



# A GUIDE TO EQUALITY

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In lieu of an introduction – three important words:

## REFLECTION



## EDUCATION



## LEGISLATION



### Dear Readers

This guide has been created with the intention of taking you through the introductory issues related to building relationships based on equality in our daily lives. We focused mainly on school life, but occasionally we also refer to personal and family experiences related to relationships between colleagues and friends. We will talk about different aspects of equality and different ways of working for equality. To create our common “journey to equality”, we will use three terms, recognised by the OECD (see OECD 1987) as the three key aspects of implementing equality in the lives of individuals, groups, states and societies. The three aspects are:

**Reflection** – our individual thoughts, beliefs and everyday sensitivity,

**Education** – the knowledge and skills that we acquire at school,

**Legislation** – the legal solutions in force in Poland and in the European Union.

Thus the three parts of this Guide are also titled as such:

**Part 1 – REFLECTION:** it will be useful for your personal research and reflection. It contains a lot of knowledge in the field of social psychology, plenty of questions and exercises that will allow you to reflect on your behaviour and the phenomena that surround you. Pay particular attention to the sections titled “Exercises for Reflection”. These are specific tasks, inspiration to observe your surroundings and notice various important phenomena related to building equality. This part of the Guide will be interesting for readers interested in psychology, social life and the development of interpersonal relationships.

**Part 2 – EDUCATION:** suggests solutions that you can propose at school. It also shows how important your education is in the process of climbing to the highest levels of maturity for equality activities. This part of the Guide will be an interesting source of ideas and inspiration for people who like to start new activities and share what they learn with the school community and their surroundings. Pay attention to the sections entitled “**A good plan is most important**” – these are tools that will help you plan specific activities at school and propose them to, for example, teachers and educators.

**Part 3 – LEGISLATION:** it will come in handy when you are looking for information about the legal status. It mainly contains quoted excerpts from the Polish Constitution and other important legal documents, as well as websites directing you to sources of information on legal regulations, so it will be a good basis for your own further research if you are interested in the law.



# PART 1: REFLECTION



# Different but equal. How to ensure equal rights for different members of the group?

This Guide deals with the issue of equality. But what exactly does it mean? Detailed legal definitions and regulations specifying this concept can be found in [Part 3](#) of this Guide. Now, however, let's try to talk about it, referring to your personal thoughts and experiences.

Democratic societies develop a definition of equality that includes assumptions about (Perotti 1994):

- equality with regards to the law,
- equal life opportunities,
- equal access to participation in social life.



Think about the groups you belong to. School, class, group of friends, family, nation, belonging to a community living in a specific geographic region or continent. Do you think we are all equal members of our group? And what does it mean to be “an equal member of the group”?

Does this mean that everyone can make decisions equally?

But does your new classmate know where to go after school, does he know the area and can suggest something? Or maybe at the beginning “he should just listen to others”? Or maybe he will have a completely new, great idea?

Or maybe equality means that everyone should be looked after and be helped? But does your little brother need exactly the same help and care as you?

Or maybe equality means the same access to different opportunities? But does that mean you have to give your computer to you one-year-old brother for half a day?



Scientists, writers, social activists, lawyers, politicians, management boards of big companies, journalists, teachers, as well as students – just like you – are looking for answers to questions about the theoretical and practical meaning of the concept of equality.

It is clear from the questions we ask here that the concept of “we are equal” must be distinguished from that of “we are the same”. **“We are equal” means we are equally important. But we are not the same.** Your friend is as important as you are when you work together in the classroom or play soccer on the field, but you and your friend probably have different interests, different skills, and different needs. You are not the same. Equality, then, goes hand in hand with the ability to reconcile different needs and interests, because, although different, they are just as important.

## The most important issues concerning the equality of people with different characteristics concern (OECD 1987):

- equality of people with different talents,
- equality of people with different physical and psychological abilities,
- equality of people with different life experiences,
- equality of people representing various **gender groups**,
- equality of people representing different ethnic groups,
- equality of people representing various national groups,
- equality of people who are followers of different religions, philosophies and value systems,
- equality of people who follow different customs and traditions, lead different lifestyles.

*Gender refers to cultural gender. Each culture requires certain specific behaviours from representatives of different biological sexes. For example, in some cultures boys are expected to let girls through the door, and girls are expected to take advantage of open doors and pass through first – this is a cultural scenario that is known to both genders. In other cultures, there is no such rule – the one who is closer to the door passes first. So when you are a girl from the “passing” culture, and someone is a boy from a different culture and does not know your cultural scenario, you can... bump into each other at the door. The principle of equality of different gender groups says that neither of you is “better” or “worse” in this case. You should simply agree on a course of action by a partnership agreement.*



All these differences are our very valuable resources. Thanks to such differences, students in the same class, for example, can ask very interesting questions, tell interesting stories, make various unusual comparisons, give unconventional examples from life, and share various skills with each other.

# Exercises for Reflection

What are your interesting features, skills, talents and experiences that distinguish you from your classmates / schoolmates and friends? What discoveries do you make with them? What kind of people do you meet thanks to them, what do you learn, what phenomena can you understand?

What experiences and talents of someone from your class/school or of your friends, helped you discover something interesting or learn something new?



**My interesting / distinguishing features:**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**Distinguishing features of people around me:**

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- 
- 
- 
- 

**What can my friends learn from me?**

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- 
- 
- 

**What can I learn from people around me?**

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- 
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- 
-

# Good practices

Thanks to scientific research, we already know that effective implementation of the principles of equality involves (Perotti 1994):



**interaction** – that is, the opportunity for people with different experiences and beliefs, representing different groups, to meet in one place and establish relationships – this can be a joint project, dance, singing, sports competitions or just being together,



**communication** – that is, the opportunity to share your own observations and thoughts – it can be a conversation, but also writing e-mails, watching movies or working together on a project,



**negotiating** – an opportunity to agree on what we will do together as a group, trying to meet the needs of different people who interact and communicate with each other,



**dialogue** – i.e. the basic tool of communication (exchange of opinions and thoughts) – dialogue is the opposite of a monologue, i.e. a situation in which only one person speaks and others have to listen,



**reciprocity** – i.e. by helping each other, supporting each other, learning from each other, and developing interests thanks to mutual inspiration,



**mutual responsibility** – which is part of “reciprocity”: consisting of taking joint responsibility for the quality of our relationship, always ensuring that both parties are concerned that the other party is treated in accordance with the principles of equality, but also that they report when they feel they are treated unequally as both parties take responsibility for how the interaction, communication and dialogue will proceed,



**mutual support** – another component of “reciprocity”: helping each other achieve all of the above-mentioned assumptions.

**How can we check if our group, class or school is following the rules described here?**

See the next section for a detailed description of a tool developed by scientists to increase the Power Equality in your group, class, school, family and surroundings.

# Power Equality – Equality of Powers

In order to introduce the rules of cooperation based on equality, you can use this tool developed by two professors from Colorado State University (USA): Shelley A. Haddock and Tony Schindler Zimmerman. This tool is called **Power Equality – Equality of Powers** (Haddock, Zimmerman 2001).

**Power Equality – Equality of Powers is a tool that is very useful for:**

- learning how to talk about equality with classmates and outside of school,
- learning how to build relationships based on the benefits of equality both inside and outside the classroom,
- recognising your strengths and the skills of your relatives, friends, colleagues and other people around you – seeing how skilfully you use the principles of equality, and also recognising the areas where you can develop and improve,
- learning how to formulate common goals related to finding new areas in which you can introduce the principles of equality, as well as work towards equality in your surroundings (at school, among peers),
- tracking and measuring your progress and that of your environment with regards to incorporating equality in everyday life.



## Building the Power Strength involves the following steps:

### Step 1.

## Introducing the topic of equality to everyday conversations

interaction,  
communication

We don't usually discuss equality in class or during family dinner. However, it is worth starting such conversations. So you can ask your relatives, your teachers and classmates about how they understand the principles of equal treatment in everyday life and whether, in their opinion, each person feels treated in accordance with the principles of equality.



Is there maybe someone around you who needs support?  
Do others ask him/her about it sometimes?



Is the opinion of everyone in your group / class / school / family equally valued?

Does everyone participate in discussions on an equal footing?

Do any of your classmates feel that they have too little influence on your joint decisions?



Does the division of responsibilities have to do with the division between girls and boys? If so, is this division right?

Is there anyone around you who, for example, is just learning to speak Polish and therefore his opinion is sometimes omitted?

Is this person part of a real dialogue?

Does anyone expect girls to take care of the kitchen tasks and boys to take care of the garden activities, for example? Why should it be like that? After all, girls can mow the lawn, and boys who can handle a knife can make sandwiches, right?



Are friends and colleagues who, for example, move less efficiently or have some health problems, included in all your plans and activities? Do they have equal access to decisions and to influence?

## Exercises for Reflection

Remember that **equality does not mean that everyone is the same, but rather that they are treated equally, have equal rights, have equal access to decision making, and feel equivalent.** It is helpful to ask group, class, or family members the following questions:

- What do you think equality means in a group, among friends and in a family?
- What else is important in the discussion of equality?
- What do you mean by “we should be treated equally”?
- What is your experience with equality?

Compare the answers of different people. Is there any common factor among them? What is the common thread in these answers, connecting people with different experiences, responsibilities and points of view?



## Step 2.

# Building our understanding of equality together



In [Step 1](#), we collected different opinions and ideas. We will probably learn that different people may understand “equality” differently. From the conversations you conduct in [Step 1](#), it may appear that, for example, each of the group members has a different definition of equal access to decisions. Some will believe that earning money means that only that person has the right to decide. Others will say that someone who gets up early every day to prepare a meal for the whole family is not treated “equally”. Or you may find that there are a few people who feel “most unequally treated” for various reasons. So how do we understand equality together, and not just discuss different ways of understanding it?



## Exercises for Reflection

Together with a group of friends or family members, work out a common answer to the following questions. In **Step 1**, we already found a common element that connects the views of different people. Use it now to make it easier for everyone to conduct a dialogue and negotiate a common solution.

**How do we understand equality in a group of friends?**



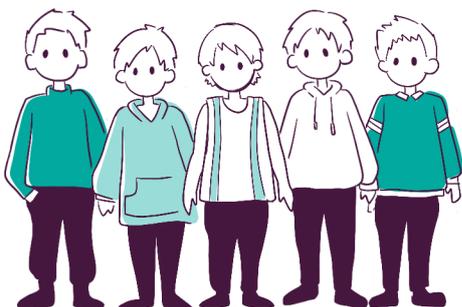
**How do I know that my friends treat me equally?**

**How do we understand equality in the family?**

**How do I show my friends that we are all equal in the group?**

**How do I know that my family members treat me as equal?**

**How do I show my relatives that we are all equal in the family, although we have different responsibilities and abilities?**



## Exercises for Reflection

One area where equality is becoming a very important issue is respecting different opinions and being able to participate in decision making.

Together, come up with answers to the following questions:

**How are decisions made among my friends?**

**Do we ask everyone for their opinion?**

**Do we respect the opinion of each person?**

**Does the opinion of one person – often the same – often prevail?**

**If so, why does this person have the greatest influence on the decisions made?**

## Step 3.

# Examining the needs and benefits of equality



It is worth considering why equality is important to us and why we want to incorporate it into the daily life of our class, group of friends or in the family.

In a conversation about equality-based action – at school, for example – look for common answers to the following questions. Write them on posters and hang them on the classroom wall. At the same time, make sure that they do not remain just slogans, but that they are implemented. You can also read about how to enrich school life with equality activities in part 2 of this Guide, titled [EDUCATION](#).

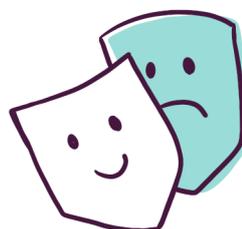
- **What do we want to accomplish with our work to introduce equality in school? How will we know if our work, our conversations, and our search for answers to equality questions were helpful? How will we know that working on equality has improved our school?**
- **How will we know that the changes we wanted are taking place? What will be different? What will happen? Together, let us create a picture of a school based on the principles of equality.**

To illustrate these desired changes, you can, for example:

paint a picture,

make a video,

put on a theatrical performance.



## Step 4.

# Evaluating strengths and skills



In this step, we will assess our competences and skills related to incorporating equality in a group of friends, at school, or in the family. We will assess equality resources and the good solutions we are already applying.

- **What have we already done to begin our journey towards equality? What do we already have? What works? What have we already introduced, what can we do, what can be helpful in our quest for equality? What are our features / skills / solutions that are already working well?**
- **What will be our next small step? What will we introduce, start, notice tomorrow?**

Remember that Steps 3 and 4 can be combined.

For example, together you can organise the following at your school:



interviews with the Masters of Equality  
(people at school or the community who can serve as role models),



film screenings,



reading reports,



performances,



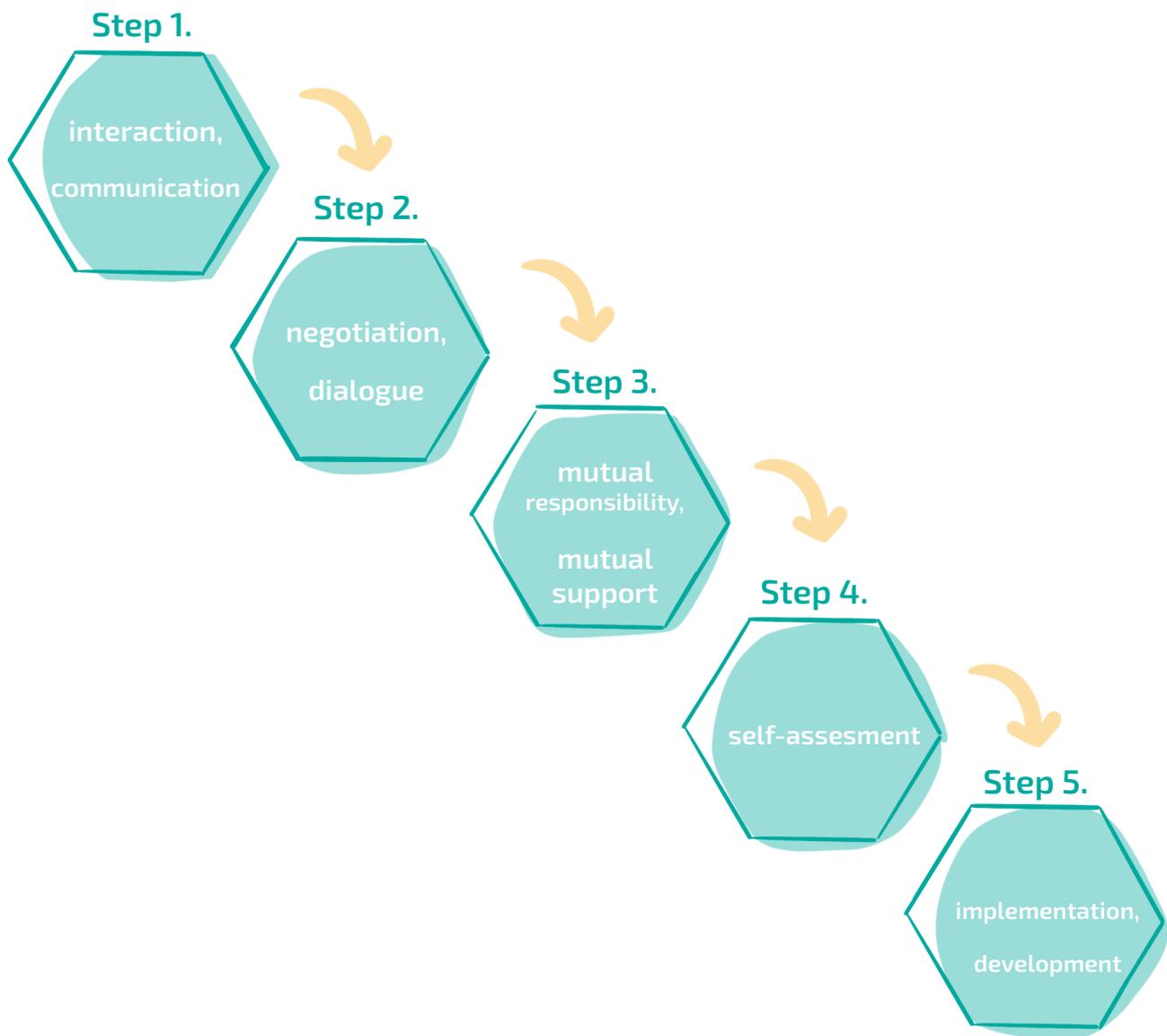
exhibitions.

## Step 5.

# Checking our progress



We will collect, measure and research everything that can be helpful in achieving our goal and in introducing changes. Our task is to translate into “measurable practice” our observations, discussions, conversations and conclusions from Steps 1-4.



# Exercises for Reflection

## 1. Let's establish a ten-point scale:



We can draw this scale on a poster, or visualize it with symbols, photos or graphic signs. It is important that it hangs in a generally accessible place.

On our scale, "10" means that the equality action is implemented to the highest degree, and the equality action situation is exactly what we want it to be. How can we name this condition? How can we picture it, describe it?



On the same scale, "1" means that what we want is minimally achieved. Similarly – let's illustrate, name and describe this state.



## 2. Let's establish the current position of our group, school or family on our scale.

Where are we on the scale today?

What proves that we are here? What tell us this?

How do we know that we are here?

What is it that we are doing that we can see that we are right here?

For example, we might consider ourselves to be "4" on our scale:



### 3. Let's assess how we have achieved the current level of equality, our skills, knowledge and abilities used so far.

How did we go from "1" to "4"?

What helped us / what was useful, what was effective?

What are we doing that places us at "4"?

What have we done, introduced that has succeeded?

What skills and abilities have we already used?

Has anyone helped us with this? What helped us?

### 4. Let's define where we want to be on the scale – for example still this year.

Where do we want to be on this scale? (for example, as a result of our work)

What is there?

What do we do there, how do we act, what do we feel?

What's going on there that's different than at "4"?

What will change if we get there?

How will this affect our school, our group, our lives?

What will others notice: our classmates, family, or friends?

### 5. Let's check if we have ever been in a position higher than "4" in some other group, under different circumstances.

Do we have experience in equality activities at a level higher than "4"?

Has anyone from our team ever been on this scale in a higher position?

What is the highest position we have been in?

What was different then? What were we doing? What did we feel, how did we act, what was important?

How did we do it, how did it happen?

What helped us get there? What supported us?

What was useful? How did it help?



## 6. What is one point higher?



Let's describe what will be on the scale when we move one step further, when things are "one point" better.

What would it be like if the road to "better" began – what would it be like at "5"?

How will we know that we are at "5"?

What does the school, group, family look like when we are at "5"?

What's different here? What is going on here that wasn't at "4"?

What are we doing here?

What helps us?

What do others see?

## 7. How do we start the "journey to equality"? What do we do to move one small step forward?

What would help us move one step further?

What could we talk about today, right now to take this step?

What would be especially useful? What are our priorities for today?

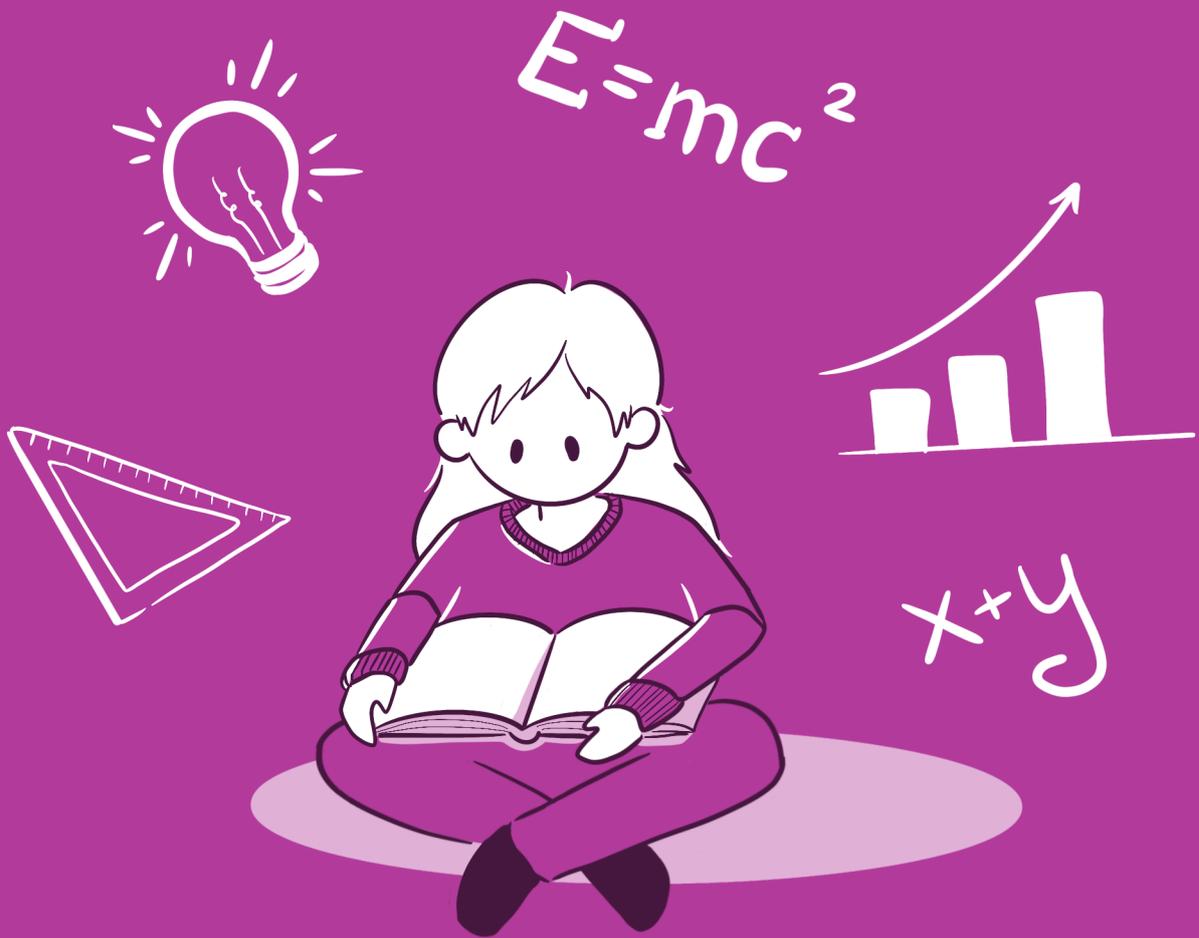
How can we use all the information we have collected to take the first step?

What will this small step look like?

What do we have to do? Who will do it? How will they do it? When will it be done?

What / who / how can help on our "journey to equality"?

# PART 2: EDUCATION

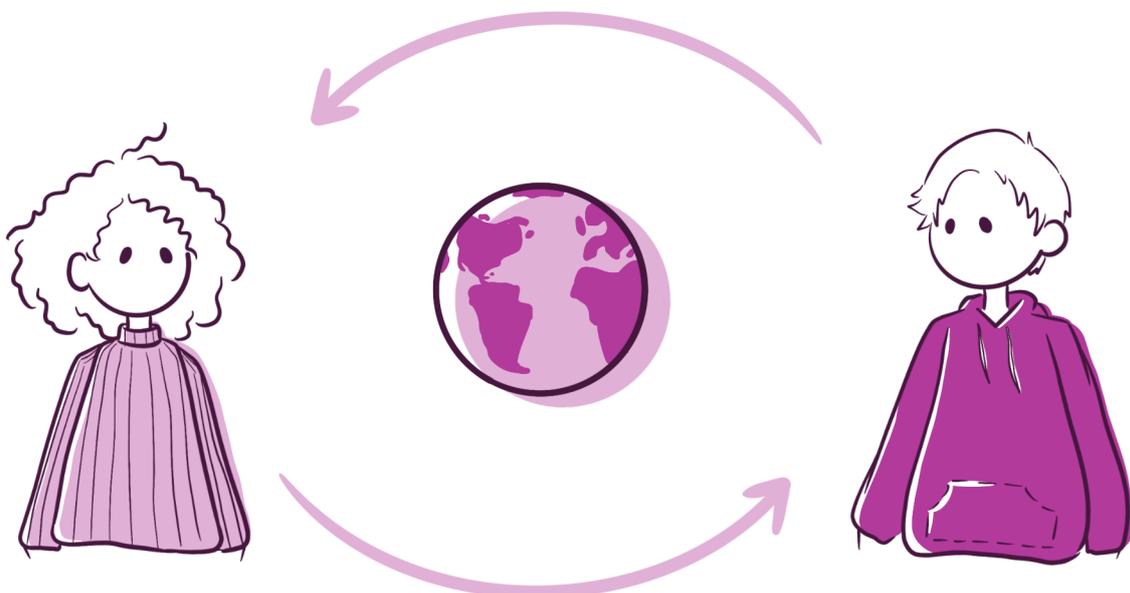


# Education and maturity for equality activities

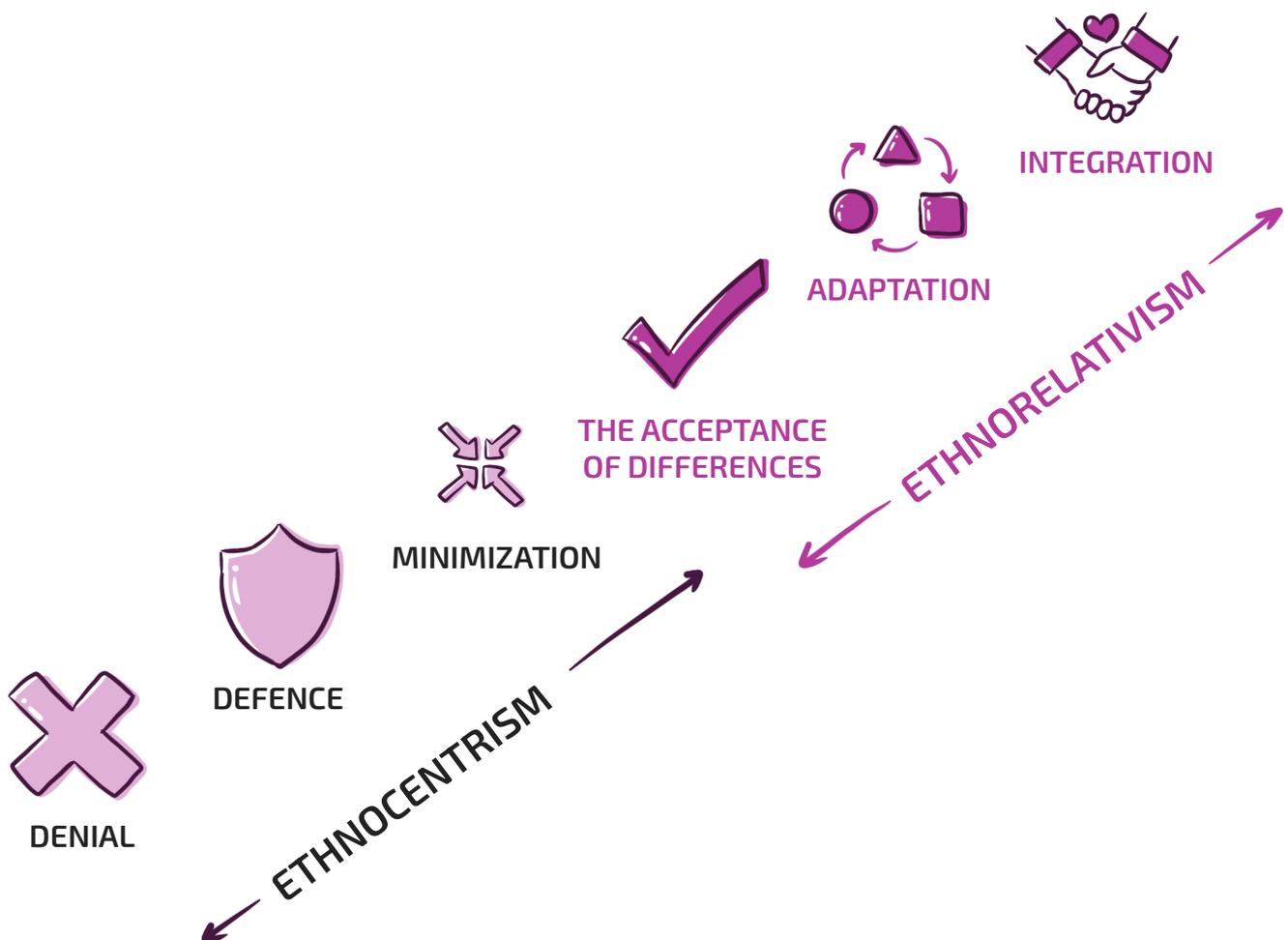
Detailed information and more extensive tips on the concept presented here can be found in the article: Łuźniak-Piecha M.: Wrażliwość o zasięgu międzynarodowym (International sensitivity). "Newsweek Psychologia" 1/2019.

Our everyday life at school, among friends, in our families, more and more often involves meetings with people representing value systems, customs, and a way of life different from what we are used to. As you probably already know, **we are different – but we are equal and equally important in these differences.**

These days many of our classmates come from various parts of the world. Thanks to modern media, we can contact a person from another hemisphere as easily as we can contact a friend from another class. This, of course, expands our diverse, multicultural and interesting environment, thanks to which our education, friendships and life experiences help us grow as people. Sometimes, however, this situation causes some difficulties. Even despite the excellent quality of audio connection, it is difficult to communicate. The ability to understand each other, however, is not only a matter of a good connection, but also of understanding the expectations of the other person. It is the ability to understand, for example, what the term "fair" means to both of you when you are discussing the division of responsibilities in a project, what "on time" means, what is "normal" and what goes beyond the norm according to your individual concepts. In other words, the ability to acquire knowledge and learn the rules of equality relations, demonstrated by both sides, is necessary here.



In his research conducted over a thirty year period, Professor Milton Bennett of Portland State University created a **scale describing the level of human intercultural maturity and sensitivity (Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity – DMIS)**. It is a six-point scale that allows us to look at the level of maturity of different people when we think about their willingness to adopt a point of view other than our own. **This scale measures our readiness to seek understanding between different ways of looking at the world.** In other words, it is a scale that shows us how mature we are in order to learn something new from someone who views the world differently from ourselves (Bennett 2004), to what extent we are ready to recognise our differences as equivalent, or if we only consider our own point of view as appropriate, “normal”, or decisive.



The first three levels on the DMIS scale are called **levels of ethnocentrism**. This means that people at these levels are convinced that their own cultural standards, their norms and beliefs are the only ones that are right, best and “true” – the deeper this ethnocentrism, the more difficult it is for a person with such views to establish an understanding with people representing other norms and beliefs. Thus, people acting in accordance with the principles of ethnocentrism will have great difficulty introducing actions and principles of equality in their everyday life – because it is difficult for them to understand that there are people in the world who simply present a different way of seeing the world.

- **The first level – the deepest level of ethnocentrism – is DENIAL.** People at this level deny the sense of recognising and reconciling cultural, ideological and social differences. It proves the lowest maturity and the least sensitivity in the context of understanding the principles of equality. People presenting this level usually formulate opinions such as: “It is best if all foreigners learn to speak Polish fluently – it should be a condition for admitting them to Poland. Thanks to this, there will be no misunderstandings “or” I never experience problems in contacts with people of other views ” – but as a rule, the person hearing such a statement adds (loudly or in his mind):” But everyone who has contact with you experiences problems very strongly... “. Sometimes such people say: “I have never heard someone complain that I have treated them unfairly – anyway, they shouldn’t whine – just learn to speak / work / behave properly ...” – it can be assumed that these people have never heard anyone complain because people complain about them behind their back.
  
- **The second level of ethnocentrism is DEFENCE.** This is the level presented by people who think that you need to defend yourself against what is different, unknown, or against views of the world other than your own. People at this level already acknowledge the existence of intercultural and ideological differences. However, these differences must – in their opinion – be stigmatized, corrected, and “those who do not understand” should also be enlightened. Persons presenting such views, of course, have a great difficulty in understanding the essence of equality actions, because they see the world in a simplified and polarized way. This means that, for example, they use many stereotypes in their thinking. Thus, even when they declare that they are in favour of the equality approach, they still believe that “being equal must be earned”. So they divide the world into “us who are normal” and “others who have yet to learn how to be normal.” The stereotypes they believe in concern both advantages and disadvantages – which does not change the fact that they polarize and label reality: “He is German, so he knows how to keep order”, “The Japanese eat these raw fish instead of eating something normal, but they all work a lot like robots. “ It is not difficult to imagine that when such a person meets someone to whom he decides to give this type of “compliment”, it will cause surprise or upset rather than satisfaction. Often such people call themselves patriots – because they recognise the superiority of their own country over others. However, **let us remember that patriotism means supporting one’s homeland, and not condemning or insulting representatives of other countries.**

- **The third level of ethnocentrism is MINIMIZATION.** People at this level tend
- to minimize differences, so their ethnocentrism is the least visible at first glance,
- but that is why it is very harmful. At the previously discussed levels, the lack
- of understanding for the equality approach is expressed directly. On the other
- hand, people at the minimization level seem to be open-minded and helpful in
- promoting equality. They often take up jobs related to creating an equality policy. They express views like: “We all need the same things”. It might seem that this is a beautiful sentence, but, unfortunately, it often means that “if I need something, I think you want the same”. How amazed are such people when – while organising, for example, an international project – they invite colleagues from other cultures to cooperate, and these “ungratefals” do not want to take part in joint ventures according to the rules imposed by the organisers. Ethnocentric minimization is nothing more than an attempt to “enlighten” people from other cultures and “give them the opportunity to work in a civilized way.” From such people you can hear specific “ethnocentrically amazed compliments”: “You are from country X – where did you learn to speak English so well?” (it doesn’t occur to them that maybe the person attended a foreign language school in their country) or “It’s fantastic that you got an education and are working with us instead of joining a drug gang in your country.” In other words, despite the declared beliefs about equality of all people, it is rather an attitude assuming that there are, however, “more equal” people. Hence, frequent statements such as: “This is how we do it and it is common” – implies that: “common in my group, country, environment”. Such an attitude may cause other people to avoid contact or working with the “good soul” described here, which, moreover, will constantly amaze and disappoint the person at the minimization level, because they are “really trying hard” (Łuźniak-Piecha 2019).

**The process of equality maturation, building the ability to cooperate with people who define what is “normal” or “appropriate” in different ways, is the process of moving from ethnocentrism to the so-called ethnorelativism** (a term coined by Milton Bennett – not existing in any dictionary). It is based on accepting the assumption that “my way of seeing things is only one of many possible options.” Thanks to this conclusion, cooperation based on the principles of equality and learning from each other finally becomes possible (Łuźniak-Piecha 2019).

- **The fourth level – THE ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENCES – is the first level of ethnorelativism.** Acting at the level of acceptance is about respecting other people's views and trying to understand them, but not necessarily identifying with them: "So doing X would be right for you – can you explain to me how it works?" Even if other people's views or customs seem extremely distant from our own habits, accepting and understanding the differences helps build the principles of effective cooperation, based on an equality approach. People presenting this level of maturity are also aware of their own habits, for example those resulting from upbringing and cultural conditions. They understand that their habits and standards regarding communication methods, customs, and beliefs are as "normal" as the beliefs of other people. Hence, you can hear statements such as: "In Poland we would do XYZ, but let's check what our colleagues from Ukraine say ..." or "What I say now may be typical of our culture ...". Such persons, before considering an action to be based on the principles of equality, check whether the other party also perceives their proposal in a similar way. Thus, they differ from people on the level of minimization – they do not expect gratitude for their "kindness" and recognition of someone's equality. They just recognise it and consider it natural.
  
- **The fifth level – ADAPTATION – is the next level of ethnorelativism.** At this level, we acquire the ability to look at a given problem through the prism of views characteristic of another culture, through the "filter" of a worldview other than our own. In other words, we are able to look at an event "through the eyes" of another person, use knowledge of someone else's standards to understand how others perceive something. Obviously, this is only possible when we consciously acquire knowledge and experience about how other people perceive a given phenomenon. **This means that EDUCATION is an extremely valuable tool in building our attitude of equality. Only education allows us to enter the fifth level of maturity described by Professor Bennett.** People at this level – thanks to the knowledge of foreign languages, thanks to conversations and contacts, learning about other people's standards and expectations, thanks to knowledge of literature, culture, geography – are able, at least partially, see someone else's perspective. Such people are effective in introducing equality solutions, because appropriate experiences and education give them an understanding of other people's ways of looking at the world, facilitate their communication and effective argumentation. In other words, people at the level of adaptation know how to behave, how to choose arguments during conversations and how to establish relationships with partners representing different customs and worldview. Remember that the ability to put yourself in your partner's shoes is the basis for establishing successful relationships – not only international ones. Putting yourself in the shoes of a friend or colleague, we don't always have to accept his or her views, but we can at least understand the reason for our differences. And thanks to understanding the essence of the problem, it is easier to solve it.

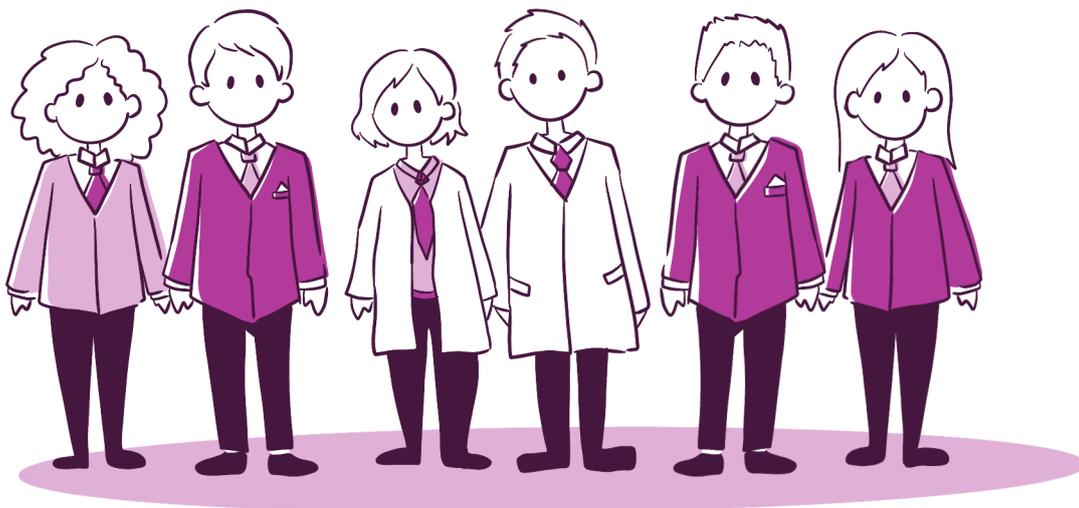
- **The sixth level – INTEGRATION – is the highest level of ethnorelativism.** This is
- the highest level of maturity and sensitivity associated with the equality approach.
- The way of thinking and acting by “shifting the perspective” from one’s own point
- of view to that of the other party becomes a habit at this level. Thus, it is a char-
- acteristic level for people who specialise in equality activities on a large scale.
- This is how students work, who had the opportunity to acquire equality skills at school, and now are able to initiate such activities themselves, actively working to promote equality in their surroundings. This is how people who effectively deal with international activities work in adulthood – managers who effectively manage global projects, large-scale diplomats, but also conscious travellers, columnists, writers and scientists. **To reach this level, of course, both the search and acquisition of knowledge are necessary – and therefore EDUCATION, as well as the ability to draw conclusions from experiences, i.e. conscious REFLECTION.**

Summarizing his research, Bennett stated:

” **Don’t treat your colleagues as you would like to be treated.  
Treat them as THEY would like to be treated.**

(Bennett 2004)

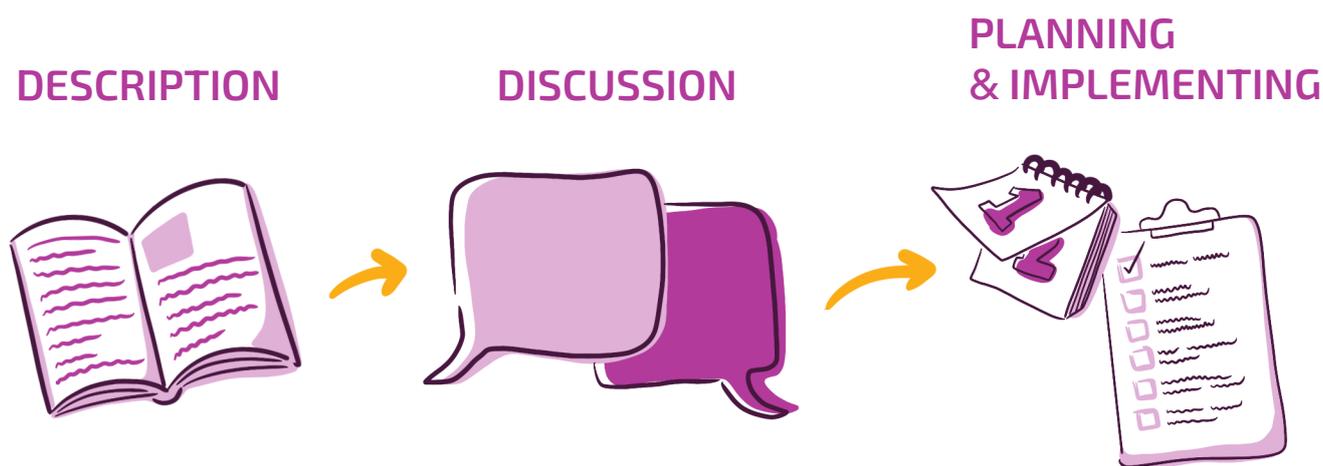
Joanna Kowalska-Andrzejewska and Dr Iwona Chmura-Rutkowska have developed



# A good plan is most important

a very useful tool that will allow you to incorporate the information and results of exercises contained in this Guide into the daily activities of your school (Kowalska-Andrzejewska, Chmura-Rutkowska 2018). This can be an important part of your education, so check out the anti-discrimination planning tool for your school below and see how you can use it in collaboration with your teachers and educators.

As you probably already know from the first part of the Guide, when planning equality and anti-discrimination activities, we should take the following steps:



## 1. **DESCRIPTION** – i.e. diagnosis – of problems and needs:

- a. What is the current situation?
- b. How should it be?
- c. What must happen to get to where it should be?
- d. What resources and competences do we need in order to get to where we should be?

**2. DISCUSSION** about our resources and competences and what we can do thanks to them:

- a. What are our skills?
- b. What does our infrastructure provide – what kind of rooms do we have, how can we use the auditorium, classrooms, corridors, playground ...?
- c. How much time do we have, is there any special anniversary coming, a good time to plan some activities?
- d. How to choose the topic we want to deal with?
- e. What kind of audience do we want, to whom do we address our activities? Could it also be a group of people we invite to cooperate?
- f. What are our needs? To what do we want to respond to?

You will find a detailed plan of these thoughts and tools for the diagnosis and discussion process in Part 1 of the Guide – **REFLECTION**.

### **3. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING** activities

We will devote this part of the Guide to planning and implementing specific activities in cooperation with the school.

You already know Professor Bennett's **Sensitivity Scale**, so you know that – in order to operate at its highest levels – to plan and prepare all equality activities, you should invite people to whom our activities will be addressed and whom the project concerns (especially minority groups).

It will be important to create a diverse team for your plans to make sense. Ideally, it should include people representing all members of the school community, representatives of different age and gender groups, representatives of different beliefs and value systems. Thanks to this, you will have different competences and points of view on a given problem. Use the form below to prepare a plan of your project, which will then be handed over to teachers or management. It will show that you approach the matter very seriously and professionally (see: Kowalska-Andrzejewska, Chmura-Rutkowska 2018).

## 1. Title of initiative/project

What problem/need is the project supposed to respond to?

## 2. Goals and ways of achieving them

**The main goal of the project:**

*For example:*

*Protection of a certain group*

*Knowledge about*

*Ability to talk about the problem of*

*Knowledge of the law*

*Planning activities related to*

*Stimulating reflection*

**Detailed project objectives:**

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At this stage, you have to answer a few questions:

Who? With who? For whom? Who is the project addressed to? Who are the project participants? How many are there? What are their current competencies in the topic? What are their expectations? What do they need/what do they care about?

### 3. Ways of achieving individual goals

#### Tasks to do:

Task 1.

Task 2.

Task 3.

Task 4.

Task 5.

Remember to take into account the conditions, needs and capabilities of people participating in our project. Will all participants feel equally comfortable on stage, for example? Can we invite them to take on different forms of expression available to different people? What are the circumstances at school? What are the expectations of different groups: group leader, teachers, management, students ...?

*For example:*

*Task 1. Preparing a show*

*Task 2. Preparing lessons on a selected topic for another group*

*Task 3. Debate between various religious groups*

*Task 4. Producing a report*

*Task 5. Preparing a film screening and conducting a discussion afterwards on a selected topic*

## Description of the assumed tasks and achievements:

*Description of task 1:*

*Description of task 2:*

*Description of task 3:*

*Description of task 4:*

*Description of task 5:*

In the description of each task, answer the question:  
What should be a visible, specific outcome of a given task?

*For example:*

*Thanks to working together on the script of the show, the students will learn ...*

*They will be able to notice ...*

*They will acquire knowledge in the field of ...*

*They will get practical knowledge in the field of ...*

## 4. Long-term effects

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Let's consider some long-term effects. The tools described in Part 1 of the Guide – **REFLECTION** are helpful in answering this question. The project will directly affect the people implementing it and participating in it, and indirectly the recipients of the long-term effects of the activities.

## 5. Necessary to gather content and their potential sources (materials, expert statements)

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# PART 3: LEGISLATION



# Legal issues, or what the Polish regulations tell us

When reflecting on equality issues in Poland, we can look at a very good source of information, which is the website of [the Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

## Who is the Commissioner for Human Rights?

The Commissioner for Human Rights acts on the basis of the provisions of [the Constitution of the Republic of Poland](#).

**The Commissioner for Human Rights is a body obliged by law to uphold the implementation of the rights of people discriminated against and excluded, in particular due to ([www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)):**

- ethnicity, nationality or race,
- religion, denomination, worldview,
- sexual orientation,
- disability,
- gender,
- age.

In carrying out this task, he participates in court proceedings, but – above all – tries to convince competent authorities to introduce changes to the law or to their practical application.

The Commissioner also commissions social surveys, which result in the preparation of reports describing the problems faced by people discriminated against in the analysed area and formulating, based on the findings, the Commissioner's recommendations addressed to the relevant public authorities.

## Art. 32 of the Polish Constitution – Equality and non-discrimination

1. **Everyone is equal before the law. All are entitled to equal treatment by public authorities.**
2. **Nobody may be discriminated against in political, social or economic life for any reason.**

Let us start by answering the question of what, according to Polish law – **Article 32 of the Constitution** – is meant by the expressions “equality” and “prohibition of discrimination”.

” **Everyone is equal before the law. All are entitled to equal treatment by public authorities.**

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**Equality – along with dignity and freedom – is the basis of the political order and should be considered in this regard.** It is both a constitutional principle and a principle of the system of rights and freedoms

The principle of equality determines the manner and scope of exercising other freedoms and rights and defines the scope of permissible limitations.

The constitution guarantees equality before the law for all. This means that social inequalities will be inconsistent with the Constitution if they result from applicable law.

Equality understood as **subjective right**, can be treated as “equality before the law” and “equality in law”, both in making and applying the law. The principle of equality is considered in the relationship between the individual and the public authority.



*Subjective rights are rights granted to you by the legislator or those arising from nature. Therefore, since our subjective right is equality before the law and in law – this means that we have the right to be treated in the same circumstances, which results from the Polish Constitution, and also from the fact that we are simply human beings and all people are equal and equally important.*

The principle of equality means that all legal entities characterized by a given significant feature should be treated equally, according to a uniform measure, without discriminating or favouring differentiation. At the same time, this principle assumes a different treatment of those entities that do not have a common significant feature ([www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)).

” **Nobody may be discriminated against in political, social or economic life for any reason.**

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**The constitution prohibits discrimination on any grounds.** The prohibition of discrimination is a logical consequence of the principle of equality. The constitution explicitly forbids introducing unjustified differentiations.

The prohibition of discrimination is universal in terms of subject (“nobody”) and object (includes “political, social or economic life”).

Discrimination means being treated inferiorly because of a personal quality. It is **a qualified form** of unequal treatment of a person on the basis of some personal feature, without rational justification. The most frequently cited grounds for discrimination are gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, but may also include other personal characteristics such as social origin or material status.

It is unacceptable for public authorities to depart from the prohibition of discrimination. In order to determine whether we are dealing with discrimination, we have to examine whether the two entities were actually treated differently. If so, why: whether the reason was a specific feature of a given person (i.e. discrimination) or other reasons (example: people with disabilities have the right to vote by correspondence. People without a disability certificate are therefore treated unequally, but this is not discrimination).

The standard of legal protection against unequal treatment and discrimination results from the acts of international and European law. Under Polish law, the regulations of the Labour Code and the Act on the implementation of certain provisions of the European Union in the field of equal treatment are of fundamental importance. In the opinion of the Commissioner – an independent body for equal treatment – legal protection measures against discrimination are currently insufficient ([www.rpo.gov.pl](http://www.rpo.gov.pl)).

**Qualified form** in law means a form of activity that is subject to stricter requirements, rigors and sanctions. This means that discrimination based on a personal characteristic (for example race, sex, religion) is subject to more severe sanctions.



## Art. 33 of the Polish Constitution – Equality between women and men

On the part of **the Commissioner for Human Rights**.

1. **In the Republic of Poland, women and men have equal rights in family, political, social and economic life.**
2. **A woman and a man have, in particular, equal rights to education, employment and promotions, to equal pay for work of equal value, to social security and to hold positions, perform functions and obtain public dignity and decorations.**

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**We find the principle of gender equality indirectly in the general principle of equality.** As the Constitution does not create a catalogue of features on the basis of which it is forbidden to differentiate the situation of individuals, Article 33 has a special meaning and constitutes an extension of Article 32 – about equality and non-discrimination.

This is another norm that can be considered in three dimensions: as a principle of the constitutional order, as a principle of a system of individual rights and freedoms, and as a subjective right.

It prohibits discrimination, i.e. unjustified differentiation of the legal situation of both sexes. Thus, adopting gender as the basis for differentiation gives rise to the presumption of unconstitutionality of a given solution. It also results directly from the prohibition of differentiation based on gender, contained in **Art. 14 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights**. Differentiations are justified when they meet the conditions of necessity, **proportionality** and relation to other constitutional norms.

In the area of social rights, it is permissible to grant certain privileges to women in order to compensate for the actual social inequalities (positive discrimination).



*Proportionality – this means that if a group of people has far fewer representatives who have any power or capacity, the principle of proportionality has been shaken. For example, there are significantly fewer women than men among members of a number of public institutions (including the Council of Ministers). Do you think the principle of proportionality has been respected here?*

## Art. 35 of the Polish Constitution – Rights of national minorities

From the side of [the Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

1. **The Republic of Poland shall ensure Polish citizens belonging to national and ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, to maintain customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture.**
2. **National and ethnic minorities have the right to establish their own educational, cultural and institutions serving the protection of their religious identity and to participate in the resolution of matters concerning their cultural identity.**

” *The Republic of Poland shall ensure Polish citizens belonging to national and ethnic minorities the freedom to maintain and develop their own language, to maintain customs and traditions, and to develop their own culture.*

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**The Polish nation is made up of all citizens, including representatives of minorities.** Each person who belongs to a given minority may decide for himself whether he or she wishes to disclose this information and be treated as a member of the minority

Public authority is to respect such a decision.

The obligation to protect the rights of minorities arises not only directly from this article of the Constitution, but also from its article 32 and from international regulations – such as [Art. 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), [the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995](#) or bilateral treaties concluded by Poland.

Reading these provisions together allowed commentators to formulate three universal rules:

- prohibition of assimilation (understood as the elimination of national and ethnic differences),
- the principles of equal treatment,
- non-discrimination.



**National and ethnic minorities have the right to establish their own educational, cultural and institutions serving the protection of their religious identity and to participate in the resolution of matters concerning their cultural identity.**

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**A Polish citizen who is a representative of a minority has the constitutional right to maintain and develop his national or ethnic identity: language, customs, tradition and culture.**

The proper implementation of these freedoms also requires **positive actions by the state**.

Within the meaning of the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language, a national minority is a group of Polish citizens, which is less numerous than the rest of the Polish population, differs significantly from other citizens in terms of language, culture or tradition, strives to maintain these differences, is aware of its own historical national community and is focused on its expression and protection, and its ancestors lived in the present territory of Poland for at least 100 years.

Such a group, in order to be recognised as a national minority, should also identify with the nation organised in its own country.

On the other hand, an ethnic minority is a group of Polish citizens who meet the above criteria, but do not identify themselves with the nation organised in their own country.

*Positive actions by the state – So the state should actively support equality activities – provide support, access to education, decent living conditions, the possibility of professional and personal development, medical care and safety to all people from different groups.*



# What do legal regulations in the European Union tell us?

## EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

It is a set of fundamental human rights and civic obligations, which is one of the most important tools for the protection of fundamental rights at the regional level that has ever been created.

Important passages from this document tell us the following:

### Art. 20 – Equality before the law:

Everyone is equal before the law.

### Art. 21 – Non-discrimination:

1. Any discrimination is prohibited, in particular on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or beliefs, political or any other views, belonging to a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.
2. Within the scope of application of the Treaties, and without prejudice to their special provisions, any discrimination with regards to nationality shall be prohibited.

### Art. 23 – Equality between women and men:

Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including within employment, work and pay.

The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures which provide specific benefits to the under-represented sex.



**Art. 25 – Rights of the elderly:**

The Union recognises and respects the right of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life.

**Art. 26 – Integration of disabled people:**

The Union recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.

European Union (EU) legislation provides a range of personal, civil, political, economic and social rights to EU citizens and residents.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

You will understand many of the provisions quoted here better when you become familiar with the explanations concerning the provisions of the Polish Constitution (in the previous paragraphs of this Guide). The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union confirms, while respecting the competences and tasks of the Union and the **principles of subsidiarity**, the rights arising, in particular, from the constitutional traditions and international obligations common to EU countries, from the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Social Charters adopted by the Union and the Council of Europe, and from the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. Presenting fundamental rights in a more precise and clear way provides legal certainty within the Union (<http://rownowazni.uw.edu.pl/kpp-ue/>).



The principle of subsidiarity means that each level of government should perform only those tasks that cannot be effectively carried out by a lower level or by individual people – members of society.



## WEBSITES OF SELECTED ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION EDUCATION AND PROMOTING EQUALITY (in alphabetical order)

- Amnesty International – Poland: <https://amnesty.org.pl/>
- Autonomia Foundation: [www.autonomia.org.pl](http://www.autonomia.org.pl)
- Feminoteka Foundation: [www.feminoteka.pl](http://www.feminoteka.pl)
- The Foundation for Social Diversity: [www.ffrs.org.pl](http://www.ffrs.org.pl)
- Campaign against homophobia: [www.kph.org.pl](http://www.kph.org.pl)
- Centre for Education Development – Social and civic competences (also: Diversity): <https://www.ore.edu.pl/category/szkola/kompetencje-spoleczne-i-obywatelskie/>
- Anti-Discrimination Education Society: [www.tea.org.pl](http://www.tea.org.pl)

## LIST OF LEGAL ACTS

- European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995 (retrieved: 26 October, 2020): <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20020220209>.
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (retrieved: 26 October, 2020): <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19930610284>.
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- Constitution of the Republic of Poland (retrieved: 26 October, 2020): <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19970780483/U/D19970483Lj.pdf>
- United Nations Convention on Children’s Rights: Art. 2.1, 2.2 and 29.1.A.
- Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Art. 5 and 10.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (retrieved: 26 October, 2020): <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19770380167>.
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**“Youth in Action +”** is a nationwide educational program aimed at inspiring young people to undertake unconventional activities for their homeland. In this edition, students will be able to learn to debate about local issues, create a report about their neighbours, or plan the development of the nearest neighbourhood together with its inhabitants.



**Uniwersytet SWPS** is a modern university based on sustainable values. It owes its strong position to the combination of high-quality didactics with scientific research that meets world standards. It offers practical study programs in psychology, law, management, journalism, philology, cultural studies and design, adapted to the requirements of the changing labour market. The SWPS University has been sharing its knowledge for years and popularizing science not only within campus walls, but also via social media and its own multimedia channels. In cooperation with external partners, it organises numerous events devoted to the challenges of the present day. It provides young people, parents and guardians, as well as people interested in self-development, with up-to-date knowledge about people and society, new trends in science, culture, business, law and design.

For more information, please visit [www.swps.pl](http://www.swps.pl).



**The Centre for Civic Education** is the largest Polish non-governmental organisation operating in the education sector. For nearly 25 years, we have been changing Polish schools and consistently working to make young people learn better and in more interesting ways, as well as making the work of teachers and headmasters more effective and satisfying. We introduce modern teaching methods and formative assessment to schools. We run programs that help young people understand the world, develop critical thinking, faith in their own abilities, teach entrepreneurship and responsibility, encourage them to engage in public life and act for the benefit of others.

For more information, please visit [www.ceo.org.pl](http://www.ceo.org.pl).

