

Summary of the interviews from polish team

As part of our youth exchange, participants conducted a series of interviews focused on the topic of discrimination. The interviews were carried out by young people with their peers as well as with teachers and school principals. The main aim of this activity was to gain a deeper understanding of how discrimination is perceived by different generations, how often it occurs among young people, where it most commonly takes place, and what actions can be taken to prevent and combat it.

The interview questions addressed personal experiences with discrimination, observations of discriminatory behavior, the role of appearance, generational differences, intentionality, and the responsibilities of schools and teachers in dealing with such situations. The collected responses provide a broad and insightful picture of discrimination as a contemporary social problem, especially in the context of modern technology and social media.

Frequency and Forms of Discrimination

Both young people and educators agreed that discrimination is a frequent problem among today's youth. However, most respondents emphasized that it occurs more often online than in real life. According to the participants, social media and the internet create a sense of anonymity, which makes people feel less responsible for their words and actions. This anonymity often leads to hate speech, harassment, and bullying that might not occur in face-to-face interactions.

When asked whether they had ever felt discriminated against or witnessed discrimination, many young people shared personal experiences. Some admitted that they had been stigmatized, judged, or exposed to unpleasant looks because of their appearance, opinions, or identity. Others stated that they had not experienced discrimination directly but had witnessed it happening to classmates or friends. Teachers confirmed that although not all of them had personally dealt with severe cases, they were aware that discrimination exists and affects students' well-being. Only one teacher mentioned never having direct contact with such a situation, while still acknowledging the problem on a broader level.

Discrimination: Definition and Intentionality

When asked what discrimination means to them, young respondents described it as humiliating, mocking, or excluding someone because of their appearance, race, sexual orientation, beliefs, or other personal characteristics. For them, discrimination is closely connected to a lack of respect and empathy.

Regarding whether discrimination is always intentional, many young people pointed out that it is not. They believe that individuals often hurt others without realizing the emotional pain they cause. Jokes, comments, or behaviors that seem harmless to one person may be

deeply offensive or damaging to another. This highlights the importance of awareness and education about the impact of words and actions.

The Role of Appearance

Appearance was identified as a significant factor influencing discrimination. Most young people agreed that how someone looks affects how they are perceived by others. One girl emphasized that appearance plays a role not only in discrimination but in almost all aspects of life, shaping first impressions and social interactions. According to the respondents, differences in clothing style, body type, or overall appearance can easily become reasons for judgment, exclusion, or ridicule, especially among teenagers.

Generational Differences and the Influence of Technology

One of the questions addressed to teachers concerned generational differences in discrimination. An experienced teacher noted that in the past, hurtful comments usually required face-to-face interaction, which often made people more cautious. Today, technology allows individuals to insult or harass others online without immediate consequences. This shift explains why discrimination and hate appear to be more widespread and visible, especially among younger generations who are highly active on social media.

Both teachers and students agreed that discrimination now occurs predominantly on the internet rather than in real life. Online platforms make it easier to spread negativity quickly and to reach a wide audience, increasing the emotional harm experienced by victims.

The Role of Schools and Teachers

When asked how schools respond to discrimination, teachers described various tools and strategies they use. These include conversations with students involved, organizing meetings with parents, explaining consequences, and involving school psychologists or counselors when necessary. Dialogue was highlighted as the most important and effective method.

Teachers also stressed the importance of understanding the root of the problem. One teacher pointed out that instead of focusing only on punishment, it is crucial to understand why a person is being discriminated against and what motivates discriminatory behavior. This approach can help prevent similar situations in the future and promote empathy among students.

Prevention and Combating Discrimination

In terms of prevention, both teachers and students emphasized education, conversation, and empathy. Teaching young people how to recognize emotions, understand differences, and respect others was considered essential. Teachers also highlighted the need to adapt to modern times by increasing education about social media, online safety, and responsible internet behavior. Learning how to navigate the digital world without harming oneself or others is seen as a key element in fighting online hate and discrimination.

Conclusions and Ideas for Action

The interviews clearly show that discrimination is a common and complex problem in Poland, especially among young people, and that it most often occurs online. While awareness of the issue is growing, there is still a strong need for education, open discussion, and empathy-building. Discrimination is not always intentional, which makes education and reflection even more important.

To effectively combat discrimination, schools should focus on dialogue, emotional education, and cooperation with parents and specialists. At the same time, young people should be encouraged to reflect on their behavior, both online and offline, and to react when they witness discrimination. Promoting empathy, respect, and responsible use of social media can help create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.