



INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT-1

COUNTRY SPECIFIC TEXT: POLAND

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN POLAND: OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUES OF GENDER, SEXUAL PREFERENCES, ETHNIC BACKGROUND, AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND DISABILITY

The aim of this article is to present an overview of the present state in Poland in five selected areas: gender, sexual preferences, ethnic background, cultural differences, and disability in higher education. The overview is based on the analysis of current literature related to the main aim of the study and the analysis of the data collected for the study. The empirical study was conducted among Polish instructors (40: 25 females; 14 males; 1 other) and students (105: 83 females; 14 males; 8 other) in autumn-winter 2021 with the help of a questionnaire created for the needs of this study.

Keywords: Polish higher educational establishments, gender, sexual preferences, ethnic background, cultural awareness

Wszyscy są wobec prawa równi. Wszyscy mają prawo do równego traktowania przez władze publiczne. Nikt nie może być dyskryminowany w życiu politycznym, społecznym lub gospodarczym z jakiejkolwiek przyczyny.

Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, art. 32

1. Introduction

Globalization has brought higher education into a new world, which is changeable, unstable and ambiguous. The world is shaped by an increasingly integrated global economy, technology, international knowledge network, and other forces beyond the control of higher education institutions. The education systems of tomorrow will be drastically different from those of today, so that innovative approaches to teaching and learning will proliferate and will be used more effectively because of technology and telecommunications (Mense, Lemoine, Garretson, Richardson, 2018).

Poland is a country with a thousand-year history and strong bonds to traditions, a country which made significant contributions to the development of western civilization in the areas of culture and science. The geographical position of the country and the experience of dramatical historical events shaped a culture, which is proud of the roots, surrounded by the values of honesty, faith (as a very religious nation), respect and focus on family. After

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the emergence of the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s, students' and teachers' organizations demanded a complete reorganization of the centralized system and autonomy for local educational jurisdictions and institutions. The political transformation that followed the collapse of the communist system was accompanied by changes in the educational system. The creation of the pluralistic market for curricula and textbooks was among the most important processes which was not influenced by communist ideology. In addition, the education system was decentralized, giving schools greater autonomy and greater involvement in the local environment. Another important process related to the structure of the secondary education was a decrease in the number of students who received only vocational education, and the increase in the number of graduates from secondary and higher education institutions. With the structural change in education and the curriculum reform, a modernization of Polish educational system was achieved (Charzyńska, Anczewska, Świtaj, 2012). The number of higher educational establishments (HEI for short) grew in Poland from 112 (105 public and 7 non-public) in 1990/1991 to 461 (131 public and 330 non-public ones) in 2009/2010, which was the peak year and in 2018/2019 number of HEIs is 392 (130 public and 262 non-public). The total student number increased steadily from less than 400,000 in the 1990/1991 to over 1.9 million in 2005/2006 (peak year) and slowed down nowadays to 1.2 million in 2018/2019 because of a steady decline in the population aged 19-24 years (Kolanowska, 2021).

Nowadays we observe the process of further developmental transformation while a tradition-oriented nation is trying to reply and adapt to the challenges of modern world in the fields of culture, economics and education. The system of higher education in Poland faces global challenges as well. Introducing the notions of cultural awareness, equity and equality into everyday life of future specialists, without looking back on political obstacles is not an easy task to fulfil.

In Poland in February 2012 was launched The Polish diversity charter (*Karta Różnorodności*). The charter document was created in collaboration with public administration, non-profit organisations, trade unions and business representatives. The main objectives of the charter are promoting diversity management in Poland and creating tools and guidance for companies, public institutions and non-profit organisations for diversity management in the workplace (Polish diversity charter, 2022).

The aim of the present article is to prepare an overview of the present situation concerning diversity highlighting the aspects of gender, sexual preferences, ethnic background, cultural differences, and disability among the groups of students and instructors at HEI in Poland, as well as to present the data of the research of the above issues in Poland.

2. Gender issues in Polish higher education institutions

Polish Constitution, Labour Code, and Act on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions all contain the notion of gender equality. However, the laws governing higher education hardly ever address gender equality. The Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Law 2.0, the Constitution for Science) does not claim gender equality as a value for HEIs and research organisations. There are no laws or policies addressing issues such as gender inclusion in research and teaching, harassment and mobbing, career advancement, or gender equity in decision-making. The only actions taken in favour of gender equality are directed at pregnant and parenting women as well as employees and students. They comprise the right to a personalized study plan and the ability to quit school for students (up to one year). Academicians are subjected to rules about working hours (those who are expecting or caring for a child under the age of four are not required to put in mandatory overtime), as well as extensions to periodic evaluations for maternity, paternity, parental, child care, or health leave (extended by the time corresponding to the length of absence). The program “Babies+” has been run by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy since 2011, and new modules (such “Babies in Academia”) were added in 2014. The initiative offers financial assistance to universities that operate or plan to operate nurseries, day-care centers, or other facilities for young children (under the age of three) (Gender Equality in Academia and Research, 2022).

In Poland, young women are generally more likely than young men to have a university degree: 43% of women and 29% of males between the ages of 25 and 34 have a postsecondary education. However, there are significant gender variations in the subjects that were studied. For example, women made up nearly 75% of university graduates in the field of health and welfare studies, compared to only 34% in engineering and 16% in computing. As a result, women make up 71% of teachers and 81% of those working in health and social services. In contrast, the proportion of female employees in the transport, storage, and communication industries is only 30%. In Poland, 59% of women are employed, which is close to the OECD average of 60%. The gender wage gap among high earners is likewise not very large. Poland has one of the lowest pay gaps according to gender in the OECD (10%) (the average in the OECD is 16%) for median wages. In Poland, women are more likely than men to have professional occupations and be working full-time. Among the OECD countries, Poland has one of the highest percentages of female managers (36%) (the average is 32%). Yet, only 7% of boards are made up of women, compared to 18% in France and 38% in Norway (Closing the Gender Gap, 2020).

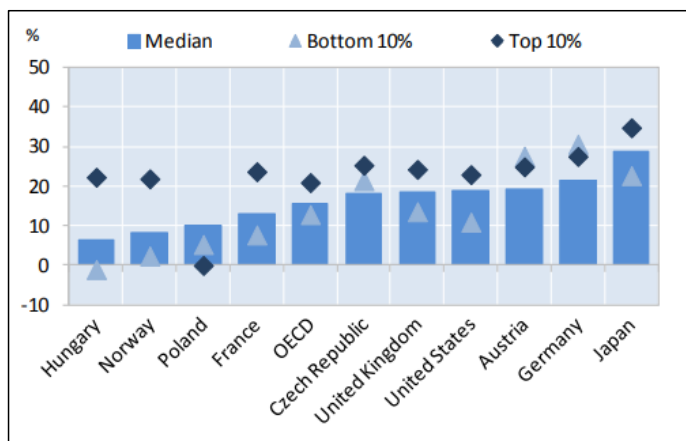


Figure 1. The gender pay gap in Poland

From: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/Closing%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Poland%20FINAL.pdf>

Eurostat data shows, that Poland compares well with other European countries in terms of representation of women in science and engineering, with 49% of women, compared to the average of 41%. There are 60% of female students in Poland. However, the percentage of women decreases in the course of the university career. Just 40% of them are reaching senior academic positions and only 27% are professors. In STEM subjects women account for around 10% of professors (Koschalka, 2020).

The University of Warsaw was the first university in Poland to adopt the “Gender Equality Plan”. It is based on five goals, formulated on the basis of research on the needs of the academic community, expert consultations and a review of solutions used in European universities. At the University of Warsaw the “Gender Equality Plan” has five main goals:

1. Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and strengthening positive attitudes towards diversity.
2. Supporting the development of women’s scientific careers.
3. Ensuring gender equality in recruitment of female and male employees, and in doctoral schools.
4. Easier combination of work and family life.

5. Increasing balanced sex representation with respect to chairpersons of faculty and university committees, management, expert and reviewer teams, and chairpersons of scientific and popularisation events (Gender equality plan, 2020).

Other Polish universities are joined the “Gender Equality Plan” as well. Among them: the Jagiellonian University, Adam Mickiewicz University, the University of Silesia in Katowice, the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow, Cracow University of Technology, Lodz University of Technology, Silesian University of Technology, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences. These changes bring hope, that gender equality will be respected at Polish HEI. The research in the field of gender issues among students is insufficient because of the fact, that no internal policies mention “Gender”, just “Sex” equality.

In Poland there is a number of interesting stimulatory projects for woman. Among them:

- The programme “For Women and Science”, which is conducted by L’Oréal, in cooperation with UNESCO, the Ministry of Science and Education and the Polish Academy of Science. The program aims to promote scientific achievements of women researchers.
- The national campaigns “Girls as Engineers!” and “Girls go Science”, which are managed by the Perspektywy Education Foundation in cooperation with the Conference of Rectors of Polish Technical Universities. The campaigns promote technical and engineering studies among high school girls.
- The project “Lean in STEM”, which is also managed by the Perspektywy Education Foundation. The project promotes technical and scientific education and careers for young women in the technological industry and other STEM-related areas.
- The foundation “Women Scientists – Polish Women Scientists Network”, which was created by the “Women Experts” to promote women’s achievements and expertise across different disciplines.
- The National Science Centre (NCN) is a government agency established to support basic research in Poland. It supports equal access of women and men to research funding.

There has been some advancement for women's rights on a global scale. According to the SDG indicator, with an emphasis on violence against women, 83.3% of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality are in place in Poland. As of 2018, the teen birth rate was 10.3, down from 11.1 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19. As of February 2021, women hold 28.3% of the seats in parliament. However, more needs to be done to attain gender equality. In the past 12 months, 3.1% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse by a current or former intimate partner. In addition, 17.6% of the time spent by women and girls aged 10 and older is spent on unpaid care and household chores, compared to 9.6% by men (Unwomen: Poland, 2022).

In general, in 2020 with 55,8 out of 100 points, Poland was placed 24th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Unfortunately, Poland’s score is 12.1 points below the EU’s score. Since 2010, its score has increased by only 0.3 points, with a slightly higher increase (+ 0.6 points) since 2017. Poland’s ranking has dropped by nine places since 2010 (Gender Equality Index, 2020).

3. Sexual preferences among Polish students and academic teachers

Numerous studies conducted recently have shown how crucial sexual expression is to the healthy development of the human body.

In Poland, a prominent study of sexual behaviour of students was conducted in 2020. 7678 students from 50 different faculties and universities took part in the study. This group consisted of 89.5% heterosexual women and 82.6% heterosexual men followed by 8.5% bisexual women and 5.3% bisexual men. 2% of women claimed homosexual orientation, so did 12.1% of men. Their results showed that the mean age of sexual initiation in the group of respondents was 18, although among bisexual women and homosexual men mean age of initiation was 17. What is more, students who were religious tended to engage in sexual activity in their later years. The groups most exposed to the consequences of risky sexual behaviour were mostly homosexual men, bisexual women, and art and military students (Stokłosa, Stokłosa, Porwolik, et al., 2021).

There is no further scientific statistical data about sexual preferences of teachers in Poland, so the issue of sexual preferences among academic instructors in Poland is a field of further investigations. But in general, the statistical studies show that Poland is currently ranked 39th out of 49 countries in the ILGA-Europe's annual review of the state of legal protection provided to LGBT persons in European countries (ILGA Europe, 2019).

4. Ethnic Background issues in Polish higher education institutions

There are multiple reasons why Poland can be listed as one of the most homogenous and less diversified countries in Europe, for instance, there is only one official language, 96% of the country is inhabited by Polish citizens, and almost 33 out of 38 million Poles declare being members of the Roman Catholic Church (The Statistical Council, <http://stat.gov./podstawowe-dane/>).

Unfortunately, some numbers which prove the homogeneity of Polish society, show that Poland is not in the best light in Europe and the whole world. These are: only 18% of Polish citizens speak English, only 13% respect the rights of homosexuals, and only 5% of Poles are not afraid to admit they belong to the LGBT community (Raport ILGA-Europe, 2022).

It is claimed that "... *'tolerance and multiculturalism' serve rather as a myth that legitimises current politics than actual administrative and political practice. But this ethnic homogenisation of the society makes issues of the acceptance of, and tolerance toward 'others' even more urgent*" (Buchowski, Chlewińska, 2012, p.10). Taking into consideration all these facts, foreign students often are subjected to discrimination based on ethnicity, race and religion.

With regard to ethnic and religious diversity, the Polish society is homogenous. But in the higher education the situation is different. According to the Supreme Chamber of Control (<https://www.nik.gov.pl/>, 2022), Poland provides "*appropriate legal and organizational conditions for the recruitment and education of foreigners at universities*".

In theory, according to the Polish Law of Higher Education, a foreigner can study in Poland for free. However, only persons who meet one of the following conditions have this option:

- They own a Pole's Card;
- They have a permanent residence permit in Poland;
- They have refugee status,
- They are covered by temporary protection in Poland;
- They received a government scholarship;
- They took part in a program for international students, e.g., Erasmus.

After meeting one of these conditions, a foreigner can apply for admission to studies on exactly the same terms as a person with Polish citizenship. International exchange programs, such as the aforementioned Erasmus, are particularly popular.

It has been noted that more and more foreigners want to study in Poland. The numbers are growing respectively: in the academic year 2016/2017 – 60.8 thousand people; 2017/2018 – 67.2 thousand people, 2018/2019 – 67.2 thousand people, 2019/2020 – 74.4 thousand people (Picture 2).

As the GUS analysis shows, ever more foreigners are interested in studying at Polish universities. In the academic year 2019/2020, 82,200 foreign students went to Polish universities, accounting for 6.8% of all students. The number of foreigners at our universities increased by 5% in comparison to the previous academic year. At the end of 2019, the largest number of students came from Ukraine (38.5 thousand people), Belarus (8.2 thousand people), India (3.3 thousand people), Norway, China, and Germany (1.4 thousand people each). The most popular fields of study in the academic year 2019/2020 were: medical faculty (7.4 thousand people), management (2.1 thousand people), computer science (1.7 thousand people), international relations (1.2 thousand people), and medical and dental faculty (1.1 thousand people) (<https://www.nik.gov.pl>, 2022).

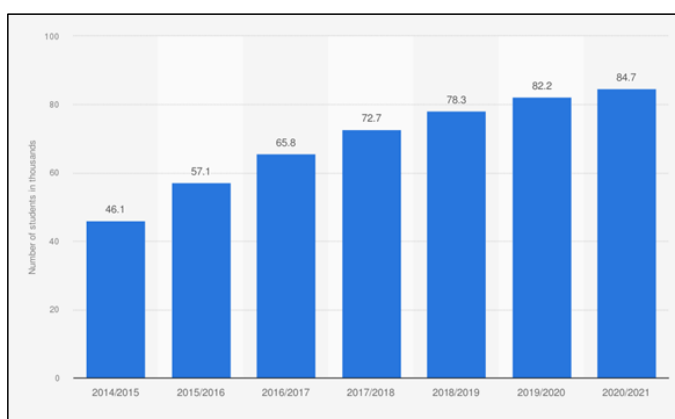


Figure 2. Number of foreign students in Poland 2014-2021

From: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1072307/poland-number-of-foreign-students-2014-2019/>

More than 1.2 million students studied at universities in the 2020/21 academic year, 1.2 % more than the previous year. In addition, there was a 3 % increase in the number of foreign students compared to the last academic year. The most numerous groups were students from Eastern countries, mainly from Ukraine and Belarus. The medical faculty was the most popular among international students. In the academic year 2019/2020, 82,200 foreign students went to Polish universities, accounting for 6.8% of all students. The number of foreigners at our universities increased by 5% in comparison to the previous academic year. The most numerous groups of foreign students were hosted at: Jagiellonian University in Kraków (2980 people), University of Warsaw (2885), University of Lodz (1801), Warsaw University of Technology (1747), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (1714), and University of Wrocław (1532). The most popular fields of study among foreign students were those related to business, administration, and law – they were chosen by more than 24,200 people. Another 12,400 foreigners chose to study social sciences, journalism, and information studies. Health and social care attracted nearly 10,800 people, while humanities and art – over 8,400. Almost 8,000 foreigners came to Poland to take up programmes related to services, and 6,000 foreigners wanted to study technology, industry, and construction. The least popular were agricultural studies, which attracted only 946 students from abroad (Statista: Number of foreigners studying in Poland, 2021).

Furthermore, the number of international academic staff in Polish universities is growing as well. A total of 93,200 academic teachers were employed in the universities (44,300 women), including more than 2,100 international academic staff. Almost 30% of foreign academic staff came from Ukraine, the rest came from the following countries: Germany (6%), Italy (5%), Slovakia (4%), Belarus, (4%), Great Britain (4%), Russia (4%), the Czech Republic (3%), Spain (3%) and India (3%) (Adamska, Grochowska-Subotowicz, Jabłoński, Leszczyński, Wiktor, Zielińska, 2021).

5. Disability issues in Polish higher education institutions

According to the official website of the Polish Government (Edukacja włączająca, 2022), inclusive education aims to increase the educational opportunities for learners and students of all ages, by providing them with conditions to develop their potential. The goal is to enable them to “*fully develop personally to the best of their abilities and to be fully integrated into social life*”.

UNESCO (2003, 2009) describes inclusion as a process of meeting the diverse needs of all children, young people, and adults by increasing their participation in science, culture, and social life and eliminating all forms of exclusion in education (<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>).

Inclusive schools are based upon a child-centered pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, and in developing an inclusive society (Source: UNESCO 1994 <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/>).

In other words, inclusive education applies to all those who are discriminated against, i.e., people with disabilities.

As stated in the Polish Journal of Laws (2014) item 392, 27.3.2014, “...*inclusive education is to provide special education that concerns children: deaf; hearing impaired; blind; partially sighted; with motor disabilities, including aphasia; with mild mental retardation; with moderate or severe mental retardation; with Autism, including Asperger's syndrome; with conjugated disabilities*”.

The Polish education system provides numerous opportunities to meet the diverse educational needs of children and young people with physical and mental disabilities (Edukacja włączająca dotychczasowe planowane, 2022).

There are various individualized forms of education organizations aiming to support the educational process of students with special educational needs, such as:

- Early Childhood Development Support (Wczesne Wspomaganie Rozwoju, WWR for short) – it applies from the moment of detection of disability to the start of school education. The number of children included in such a form of support is growing every year. In 2011, the number of children was 18.3 thousand; in 2018 the number grew to 57.5 thousand;
- Various forms of psychological and pedagogical assistance, didactic and compensatory classes, classes developing learning skills, individualized organisation of education process, therapeutic classes, workshops, and consultations;
- Adjusting the content, educational requirements, and organization of education with pupils and students to their individual needs and capabilities (e.g. selection of core curriculum, adjustment of educational requirements, special education, individual teaching, exemption from selected educational classes);
- Adjusting the time of commencement of the education process and its duration (early commencement or postponement of compulsory education, an extension of educational stages for disabled pupils/students, shortening the period of

education for learners who are socially maladjusted or at risk of social maladjustment, promotion to a higher class during the school year, individual course of learning);

- Adjusting the conditions and form of external examinations. *“The decision on the choice of the form of education (public, integrative or special) in Poland belongs to the parents (legal guardians) of the child”* (Edukacja włączająca dotychczasowe planowane, 2022).

According to the Polish Ministry of Education and Science (www.gov.pl), more and more people with disabilities are studying at Polish universities. In 2005, there were just over 9,000 of them, in 2007 – almost 20,000, and in 2010 – almost 30,000. Thanks to the reform of Higher Education in 2011, Polish universities gained new means of providing help and support to students with disabilities.

The basic tasks of a HEI for short, include creating conditions for people with disabilities to participate fully in the process of admission to the university to commence education, education itself, and conducting scientific research.

To support these tasks, the ministers supervising HEIs provide a subjective grant. Funding from such grants should be used to ensure that candidates, students, doctoral students, and staff are enabled to participate fully in the process of admission to studies of their choice. It can be spent on e.g., sign language courses, specialized training (including enabling spatial orientation on the university premises for disabled students), participation in contests and other various events, purchase of equipment and specialized devices supporting the didactic process, purchase scientific literature for university libraries for the needs of people with disabilities, adaptation of infrastructure.

The 2021 edition of representative research on Legal awareness in the context of discrimination and equal treatment shows that Poles, more often than in 2020, notice acts of discrimination. More than half of respondents (56%) mentioned sexual orientation (being homosexual) and gender identity (being transgender) (52%) as the most common reasons for discrimination. *“Slightly less frequently, respondents indicate race (e.g., skin colour) (49%), ethnicity (37%), nationality (36%) or religious belief (35%). A third (33%) consider disability to be a common cause of discrimination. The worldview is mentioned by 30% of respondents, while 28% indicate a poor financial situation”* (Miedzynarodowy dzien bez dyskryminacji, 2022).

According to the aforementioned research, Polish citizens are able to recognize discriminatory situations more and more frequently, especially the cases of discrimination based on disability (an increase of 12%). Some of the most common examples of real-life examples of discrimination include:

- asking a blind person with an assistance dog out of a restaurant (73%);
- refusal to admit a child with Down syndrome to kindergarten (70%);
- conducting classes in a remote form at a school for the deaf without translation into Polish Sign Language (68%);
- lack of adaptation of stops and buses to the needs of the elderly and disabled (e.g., lack of handrails, access to low-floor buses) (64%).

The decreasing number of architectural barriers, unfortunately, does not lead to a reduction of the number of mental barriers towards people with mental and physical disabilities and other conditions. The increasing emergence of non-profit organisations fighting racism and other forms of discrimination does not decrease the number of violent acts and hate speech incidents.

The tertiary education institutions are actively promoting openness to “the other”, “the new”, no matter if it is about foreigners, sexual minorities, or disabled people.

The analysis of the data concerning the study of the issues of gender, sexual preferences, ethnic background, cultural differences, and disability among instructors and students in Polish higher educational institutions in Poland is presented.

6. Methodology

The empirical study was conducted among instructors (40: 25 females; 14 males; 1 other) and students (105: 83 females; 14 males; 8 other) in Polish Universities in autumn-winter 2021 with the help of the questionnaire created for the needs of this study. The description of both groups is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistical description of the samples

			Instructors	Students
Gender	female	<i>N</i>	25	83
		%	64%	79%
	male	<i>N</i>	14	14
		%	35.6%	13.3%
	other	<i>N</i>	1	8
		%	0.4%	7.7%
Age	18-25	<i>N</i>	1	91
		%	2.6%	86.7%
	26-35	<i>N</i>	6	6
		%	15.4%	5.7%
	36-45	<i>N</i>	12	3
		%	30.8%	2.9%
	46-55	<i>N</i>	13	5
		%	33.3%	4.8%
	56-65	<i>N</i>	7	-
		%	17.9%	-
Degree	BA	<i>N</i>	0	93
		%	0.0%	88.6%
	MA	<i>N</i>	18	9
		%	45.0%	8.6%
	PhD degree	<i>N</i>	16	3
		%	40.0%	2.9%
	Professor	<i>N</i>	6	-
		%	15.0%	-

7. Results

In order to address the research questions, we carried out statistical analysis on obtained database using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software. We calculated basic descriptive statistics with Kolmogorov-Smirnow test, Spearman's rank correlation analysis, t Student's test for independent samples and ANOVA for independent samples.

Firstly, we will describe the results obtained in the group of Polish instructors. In the study group 32.5% of the instructors have experience between 0-5 years; 32.5% – 6-10 years; 17.5% – 11-15 years; 10.0% – 16-25 years; 27.5% – 26+ years. Among them 32.5% lived in a foreign country longer than 6 months, 32.5% have in their family or surroundings

someone with a disability and 40.0% have in their family or surroundings someone with different sexual preferences. It means, that the sample consists mostly of the instructors in the mid period of their academic career. At least one third of the instructors have experiences of leaving abroad, living with people with disabilities and different sexual preferences. These facts allow us to expect that instructors expressed valid opinions on these issues.

Looking at the sample's knowledge of procedures for reporting discrimination we got the next results: 52.5% of the instructors do not know anything about the procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on cultural awareness, 17.5% answered that there are no such procedures, while 30.0% have knowledge about such procedures; 47.5% of the instructors do not know anything about the procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on ethnic background, 20.0% answered that there are no such procedures, while 32.5% have knowledge about such procedures; 52.5% of the instructors do not know anything about procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on sexual preferences, 20.0% answered that there are no such procedures, while 27.5% have knowledge about such procedures; 57.5% of the instructors do not know anything about procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on gender, 20.0% answered that there are no such procedures, while 22.5% have knowledge about such procedures; 42.5% of the instructors do not know anything about procedure for instructors to report discrimination based on disability, 20.0% answered that there are no such procedures, while 37.5% have knowledge about such procedures. Unfortunately, such results show us, that in Poland it is still a lot of work should be done in the HEI to develop and introduce into practice the procedures for reporting discrimination.

The distribution of the answers for the scale "Cultural awareness", "Ethnic background" and "Disability" are close to left skewed distribution, while the answers for the scale "Sexual preferences" and "Gender" are pure left skewed distributions (see Figure 3).

It means, that the instructors in our sample during evaluation of the statements for the scales "Cultural awareness", "Ethnic background" and "Disability" most frequently chose the answers "Agree" and "Neutral", while evaluating the statements from the scales "Gender" and "Sexual preferences" the instructors mostly chose the answer "Strongly Agree". This can be a signal of social desirability, which shows the tendency of the respondents to give the answers in a way they deem to be more socially acceptable. The instructors could do it firstly because the topics of gender and sexual preferences are questionable in Poland and secondly because they wanted to create a favourable image of themselves and to avoid receiving negative evaluations in this field.

In the next step we performed Student's t test for independent samples to verify if the gender of instructors affects the level of five analysed scales. The analysis showed that in our sample there was only one statistically significant difference. In the group of female instructors, we got higher results in "Ethnic background scale", then in the group of males. Size of observed effect was moderate (see Table 2 and Figure 4).

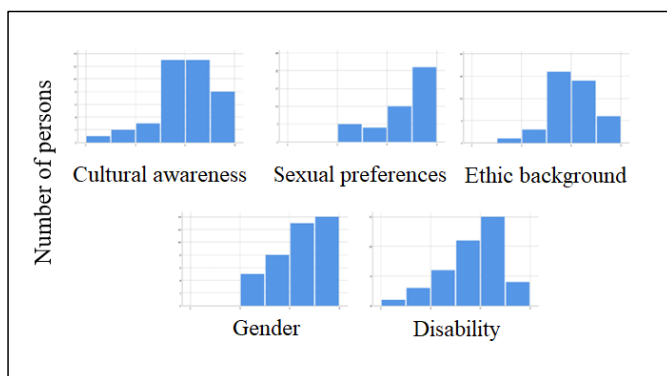


Figure 3. Histograms which present the distribution of the answers of the instructors for five scales

Table 2. Scales level in the sample of instructors

	together (n = 40)		female (n = 25)		male (n = 14)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Cultural awareness	4.06	0.62	4.17	0.53	3.90	0.76	1.34	.190
Ethnic background	3.99	0.45	4.12	0.37	3.80	0.50	2.28	.029
Sexual preference	4.32	0.65	4.47	0.58	4.15	0.66	1.56	.128
Gender	4.19	0.52	4.31	0.50	4.05	0.45	1.59	.121
Disability	3.83	0.59	3.82	0.63	3.82	0.52	0.02	.982

Such result is possible to explain by a higher social desirability or higher sensibility of women answering the questions of ethnic background in the field of higher education, on the other hand such result can be explained by a bigger size of female sample.

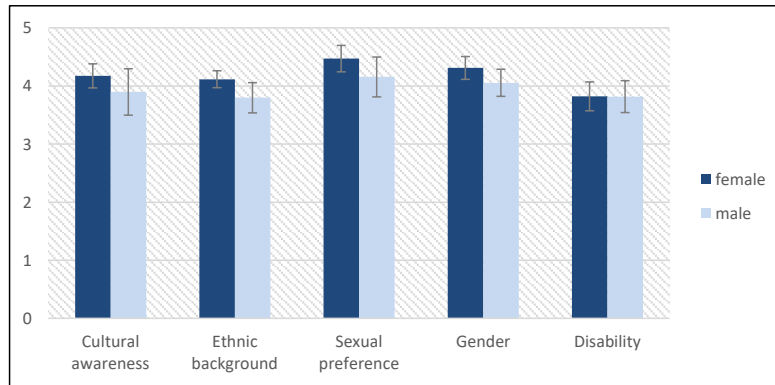


Figure 4. Scales level in the samples of female and male instructors

In the last step we verified if the age of instructors was correlated with the level of analysed scales. Spearman's rank correlation was performed. No statically significant correlations were found (see Table 3). Such result can be a consequence of the small size of the studied group.

The analysis of the answers for each particular item from each scale showed us that evaluating the items from the scale "Cultural awareness", instructors mostly agreed that they feel comfortable while working/studying with colleagues/students of different cultural backgrounds ($M=4,35$; $SD=0,7$) and that during group discussions or exercises they make

efforts to ensure all students are included regardless of their cultural background ($M=4,0$; $SD=1,32$). The instructors agree in general that they feel comfortable discussing cultural issues in the classroom ($M=3,87$; $SD=1,18$), providing opportunities for activities related to cultural awareness ($M=3,62$; $SD=1,19$) and addressing multicultural issues in the classes ($M=3,47$; $SD=1,32$). The instructors mostly disagree with the item “I feel uncomfortable when I am in the company of people from different cultural backgrounds” ($M=1,8$; $SD=1,04$), that means, they feel comfortable in such situations.

Table 3. Correlation of scales level in the group of instructors

		Poland
Cultural awareness	Spearman's rho	.12
	significance	.471
Ethnic background	Spearman's rho	.15
	significance	.361
Sexual preference	Spearman's rho	.10
	significance	.526
Gender	Spearman's rho	-.04
	significance	.804
Disability	Spearman's rho	-.16
	significance	.344

In case of the scale “Ethnic background”, the instructors mostly agreed that they feel comfortable in the company of people from different ethnic backgrounds ($M=4,07$; $SD=0,9$) and most of the instructors think, that prejudice about different ethnic or racial groups are wrong ($M=4,07$; $SD=0,79$), as well as that students should avoid telling jokes about other ethnicities and racial groups ($M=4,07$; $SD=0,79$). The instructors agree that they understand why students of other ethnic backgrounds act differently ($M=3,85$; $SD=0,73$), in general they accept different behavioural/verbal expressions of ethnicity in their classes ($M=3,77$; $SD=1,24$) and student's ethnic background does not affect how they behave in the classroom ($M=3,7$; $SD=0,89$). The lowest support got the answers concerning the prevention of racist behaviours in the classroom ($M=3,5$; $SD=1,98$) and general concern about racial inequality in education ($M=3,5$; $SD=1,98$).

The analysis of the evaluation of the items from the scale “Sexual preference” showed that instructors mostly agree that students who are gay should be able to receive equal education as heterosexual ($M=4,55$; $SD=0,9$), and their sexual orientation doesn't influence their academic life ($M=4,47$; $SD=0,8$). The instructors agree that they would feel comfortable teaching a gay student ($M=4,15$; $SD=1,02$) or having a homosexual officemate ($M=4,1$; $SD=0,8$). The instructors support the item “Homo and heterosexuals have the same learning-working habits” ($M=3,9$; $SD=1,2$) and do not agree with the item “Homosexuals affect the University's reputation negatively” ($M=1,47$; $SD=0,8$).

Data from the scale “Gender” shows that the instructors very much agree that students should be treated equally, regardless of their gender ($M=4,7$; $SD=0,67$) and in general the instructors are neutral to the specific interests and needs of males and females ($M=3,12$; $SD=1,04$). The instructors do not agree that females are better students than males ($M=2,17$; $SD=1,03$) and that some jobs/departments are not appropriate for females to study ($M=1,9$; $SD=1,12$). The instructors absolutely disagree that their attitude is different with males and females during the lessons ($M=1,67$; $SD=0,9$); that females should obey school rules more than males ($M=1,65$; $SD=0,86$); that for females, marriage is more important than education

($M=1,52$; $SD=1,01$), and that they prefer to teach only male or female classes ($M=1,52$; $SD=0,81$).

The analysis of the evaluation of the items from the scale “Disability” showed that instructors believe that they adjust their teaching methods and techniques to support students with disabilities in their classes ($M=3,95$; $SD=0,78$). The instructors agree that students with disabilities can socially and emotionally develop when they study with students without disabilities ($M=3,62$; $SD=0,92$) and that they feel comfortable working with students with disabilities ($M=3,52$; $SD=1,17$). At the same time the instructors confess, that they do not have enough knowledge and skills to educate students with disabilities ($M=2,9$; $SD=0,9$). The instructors disagree that they tend to become impatient with disabled students ($M=1,9$; $SD=1,12$) or that they do not expect too much from disabled students ($M=1,9$; $SD=1,03$), as well as that students with disabilities are a burden on the educational system ($M=1,77$; $SD=0,9$), and that students with disabilities should be educated in separate classes ($M=1,67$; $SD=0,76$).

In the next step we describe the results obtained in the group of Polish students. In the study group of students 19.0% lived in a foreign country longer than 6 months, 54.3% have in their family or surroundings someone with a disability and 63.8% have in their family or surroundings someone with different sexual preferences. The sample consists mostly of BA students 88.6%. Only 19.0% of them have experience in leaving abroad longer than 6 months. Most of the students are between 19 and 25 years old (86.7%), and it allows us to expect that students expressed valid opinions on studied issues.

From the sample’s knowledge of procedures for reporting discrimination we got the next results: 65.7% of the students do not know anything about the procedure for students to report discrimination based on cultural awareness, 13.3% answered that there are no such procedures, while 21.0% have knowledge about such procedures; 62.9% of the students do not know anything about procedures for students to report discrimination based on ethnic background, 11.4% answered that there are no such procedures, while 25.7% have knowledge about such procedures; 61.9% of the students do not know anything about procedures for students to report discrimination based on sexual preferences, 17.1% answered that there are no such procedures, while 21.0% have knowledge about such procedures; 62.9% of the students do not know anything about procedures for students to report discrimination based on gender, 17.1% answered that there are no such procedures, while 20.0% have knowledge about such procedures; 60.0% of the students do not know anything about procedures for students to report discrimination based on disability, 12.4% answered that there are no such procedures, while 27.6% have knowledge about such procedures. Unfortunately, such results show us, that in Poland there is still a lot of work to be done in the HEI to develop and introduce into practice the procedures for reporting discrimination for students, as well as for the instructors.

The distributions of the answers for the scales “Sexual preferences” and “Gender” are close to left skewed distribution, for the scales “Ethnic background” and “Disability” are close to uniform distribution, while the distribution of the answers for the scale “Cultural awareness” is close to normal (see Figure 5). Such data allow us to expect, that students were giving the honest answers/evaluations of the statements for the all scales, excepting “Sexual preferences” and “Gender”, where they were trying to give socially desirable answers.

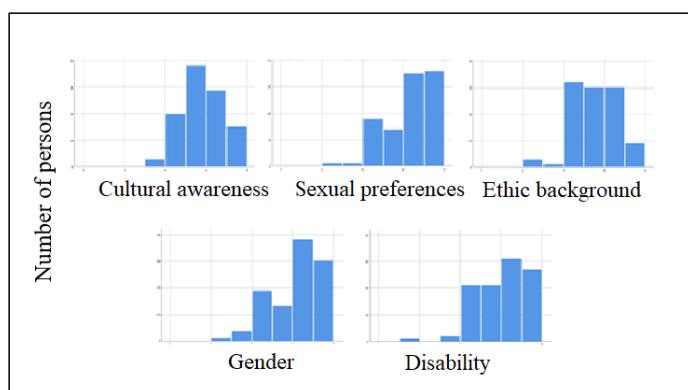


Figure 5. Histograms which present the distribution of the answers of the instructors for five scales

The students in the sample during evaluation of the statements for the scales “Cultural awareness” were giving honest answers. Regarding “Sexual preferences” and “Gender”, they mostly preferred choosing the answers “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”; for the scales “Ethnic background” and “Disability” the answers were distributed almost equal between the answers “Strongly Agree”, “Agree” and “Neutral”.

In the next step, we performed Student’s t test for independent samples to verify if the gender of students affects their scoring. The analysis showed, that in our sample there were no significant differences (see Table 4 and Figure 6).

Table 4. Scales level in the sample of students

	together (n = 105)		female (n = 83)		male (n = 14)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Cultural awareness	3.86	0.63	3.89	0.64	3.75	0.66	0.72	.476
Ethnic background	3.72	0.59	3.76	0.63	3.53	0.47	1.29	.200
Sexual preference	4.16	0.72	4.13	0.69	4.38	0.82	-1.23	.224
Gender	4.10	0.72	4.11	0.74	4.01	0.66	0.48	.634
Disability	4.04	0.72	4.02	0.74	4.10	0.59	-0.36	.722

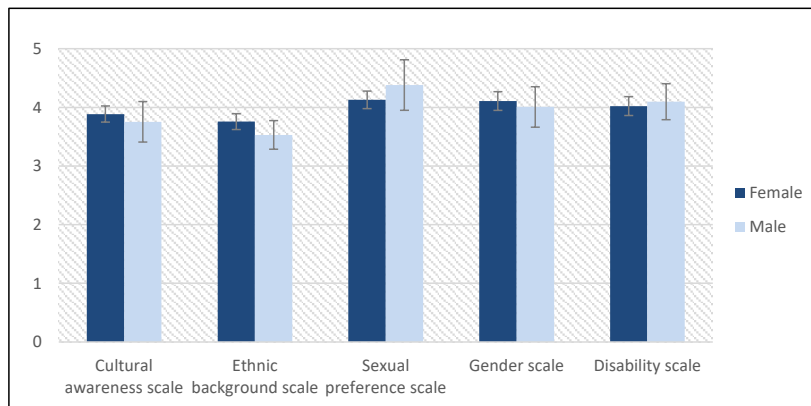


Figure 6. Scales level in the samples of female and male students

In the last step, we verified, if the age of students was correlated with their scoring. Spearman's rank correlation was performed. No statically significant correlations were found (see Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation of scales level in the group of students

		Poland
Cultural awareness	Spearman's rho	-.09
	significance	.365
Ethnic background	Spearman's rho	-.12
	significance	.227
Sexual preference	Spearman's rho	.01
	significance	.903
Gender	Spearman's rho	-.14
	significance	.142
Disability	Spearman's rho	.01
	significance	.931

For the scale "Cultural awareness", the students agree that their instructors are comfortable working/studying with colleagues/students of different cultural backgrounds ($M=4,23$; $SD=0,64$) and that during group discussions or exercises the instructors make efforts to ensure all students are included regardless of their cultural background ($M=3,99$; $SD=1,04$). Instructors also seem comfortable discussing cultural issues in the classroom ($M=3,9$; $SD=0,96$). The students agree in general, that their instructors try to provide opportunities for activities related to cultural awareness ($M=3,57$; $SD=0,83$) and adequately address multicultural during classes ($M=3,48$; $SD=0,98$), as well as help students to increase their understanding of multicultural issues ($M=3,46$; $SD=0,94$).

In terms of "Ethnic background", the students agree that their ethnic background does not affect instructors' behaviour in the classroom ($M=3,95$; $SD=1,13$) and instructors accept different behavioural/verbal expressions of ethnicity ($M=3,85$; $SD=0,87$). The students mostly agree with the statements that instructors understand why students of other ethnic backgrounds act differently ($M=3,48$; $SD=1,18$), avoid telling jokes about other ethnicities and racial groups ($M=3,44$; $SD=1,28$), and help students to develop their awareness of different ethnic backgrounds ($M=3,31$; $SD=1,13$). The students slightly support or were not able to evaluate the statements that instructors are concerned about racial inequality in education ($M=3,25$; $SD=1,12$), try to stop racist behaviours at the classroom ($M=3,12$; $SD=1,75$), and react to ethnically biased behaviour in the classroom ($M=2,86$; $SD=1,55$).

The analysis of the evaluation of the items from the "Sexual preference" scale showed that students think that their instructors almost always feel comfortable teaching homosexual students ($M=3,7$; $SD=1,26$) and instructors make learning opportunities equal to gay and heterosexual students ($M=3,68$; $SD=1,46$). For students in our sample, it was difficult to evaluate the thoughts of the instructors concerning the idea that homo and heterosexual students have the same learning-working habits ($M=3,08$; $SD=1,46$). The students disagree with the statement that any mentions of the word "homosexuality" makes their instructors feel uncomfortable ($M=1,77$; $SD=0,96$), that homosexuality is a psychological disorder and requires therapy ($M=1,56$; $SD=1,08$), and that homosexual instructors affect the University's reputation negatively ($M=1,53$; $SD=0,98$).

The analysis of the students' evaluation of the items from the "Gender" scale show that they agree with the statement that instructors treat students equally, regardless of their gender ($M=3,96$; $SD=1,15$). The students disagree with the statements that their instructors' attitudes are different with males and females ($M=1,96$; $SD=1,01$), that according to their instructors some jobs/departments are not appropriate for females to study at ($M=1,8$; $SD=1,09$), that instructors expect females to obey school rules more than males ($M=1,77$; $SD=1,06$), that instructors show that females are better students than males ($M=1,75$; $SD=0,98$), that instructors would prefer teaching only male or only female classes ($M=1,71$; $SD=0,93$), and that marriage is more important than education for females ($M=1,53$; $SD=0,97$).

Data from the analysis of the students' evaluation of the items from the "Disability" scale showed that mostly it was difficult for students to evaluate whether their instructors are comfortable working with students with disabilities ($M=3,19$; $SD=1,65$), are willing to adjust their teaching to support students with disabilities ($M=3,18$; $SD=1,55$), and have knowledge and skills to educate students with disabilities ($M=3,05$; $SD=1,55$). Students disagree with the statements that according to instructors, students with disabilities should be educated in separate classes ($M=1,75$; $SD=1,17$), instructors do not expect too much from disabled students ($M=1,74$; $SD=1,21$), that instructors become impatient with disabled students ($M=1,52$; $SD=1,08$), and think that students with disabilities are a burden on the educational system ($M=1,51$; $SD=0,99$), as well as that instructors treat students with a disability as if they have no feelings ($M=1,47$; $SD=0,91$).

Conclusion

The analysis of different sources showed that, even though Polish universities are open to admitting foreign students and students with various disabilities and conditions, there are still multiple encounters of discrimination and racism.

According to the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights (Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej RPO), discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic origin occurs when a person is treated worse than another person in a similar situation because of his or her race, nationality or ethnic origin (direct discrimination), or when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice may place persons of a particular racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared to other persons (indirect discrimination). Discrimination based on race, nationality or ethnic origin also occurs in the case of undesirable conduct based on racial or ethnic origin, the object or effect of which is to violate the dignity of the person and create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or derogatory atmosphere (Dyskryminacja, 2022).

There are some anti-discrimination practices established at HEIs and research organisations in Poland. For example, Anti-mobbing Commissions or Committees in Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Medical University of Gdańsk, Medical University of Warsaw, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, University of Gdańsk, University of Łódź. They are responsible for actions preventing discrimination and mobbing, identifying instances of mobbing/sexual harassment, conducting explanatory procedures in cases of mobbing/discrimination, formulating proposals to mitigate mobbing/sexual harassment, and conflict resolution. Anti-discrimination and Equal Treatment Commissions at HEIs and research organisations in Warsaw University, Pedagogical University of Kraków, University of Łódź, University of Wrocław are responsible for institutional change and awareness-raising, including:

- monitoring equal treatment based on sex, age, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation;
- drafting an equal treatment policy and proposals on issues related to unequal treatment and discrimination;
- recommending actions and formulating conclusions in cases of discrimination;
- supporting and advising victims of discrimination;
- preventing discrimination on any legally protected ground;
- recommending training and organising anti-discrimination awareness campaigns;

- investigating cases of discrimination/unequal treatment (Gender Equality in Academia and Research, 2022).

The results of our empirical study allow us to sum up that, although both groups were trying to give socially desirable answers, their answers are supporting each other. Students have very good opinion about their instructors, and in the opinions of the instructors we did not find critical points. At the same time, it was clear to see from the data in the group of instructors and students, that there is a lack of knowledge about the procedures for reporting discrimination based on cultural awareness, on ethnic background, on sexual preferences, on gender, and on disability. The obtained results show that in the HEI in Poland a lot of effort should be put to develop the practice for reporting discrimination. Other studies also showed that in many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women's access to assets, and gender and the environment – there is a lack of comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. *“Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in Poland”* (Unwomen: Poland, 2022).

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