	M	N	SD
Macedonians	2.04	518	.582
Albanians	2.23	110	.725
Serbs	1.82	22	.501
Turks	2.33	12	.651
Roma	2.00	4	.816
Bosniak	2.19	16	.655
Vlach	2.33	9	.707
Other	1.25	4	.500
Total	2.07	695	.618

The most frequent answers to the question regarding the situations in which students perceived discrimination point to grading, and then class discussion. The numbers indicate that students did not feel safe enough to talk or discuss freely during classes because of fear from discrimination, which on the other hand impacts freedom of expression in the academic environment, but also because free discussion might impact the final grade.

Additionally, 62.6% of the students stated discrimination in grading, which only shows how education and the need for changes in the educational system, towards proper valorisation of student knowledge, are extremely necessarily.



Graph 15: Activities in which students experienced discrimination

However, despite the frequency of the issue, only 7.6% of students were aware of the procedure for reporting discrimination at the faculty, which unfortunately they believed was inefficiently implemented. Further below are some of the statements related to the efficiency of the discrimination procedure implementation.

I haven't had any personal experience, but I believe there is an adequate opportunity to solve the problem should the procedure be initiated.

Unfortunately, no, due to the higher hierarchy of the person discriminating.

I do not believe that anything is solved efficiently.

It isn't efficient, rather only carried out in perfunctory manner.

No, the Framework Agreement will not be voided any time soon, and the enrolment quota are guaranteed for X nationalities regardless of the success an individual from certain nationality has achieved.

It is concerning that only 6.6% (52) of the students had ever reported discrimination at the faculty. Furthermore, the answers to the question why they had never reported discrimination are also concerning, the most frequent being they did not know where to report it, which only demonstrates the necessity for public discussions on this topic and affirming the roles of the Student Ombudsperson, commissions and other bodies against discrimination.

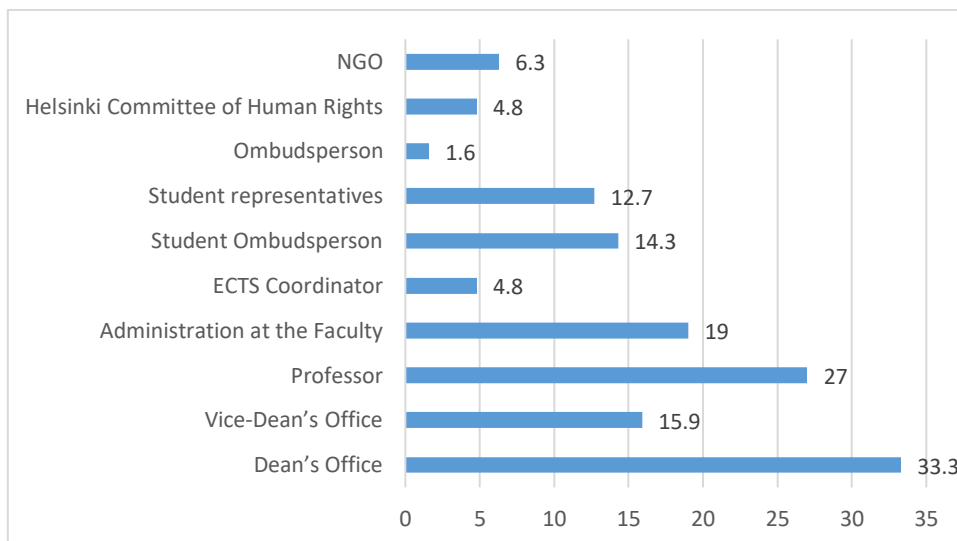
I don't know where.

I have never noticed discrimination against me personally.

It won't change anything, but also the discrimination was not to such an extent, it didn't concern me that much.

Because I don't believe it would help. I've been in situations where I had to ask where discrimination was reported, but all employees stick together, so all the energy in reporting would be wasted. It would be easier just to leave the faculty.
I didn't want to create a conflict situation and end up not passing the exam – I depend on the professor.
Due to fear from the professors, they might fail me on purpose or, as they say, I don't want to be a thorn in their eye.
I don't know, as students we are not informed about where to report or ask for help if we are facing a problem, regardless whether it is discrimination or something else.
Because I don't know where to report – I am afraid to report discrimination in a corrupted system.
Because I haven't encountered a single explicit example of discrimination during my studies, perhaps examples of accidental, unintentional discrimination, which was also very rare.
Because I know it won't have any effect and it won't be anonymous.
Once, yes, with a bad outcome for me and my fellow student, and never afterwards, because the person who discriminates is protected from the colleagues and from "above".
The discrimination I have witnessed and/or experienced, although common, was not that serious to report. In cases of discrimination on the ground of social class, the problem is that the system plays favourites.

However, out of those who have reported the issue, the largest percentage did it to the faculties' deans, the professors or the faculty administration. The fact that students perceived the dean as the main figure in charge of everything, even discrimination, is a very interesting finding.



Graph 16. Students' responses on where they report discrimination

According to the information students had, only 25% were informed that a procedure had been initiated, out of which in 12.1% discrimination was determined. On the other hand, in cases when a procedure was initiated, in 12.5% the person who discriminated was sanctioned.

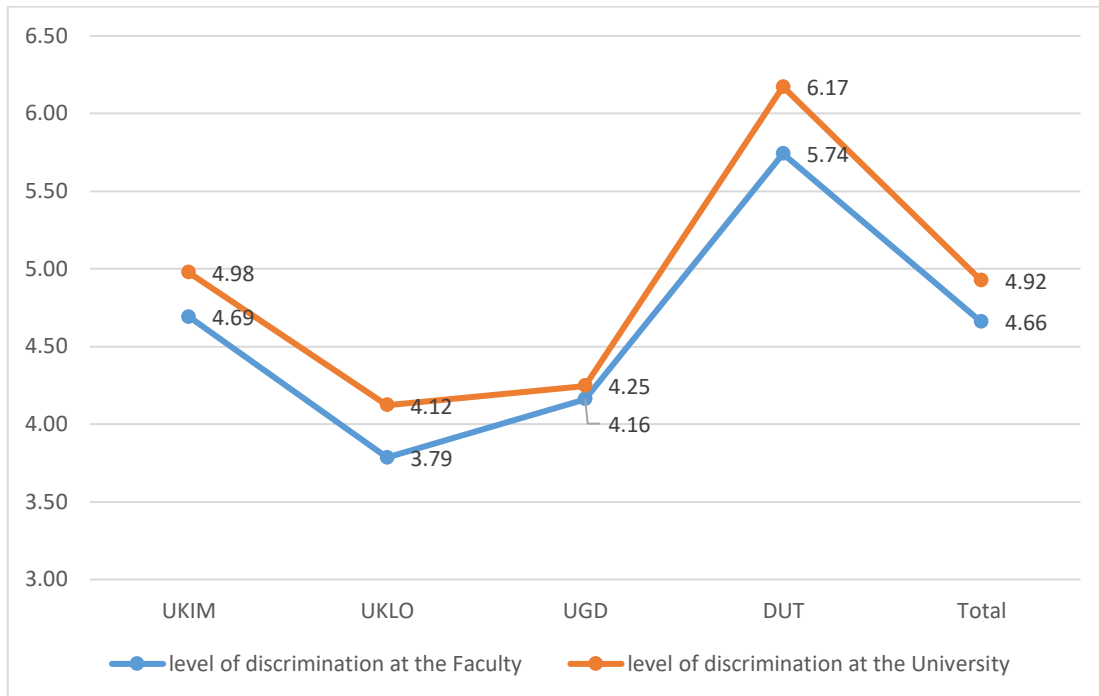
Only 14.4% of the students said that the faculties had a policy for the promotion/respect of differences, while 70.8% were not informed of any such thing. However, only 28.2% of the students believed this policy efficiently protected them from discrimination. It should be mentioned that more than 90% of the students studying at SUT were not informed about the University's policy on promotion of differences, which is perhaps due to the fact that, contrary to the websites of other universities, information on the University's policies were not available on its website. In addition, SUT did not reply to the request for access to public information.

We find it concerning that a very small percent (5%) of the students claimed they could point to the document/act on this policy or offer direction as to where we can read more about it. The responses are shown in the table below.

On the website.
The faculty offers free psychological counselling for students.
The faculty teaches us about the differences among people and cohesive living.
When we enrol or when scholarships are awarded, there is a special category of people from different nationalities, ethnicities or family income. They are listed in the specific application calls at the faculties' website.
The human rights institute.
Law on Protection and Prevention against Discrimination.

With regards to the extent of discrimination against other people at the university students witnessed, 27.5% replied affirmatively, and only 3.5% reported the incident.

At the very end, students had the opportunity to assess, on a scale from 1 to 10, the extent to which they were discriminated at the faculty/university. According to the answers, students from SUT perceived discrimination the most, while the least respondents from UKLO.



Graph 16: Arithmetic means of discrimination at the four universities

In an attempt to compare the different groups of respondents in terms of the extent of discrimination at the faculty/university on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being the least discriminated, and 10 the most discriminated), it can be noticed that regarding gender, students who refused to disclose their gender believed there was greater discrimination at the faculties and universities.

Table 36: Arithmetic means among students from different sex in terms of level of discrimination

Gender		Faculty	University
Male	M	4.27	4.51
	N	177	171
	SD	2.867	2.897
Female	M	4.79	5.06
	N	507	496
	SD	2.683	2.663
I don't want to answer	M	5.38	5.25
	N	8	8
	SD	3.378	3.370
Total	M	4.66	4.92
	N	692	675
	SD	2.746	2.739

Regular students, who spend more time at the faculty as opposed to part-time students, believe there was greater discrimination at the faculties/universities.

Table 37: Arithmetic means between students with different status in terms of level of discrimination

Status		Faculty	University
Regular	M	4.75	5.02
	N	637	621
	SD	2.752	2.748
Part-time	M	3.67	3.88
	N	52	51
	SD	2.511	2.430
Total	M	4.67	4.93
	N	689	672
	SD	2.747	2.740

With regards to sexual orientation, students who are members of the LGBT community believe there was greater discrimination at faculties and universities, as opposed to asexual respondent who believed students were the least discriminated at faculties/universities.

Table 38: Arithmetic means among students with different sexual orientation in terms of level of discrimination students believe exists

Sexual orientation		Faculty	University
Heterosexual	M	4.64	4.87
	N	493	482
	SD	2.818	2.777
Bisexual	M	5.19	5.65
	N	54	54
	SD	2.533	2.412
Gay/lesbian	M	5.55	6.10
	N	22	21
	SD	2.405	2.606
Queer	M	4.00	4.20
	N	5	5
	SD	1.414	1.304
Asexual	M	4.43	3.67
	N	7	6
	SD	2.992	1.966
The preferred answer was not stated	M	4.94	5.25
	N	49	48
	SD	2.719	2.733
Total		M	4.73
			4.99

	N	630	616
	SD	2.769	2.736

Albanian students believed there was greater discrimination at the faculties and the universities in comparison to students from other nationalities.

Table 39. Arithmetic means among students from different ethnicity in terms of level of discrimination students believe exists

Ethnicity		Faculty	University
Macedonian	M	4.42	4.67
	N	513	500
	SD	2.639	2.621
Albanian	M	5.92	6.26
	N	108	104
	SD	2.958	2.930
Serbian	M	4.52	4.74
	N	23	23
	SD	3.013	3.018
Turkish	M	5.55	5.91
	N	11	11
	SD	2.505	2.256
Roma	M	4.00	4.00
	N	4	4
	SD	3.367	3.367
Bosniak	M	4.20	4.65
	N	20	20
	SD	2.093	2.254
Vlach	M	5.00	5.33
	N	9	9
	SD	3.000	3.000
Other	M	2.33	1.33
	N	3	3
	SD	2.309	.577
Total	M	4.66	4.93
	N	691	674
	SD	2.744	2.737

Furthermore, at the very end of the research questionnaire, as a response to an open question, students shared their opinion on discrimination and what could be done in order to decrease it at the university.

There is discrimination at the faculties, not only in terms of sex, ethnicity, nationality but it is also manifested as discrimination against students because someone is “a member of a professor’s close or distant family” and these are the only students who are prioritized in Erasmus student exchange, during grading, gate keeping of valuable information on employment/practice etc.
The approach towards students is not individual or personalized. Students’ opinions are rarely taken into consideration or even appreciated. This is probably the case with the institutes where the number of students is bigger. This results in not being motivated in terms of academic realization. I believe this is only one of the problems that needs to be addressed.
I witnessed discrimination from students who see themselves as belonging to a higher class and discriminated introvert and shy students by offending them, while those being discriminated against remained silent.
The system is terrible! Nothing is done for the benefit of students. We are constantly being told how much they care for us, it is ingrained in our brain and people believe in it, disregarding the real picture. I and a huge part of the students who are more self-confident are appalled by the working principle. It’s all I have to say.
The research questionnaire was great, and it included interesting and important topics. I would like to suggest more questions on the quality of education and the changes that need to be done in order to improve the quality for students and professors, but also develop more programs and contracts with various companies/associations so students from all faculties would be able to gain practical experience.
It happens that girls are failed several times in a row so that the professor would see them again the next term or extort sexual services for a better grade. This is why many girls put on dirty or ugly clothes when going to lectures or taking exams. It’s catastrophic.
I think that the St. Cyril and Methodius University is a wonderful democratic place where anyone can share their opinion without being discriminated on any ground. If someone feels discriminated, I believe it is not an objective state but rather an individual personal violation caused by other reasons.
This survey is very important for many students with the right to study from different religion, ethics. Due to these types of surveys, I have been studying for 3 years now and have no desires or anything like that to discriminate and I am happy to be studying together with different colleagues from different ethnicities.

In-depth interviews findings

Within the analysis, two in-depth interviews were conducted with respondents who volunteered to be part of the survey (a female student from Albanian nationality from UKIM and a male student from Macedonian nationality from UKIM), who fully correspond with the quantitative analysis data. The goal of the in-depth interviews was to find out more about two closely related issues: (1) fairness and inclusive education, and (2) harassment, including discrimination, sexual harassment and homophobia, among students.

The in-depth interviews indicate that young people, particularly young women, believe that discrimination on the ground of gender concerns many young people at the universities. Consequently, the need arises to provide equal opportunities and access to rights for young people regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In addition, students stressed the frequent gender-based violence, without listing specific examples to support the conclusion. In any case, the issue with gender-based violence at universities, as a form of discrimination against women, is an issue that deserves special attention and requires specific research.

The perception of women in the role of homemakers is slowly disappearing at the faculties, however there are still stereotypes present in textbook content or lectures given by professors. When discussing the role of women, the accent is always placed on their biggest desire to be mothers and homemakers, instead of investing in professional careers. Such information at lectures promoting gender stereotypes with elements of sexism, mostly lack arguments in support. The interviewees believe that faculties should be a place where stereotypical gender roles will be eliminated instead of stimulated additionally.

However, the general impression is that universities are safe and welcomed, a place where students feel pleasant enough to study. Professors and students mostly appreciate diversity and demonstrate respect towards others and dedication to establish a fair and caring society. In the rare cases, when students did exhibit discriminatory behaviour – including harassment against other students, they often react to the differences perceived (stereotypes) and fail to realize that diversity is one of the greatest benefits in education. Violence and harassment are harmful, and is hence unacceptable behaviour not tolerated in a respectful atmosphere of acceptance.

Furthermore, the students interviewed stressed that young people have difficulties in confirming the authenticity and validity of information shared with the students. They should be more properly equipped to navigate the media landscape and participation in a constructive dialogue. They stress the need for a bigger media literacy among young people.

An increasing number of young people (students), particularly during the pandemics, expressed concern on the absence of mental health-related issues, such as increased stress, anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses among their peers. Young people list the huge social pressure they are facing nowadays and express the need for better mental health services for young people. In addition, students believe that unless mental health issues are discussed openly, those facing them will become a bigger target of discrimination. It is particularly important to stress that students from UKLO have access to free psychological counselling, opened at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis (also the first one in the country).

Students are aware that the past year abounded in numerous challenges, which made taking care of young people different than what we were used to, but also introduced incertitude and restlessness in students' lives. Students are dealing even today with many of the challenges and the traces left. Hence, the imminent need for psychological counselling at all universities, firstly intended for students who need help in dealing with the difficulties of the environment they live in/study – family, faculty and society in general, but also in the successful realization of their emotional and social relations and their own individuality and independence. These aspects are important in acquiring greater self-confidence, which correlates negatively with the exposure to discrimination.

However, on the other hand, the impression from the in-depth interviews was that students are not aware of the legal acts against discrimination. The fact that students are afraid to report discrimination due to lack of trust in the system is alarming, and so is the belief that their requests will never be considered and realized. This finding completely correlates with the finding from our research that only 6.6% (52) of the students have ever reported discrimination at the faculties, because other students do not know where to report being discriminated.

The fear of becoming a victim as a result of taking actions against discrimination prevents students to advocate more loudly for improvement of the conditions at the faculties, and thus contribute to the prevention and protection against discrimination. Namely, students stress that "it is better to keep doing things as the system requires than having problems with grades later", indicating to a lack of activism among young people, which on the other hands makes students silent witnesses to discriminatory behaviour.

Conclusions and recommendations

The right to education implies not only the right to access to education but also the right to a certain quality of education, teaching methods customized to the different needs of certain students, transfer of knowledge and intellectual development. However, it is important to establish how students feel in the course of their education and their perception of discrimination at the universities.

The research was conducted on a research sample ($N = 790$) comprised of 25% male respondents, 72% female respondents and 3% respondents with a different gender identity, with mean age $M = 22.75$. According to place of living, 61% of the respondents studied at the St. Cyril and Methodius University, 6% at the St. Kliment Ohridski, 18% at the Goce Delcev University, 12% at the State University in Tetovo, and 3% of the respondents studied at both universities simultaneously.

Generally it could be noticed that the satisfaction level of students at the universities and faculties was above the mean ($M = 3.11$), the most satisfied being students at UKLO,²⁹ with the least satisfied being those from UKIM and SUT.

In terms of student status, part-time students were more satisfied than regular students with the situation at the universities and at the faculties. The in-depth interviews and the informal discussions with students indicated that regular students believed professors and administrative staff to be more prone to respond to emails of part-time students, or that the latter were prioritized at professor's offices regarding free consultation slots under the excuse that they "must return to work". This might be the reason for the differences between the two groups.

On the other hand, the most satisfied were students studying at the second cycle of studies, with the least satisfied being those from the third cycle of studies. Students enrolled at the second cycle of studies were mostly recently graduated with a bachelor's degree and had already had positive experiences with the faculties/universities, and therefore decided to continue their education. On the other hand, most of them were already employed and felt satisfaction in more fields in life, which made them more satisfied with the academic climate as well. However, it is concerning that in terms of year of studying, the most satisfied were students enrolled at the first year, with the least satisfied being those from the fifth year, a possible indicator that students enrolled with higher expectations that remained unfulfilled until they graduate, with some students even feeling disappointed.

²⁹ It is important to mention that the number of respondents from UKLO is small, hence the larger margin of error.

In terms of how satisfied students belonging to different groups on different grounds were, results show that women were the most satisfied with the climate at the universities and faculties, while the least satisfied being those who did not reveal their gender. However, on the other hand, according to the data, women felt less safe at the universities than men. This completely correlates with the in-depth findings, where students stressed that gender discrimination still affected many young people, particularly women at the universities. Sexual orientation and gender identity significantly affects safety, hence men with different sexual orientation felt less safe than heterosexual men. Respondents who refused to disclose their gender, whom we assumed did not identify with the binary categories male/female, felt the least safe, the least appreciated at the faculty, with a feeling they did not belong and a desire to leave.

Regarding perception of discrimination, the results from the quantitative research show a similar degree of exposure to discrimination between female and male students. The discrimination issue was more important for women than men, and was particularly more important for people with different sexual orientation than heterosexual students.

Gender equality is a basic human right and the foundation for prosperous education and modern economy generating sustainable growth. Gender equality is crucial in order to ensure equal contribution in the home for women and men, in education, at the working place, social life and economy. Essential to overcoming prejudices towards the different is interaction with different groups, learning their specifics and understanding their needs and problems. Research findings show that at all universities included in the survey, students had the biggest prejudices against transgender people, and transgender people and people with different sexual orientation were the least discussed. The largest part of the students responded that differences on the ground of sex, nationality, religion and disability were discussed from time to time at lectures, but differences were the least mentioned in publications.

Additionally, in the course of the studies, most students became disillusioned about studying and found other priorities. Not attending lectures this past year and a half during the pandemic also led to dissatisfaction with the climate in higher education. Students affiliated with a political party tended to be more satisfied with the university and faculty climate than those not affiliated with any political party. In addition, the most satisfied with the university and faculty climate were students who assessed themselves to be from high socio-economic status families, with the least satisfied being those coming from low socio-economic status families. Very often, the socio-economic status is connected to the quality of life and general satisfaction with life, hence the conclusion that the higher the status, the more satisfied the students are with the academic climate. Dominant groups have the power to determine what is considered as knowledge, hence such education favours students of powerful people, which leads to discrimination of students with lower social and economic status. The sociologist Bourdieu speaks of dominant culture as a cultural capital, because it is

transformed into wealth and power through education, and this cultural capital is disproportionately divided along the class structure.

When speaking of students' sexual orientation and satisfaction with academic climate, students were grouped in two groups – heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, whereupon heterosexuals were more satisfied than non-heterosexuals who felt far less satisfied with the academic climate.

Furthermore, students with disabilities were less satisfied with the university and faculty climate than those without disabilities. They also felt less safe than students without disabilities. Out of the total number of respondents, 7.2% confirmed they had a disability; most of them had poor vision/blindness (3.2%), while 1.6% perceived they had mental health issues. Every other student with a disability confirmed exposure to discrimination, as opposed to 31% from the students without a disability. Pursuant the recommendations of the Human Rights Committee, higher educational institutions must be more prepared to carry out the teaching process for disabled students.

Comparison among students with different sexual orientation shows that the academic environment was the least desirable for gay/lesbian students, who mostly think of leaving the university because of feeling unaccepted, but they also mostly believed their opinion was less appreciated and lacked the opportunities to express their potential. Bisexuals felt the least appreciated and the least respected at the universities.

Psychological research on relationships among different groups has relied on determining social distance for a long time. The category "social distance" includes the conative or behaviour dimension of prejudices (Lazarovski, 1994) Data on social distance indicate relationships towards certain groups. The research findings, in comparison to previous research among respondents from the same ethnicities, show a tendency of a drop in the social distance (Ugrinovski, I. 1998). This recent situation is probably the result of human rights regulation and regulation of the relationship among the ethnic groups living on the same territory. In order to examine social distance (is a certain target group perceived as close or distant) at universities with the application of the well-known Bogardus scale, students were asked to respond how often they communicated with people different from them in terms of several dimensions, such as: people from different religion, political affiliation, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, social class or people with disabilities.

Social distance was the smallest at UKIM and UKLO, and the biggest at SUT. The fact that students communicated the least with people with disabilities at the campus, or people with learning difficulties, psychological or other not visible difficulties, was concerning. On the other hand, social distance was the smallest when students made contact with people from different sex.

However, it should be noted that 234 (29.7%) of the students answered they felt personally discriminated, out of who 134 (16.96%) were from UKIM, 11 (1.39%) from UKLO, 42 (5.31%) from GDU, 42 (5.31%) from SUT and 5 (0.63%) studied at both universities, i.e. data shows that approximately a third of the students were victims of discrimination.

According to the data, female students believed they were discriminated more often at the university than male students. In terms of sexual orientation, the largest percentage of discriminated students belonged to the gay/lesbian students (43.5%), with the least discriminated being those who did not reveal their sexual orientation (26.8%), as well as students who declared themselves as heterosexual (31.8%)

In terms of the most common discriminator, as many as 75% of the students who were victims of discrimination, stated they were discriminated against by the professors. This indicates that students due to a personal characteristic were not treated as equal stakeholders in the academic community and that a certain number of professors abuse their power to discriminate against the students.

The research indicated that students from North Macedonia at all levels in the higher educational process perceived discrimination at universities and faculties. On the other hand, there are no efficient policies and protection mechanisms against discrimination to ensure improvement of the situation with discrimination at the universities.

Students lack sufficient information on policies and protection mechanisms against discrimination at university level. Those aware of the potential discrimination protection means refused to take actions due to lack of trust and the belief that nothing would be accomplished or because of fear from additional victimization for having spoken up against the discrimination.

According to the findings, students with a different gender identity and sexual orientation perceived themselves to be the most marginalized, the most discriminated and with the least rights in the educational system.

Recommendations

- Amendment to the Law on Higher Education in order to:
 - Prohibit discrimination on all grounds established with the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination;
 - Prescribe a prevention and protection against discrimination mechanism at universities competent to prevent and protect against discrimination within the universities;
 - Establish a mechanism for revision of contents in curricula and textbooks and prevent their publication and the use of discriminatory contents in curricula at universities.
 - Establish a data collection system in discrimination cases (prevalence) at universities.
- Develop and adoption of internal acts for prevention and protection against discrimination at the universities.
- Introduce a separate body for prevention and protection against discrimination at the universities with the students' significant participation in its establishment and functioning.
- Implement transparent election of Student Ombudspersons at universities that have not elected one yet.
- Public and regular dissemination of information among students and staff at the faculties and universities regarding the grounds and forms of discrimination and the available protection mechanisms against discrimination, as well as the manner in which a procedure for protection against discrimination can be initiated.
- Anonymous annual surveys on discrimination conducted by the competent bodies for prevention and protection against discrimination.
- Universities should provide proper adjustment to students' individual needs, depending on the type and level of disability.
- Revision of textbooks and teaching aids, removal of discriminating contents and introduction of unbiased, scientifically-based information grounded on human rights.
- Formal and informal education of students on discrimination, gender-based violence and possible manners of resolution.
- Significant participation of students in the development and adoption of university's acts referring to improvement of quality, strengthening the trust between the concerned parties and elimination of discriminatory practices in all phases of education.

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Questionnaire

The Youth Educational Forum (MOF) is a youth organization creating space for debate, free expression and youth organizing, encouraging activism, protecting and promoting youth rights and policies. MOF accomplishes its goals through disseminating information, education, discussion, cooperation and by motivating and supporting young people. Within the project “**Student Perception of Discrimination**” supported by the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia, MOF aims to conduct a research in order to place into focus and decrease discrimination in higher education.

The survey, intended to research students’ perception of discrimination, is designed to help us acquire better understanding by finding out about the perspectives and experiences of our community related to diversity, fairness and inclusion.

The data collected will be used to understand the current climate at the university campuses. Your participation and replies will be strictly confidential and will not be recorded in any academic, medical or disciplinary records. Information on individual recognition will not be reported. The research is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this survey and – if you decide to participate – you can skip any question you do not want to answer and stop the research at any time.

Consent Form – Information about the research

- Participation in the survey is voluntary.
- The survey will take around 15 minutes to complete.
- You can skip and not answer any question, and you can stop participation at any time.
- The benefits from your participation is that your personal beliefs/perspectives, behaviours and knowledge will support the development and refinement process of programs and services designed to assist in creating diverse, inclusive and fair community at campus.
- Your answers and personal information will be kept secret.
- The results of the research will be reported only collectively.
- In future, a review of the data, which will not contain any information that might identify you or anyone else participating in the research, might be used for other related studies for assessment of universities curricula, university policies, improvement of protocols and studies and provide a background for future research on these topics.
- You must be at least 18 to fill in the questionnaire; by filling in the questionnaire you admit that you are at least 18.
- Data from the survey is collected by the Youth Educational Forum.
- If you have any questions regarding the research, contact the research team at sofijaarnaudova@gmail.com or 071351565.
- If you wish to talk to someone about any issues or problems you might have regarding your experience with the campus climate, please contact the Office of the Youth Educational Forum at policy@mof.org.mk.

By clicking Next bellow, you agree to participate in the research

PART I

1. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- The preferred answer is not stated (state your answer): _____

2. At which university are you enrolled currently? If you study at several universities, choose both.

- State University of Tetovo
 - Faculty of Economy
 - Faculty of Pedagogy
 - Faculty of Law
 - Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
 - Faculty of Business Administration
 - Faculty of Agriculture and Biotechnology
 - Faculty of Medicine
 - Faculty of Food Technology and Nutrition
 - Faculty of Applied Sciences
 - Faculty of Arts
 - Faculty of Physical Education
 - Faculty of Philosophy
 - Faculty of Philology
- St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
 - Faculty of Architecture
 - Faculty of Civil Engineering
 - Faculty of Economy
 - Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
 - Faculty of Medicine
 - Faculty of Pedagogy St. Kliment Ohridski
 - Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus
 - Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
 - Faculty of Stomatology
 - Technological-metallurgical Faculty
 - Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
 - Faculty of Design and Technologies of Furniture and Interior
 - Faculty of Dramatic Arts
 - Faculty of Electro-techniques and Informational Technologies
 - Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food
 - Faculty of Informational Sciences and Computer Engineering
 - Faculty of Fine Arts

- Faculty of Musical Art
- Faculty of Physical Education, Sport and Health
- Faculty of Forest Sciences, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Engineering
Hans Em
- Faculty of Pharmacy
- Faculty of Philosophy
- Faculty of Philology Blaze Koneski

- St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola

- Faculty of Technology
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Faculty of Pedagogy
- Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences
- Faculty of Administration and Management of Information Systems
- Higher Medical School
- Faculty of Security
- Faculty of Law
- Technological and Technical Faculty
- Faculty of Veterinary
- Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies
- Tobacco Scientific Institute

- Goce Delcev University in Shtip

- Faculty of Educational Sciences
- Faculty of Natural and Technical Sciences
- Faculty of Agriculture
- Faculty of Informatics
- Faculty of Economy
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Medical Sciences
- Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics
- Faculty of Philology
- Electro-technical Faculty
- Technological-technical Faculty
- Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Music
- Faculty of Film

3. You are enrolled as a

- Regular student
- Part-time student

4. Level of studies

First Cycle

Second Cycle

Third Cycle

5. Year of studies

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- Fifth

6. What is your current age (in years)?
(open-ended question)

7. Are you affiliated with any political party?

No

Yes

(Optional: Which one?)

8. How would you assess your socio-economic status?

Low

Middle

High

9. What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- bisexual
- Gay / Lesbian
- Queer
- Asexual
- The preferred answer is not stated (state your preferred answer): _____

10. Please state the ethnicity with which you identify. (Several answers are possible)

- Macedonian
- Albanian
- Serbian
- Turkish
- Roma
- Bosniak
- Vlach
- Other (state)

11. How would you describe the ethnic composition of the community in which you grew up?

- Everyone or almost everyone is from my ethnicity
- Mostly my ethnicity
- Half my ethnicity and half people with different ethnicities
- Mostly other ethnicities
- Everyone or almost everyone is from different types of ethnicity

12. How would you describe the ethnic composition of your high school?

- Everyone or almost everyone was from my ethnicity
- Mostly my ethnicity
- Half my ethnicity and half people with different ethnicities
- Mostly other ethnicities
- Everyone or almost everyone was from different types of ethnicity

13. Were you born in North Macedonia?

- Yes
- No

(If not, in which country were you born?)

14. With which religion do you identify?

- Christian Orthodox
- Muslim
- Catholic
- Protestant
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- I am not religious
- Other (which)

15. Do you have a disability?

- Yes, I do
- No, I don't

If you have a disability (What type of disability do you have/traumatic brain injuries)

- Attention Deficit Disorder / Hyperactivity
- Asperger's Spectrum / Autism
- Blindness/ Poor vision
- Deafness / Poor hearing
- Cognitive or learning disability
- Chronic illness / medical condition
- Mental health issues / Psychological condition
- Physical disability affecting movement
- Physical disability not affecting movement
- Speech disorder / communication
- Other (state): _____

16. Which of the following best describes your parents/guardians education?

- None of the parents/guardians finished higher education
- None of the parents/guardians acquired a higher education diploma, but one or both parents were enrolled at faculty
- One parent/guardian finished higher education
- Both parents / guardians finished higher education

17. In which municipality do you live?

(List of municipalities)

18. In what kind of environment do you live?

- Urban (large density of population, a broad spectre of infrastructure and development of economic sectors).
- Rural (scarce population beyond the influence of urban cities)

Part II 2 CONTEXT IN WHICH THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS (title only for internal use)

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the climate at the University during your studies?

- Very unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Nor satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the climate at the Faculty during your studies?

- Very unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Nor satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

19. For the following questions choose one option out of each set of adjectives that best represent how you would grade the campus (faculty) based on your direct experiences:

Hostile / Friendly

Homogenous environment / Heterogeneous environment

Sexist environment / Non-sexist environment

Individualistic spirit / Team spirit

Competition / cooperation

Homophobic / Not homophobic

Elitist / Not elitist

20. During your studies, how often were you concerned with your physical safety at the University?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

21. During your studies, how often were you concerned with your physical safety at the Faculty?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

22. Considering your experiences during your studies, state the level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the least and 5 the most.

I feel appreciated as an individual at the University	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I belong at the University	1	2	3	4	5
The University is very dedicated to diversity, fairness and inclusion	1	2	3	4	5
I have been thinking of leaving the University because I feel isolated	1	2	3	4	5
I am treated with respect at the University	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that others do not appreciate my opinions at the University	1	2	3	4	5
The University is a place where I am able to fulfil my full potential	1	2	3	4	5
I have the same possibilities for academic success at the University as my peers	1	2	3	4	5
I found one or more communities or groups to which I belong at the University	1	2	3	4	5
Too much focus is placed on diversity, fairness and inclusion at the University	1	2	3	4	5
The University provides sufficient programs and resources for encouraging success of the diverse student body	1	2	3	4	5
I have to work more than others to be equally appreciated at the University	1	2	3	4	5
My experience at the University has a positive influence on my academic growth	1	2	3	4	5

23. During your studies how often have you communicated in a significant manner with people

... with different religion than your	Never	Rarely	Someti mes	Often	Very often
... with different political affiliation than your					
... from a nationality different than your					
... with sex different than your					
... with sexual orientation different than yours					
... who are from a different social class					
... who have physical or other disabilities in their development					
... who have learning difficulties, psychological or other difficulties that are not visible					

24. At your University, how often have had the opportunity to hear about the experiences and/or achievements of:

- women and girls
- different nationalities
- different religious communities
- people with disabilities
- homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals
- people identifying as transgender
- people with different income

25. At your University, members of different groups (sex, nationality and religion, people with disabilities...) appear in:

- images or posters at the faculty (social media)
- presentations of students' activities
- materials used at classes (for instance, books, videos)
- discussions and presentations on topics learned at class
- publications (for instance, year books, newspapers)
- special events and celebrations

On a scale from 1 to 10, assess how much you would be disturbed if a person from a different group

	Sex	nationality	religion	Political party	Person with a disability	Different place of living
Lives on your street						

Studies at your university						
Studies at your faculty						
Studies in your study group						
Is a member of your lectures or practice group						
Is your friend						

PART III EXPERIENCE WITH DISCRIMINATION (title for internal use)

26. Have you been a victim of discrimination at the faculty/ university / campus / in your academic community during your studies?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, by (you can circle several answers)

professors/teaching staff

colleagues/students

faculty administration

other

If Yes, how often have you experienced discriminatory events at the campus due to your:

- Disability
- Above average knowledge
- Ethnical identity
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or gender expression
- Marital status
- Age
- Religion

- Height or weight
- Political orientation
- Affiliation with a political party
- Social class
- Grades
- Native language

27. Have you been a victim of discrimination on a ground we did not list?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, please describe all other discriminatory events you have experienced.

How would you rank the discrimination issue in comparison to other issues at the University/Faculty ?

Less important

Equally important

More important

In which of the following situations have you noticed discrimination (several answers are possible)?

- in teaching contents/in textbooks,
- during grading,
- during enrolment,
- selecting assistants/demonstrators,
- selection of research teams or awarding research funds,
- selection of students to represent the faculty/university at scientific competitions at classes,
- class discussion,
- other (state)

28. Is there a procedure for reporting discrimination at your faculty?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If Yes, do you think that the procedure for reporting discrimination efficiently solves discrimination cases?

Have you reported discrimination at your Faculty?

Yes

No

If No, why? If Yes, where did you report the discrimination?

At the Dean's office

At the Vice-dean's office
To the professor
At the faculty administration
To the ECTS coordinator
To the Student Ombudsperson
To the student representatives
To the Assembly's Commission for Protection against Discrimination
To the Ombudsperson
At the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
At a NGO

What was the outcome?

A procedure was initiated
A procedure was not initiated

If a procedure was initiated, was discrimination determined?

Yes

No

I don't know

If a procedure was initiated, was the person sanctioned?

Yes

No

I don't know

Is there a policy for promotion/respect of differences at your Faculty?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If Yes, then do you think that the policy for promotion/respect of differences is efficient in protecting students against discrimination?

Yes

No
I don't know

Can you name the document/act in which the policy is contained or give us directions as to where we can read more about the policy?

Yes
No

Have you been a witness of discriminatory events towards other people at the University?

Yes
No

Have you reported it?

Yes
No

On a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent do you think students are discriminated at your Faculty?

On a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent do you think students are discriminated at your University?

Please share some other thoughts, comments or suggestions you might have with regards to the topics included in the survey. Do not include personal information that could help identify individuals in your response.

Thank you for participating in this important survey – we appreciate your time and contribution!

Now you can click Submit and close the browser.