

May 2022

DIVERSITY POLICY AT WSB UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

WSB University has its facilities in 5 cities in Poland, which in total educate about 12000 students in 62 fields of study. The offer of WSB University is intended not only for students from Poland, but also for English-speaking, Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking people of various origins. Among the students currently studying at our university there are people from the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Nigeria and from many other countries. In total, almost 32% of all students are of non-Polish nationality. Thus, every day the corridors of our university – WSB University - host people from very different parts of the world, with different stories and experiences. Together, we create one of the most diverse academic communities.

That is why we value and cherish diversity as a superior value. It is thanks to it that the environment in which our students learn is unique, and at the same time provides the opportunity to inspire each other through everyday contact with cultural and linguistic diversity. All this prepares members of our community to better understand the world and implement solutions that are useful for the community.

At the same time, we care about other values related to diversity:

- openness to other people understood as respect for the fact that we are different and for the various experiences or beliefs we profess;
- understanding the perspective of others, i.e. the ability to not only respect differences, but also to see the consequences of living with a different perspective;
- inclusivity, i.e. active work to create a democratic environment that is friendly to everyone;
- solidarity, i.e. supporting other people who need it and acting for the common, not just individual good;
- innovation, i.e. searching for new ways of thinking, fighting inequalities and using the perspective of others to implement new solutions;
- dialogue, i.e. readiness to talk and solve problems also in a conflict situation.

Understanding the challenges related to the above-mentioned values, we approach with full responsibility to provide the entire academic community with such a learning and working environment in which, above all, you can feel safe and comfortable. Our pursuit for a multidimensional development space is intertwined with the pursuit for broadly understood equality and the creation of the so-called *safe space*. To make this possible, we conduct numerous integration, training and corrective activities. Their summary, description and evaluation is provided in this document - *the Diversity Policy of WSB University*.

For this purpose, three studies were conducted - two focus group interviews and one computer-assisted interview using an electronic questionnaire (CAWI). All three were prepared by an independent team of experts from the Institute of Social Security (Pol. IBS), also involved in the preparation of this document. The objective of the research was to a) examine the state of the anti-discrimination protections functioning at the university, b) identify possible problems and c) propose specific solutions. For the purposes of preparing *the Diversity Policy of WSB University*, the current university regulations regarding equality were also analyzed.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The first of the interviews was conducted among several senior employees, while the second among representatives of the student government and people working in positions that rely on daily, direct contact with the student body. The separation of the two groups was intended to ensure that people with different positions at the university could express themselves freely, also on topics related to the assessment of the functioning of this university.

Two representatives of the Institute of Social Security, in the case of both interviews, asked questions about: a) anti-discrimination programs operating at the university and related jobs, b) past cases of unequal treatment, both those reported through official procedures of the

university and informally c) functioning of integration programs, d) data on the inclusivity of curricula for students of different nationalities, e) data on past conflicts between students, as well as between students and employees, whether on national, religious or others, related to diversity.

THE RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

Based on the information obtained during the interviews, as well as the analysis of the existing regulations at WSB University, it was found that the university has an effective organization in providing students of a nationality other than Polish with full access to the education offer, while ensuring, among others, accommodation of visiting students in a way that allows the most comfortable use of the didactic offer. Therefore, WSB University cares not only about the level of education of foreign students, but also about the practical elements of their life in Poland. This support is particularly important in the first months after arriving in a new country.

Among such activities of the University, the activity of the International Cooperation Office should be mentioned in the first place, which makes it easier for students who do not speak Polish to contact medical aid or obtain appropriate benefits from the state. The employees of this office and secretariat serving groups of foreign students, as well as the academic staff having contact with foreign groups are fluent in the languages in which education at WSB University takes place: Polish, Ukrainian, Russian and English. This allows for trouble-free communication in - very often - the native languages of students.

At the same time, the research conducted by the Institute of Social Security (Pol. IBS) team has shown that WSB University, already at the time of writing this document, undertakes a number of anti-discrimination and integration activities, striving to provide students of all nationalities with safe learning and development conditions. These are in particular: a)

regular meetings *Meet My Country*, b) workshops on diversity and mutual respect included in the curriculum for people starting their studies, c) mandatory workshops on diversity for employees who have contact with students, d) supporting the organizational activities of students, e) organizing celebrations of various holidays, also characteristic of the regions where students originate from.

The first of these activities are the regular *Meet My Country* meetings, in which foreign students present elements of their culture, national and local traditions of the countries and places they come from. Each student group from a given country or region is assigned a day during which it has the opportunity to present its national history, customs and cuisine to the rest of the community. Foreign students also share their experiences related to studying in Poland. This positive intergroup contact brings members of our community closer together, reducing potential intergroup tensions and prejudice.

Workshops, in turn, are intended for people starting their studies and employees who have contact with foreign groups. For their duration, new students are acquainted with the challenges of diversity, its advantages, as well as the opportunities they give, especially during studies at the university. In addition, these workshops are an opportunity to integrate students, and at the same time to establish international relationships, which are an important element of studying at WSB University. Workshops for employees, on the other hand, are aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to support diversity, resolve conflicts or implement activities that counteract the dissemination of stereotypes and prejudices among the academic community.

WSB University also supports the activities of student organizations, including international ones, while cooperating with the student government, whose representatives have an impact on decisions made at the university. Thanks to the organizational activities of students, WSB University community may take part in the celebration of holidays characteristic for individual regions from which students come, which additionally supports the process of intercultural

integration. However, these events are organized outside of studying hours, so it is possible that not every person has a real opportunity to participate in them. This is one of the challenges facing WSB University.

In addition, students also have the opportunity to conduct intercultural scientific and artistic projects. Thus, the university engages students in joint activity, which not only prepares them to enter the international labour market with appropriate experience, but also teaches cooperation despite differences, the use of diversity as a prized value, and in particular the skillful use of diverse work styles and abilities. Such soft skills are a unique effect of learning in an international environment such as WSB University.

What is also important in the context of practices preventing discriminatory behavior, WSB University employs a person in the position of the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality, whose task is to consult, signal, prevent and, if necessary, also resolve conflicts arising at various levels of the university structure - both those concerning students and students, as well as those in which the WSB University staff is involved. Although the title of the position refers to only one premise, this person also deals with diversity in a broader sense, in particular in terms of nationality and economic situation. Due to the fact that the purpose of the implementation of the diversity policy is not only its reliable construction, but also its proper promotion, perhaps a more appropriate name for the position indicated would be the term " Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality ", so as to indicate the widest possible range of activities of this person.

Both the organized integration events and the work of the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality proceed in accordance with the detailed policies already functioning at WSB University, including, among others, anti-mobbing policy and gender equality policy. The committees appointed and dedicated to specific policies supervise the updating of applicable procedures and their proper conduct. Thanks to this, diversity is appreciated not only at the level of practice, but also at the level of applicable regulations, which guarantees

transparency of rules. Their functioning is verified annually through a focus group study and a quantitative study addressed to male and female students. During this verification, it is possible to evaluate the practices used so far, as well as to check their actual availability.

At the time of writing this document, no compliance bodies (including policy enforcement committees and the Chancellor's Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality) had not considered any formally filed case of unequal treatment or intra-university violence. Any emerging problems, including conflicts between groups of students of different nationalities, were resolved amicably, with the participation of both parties and WSB University employees. Male and female students had the opportunity to evaluate the satisfaction of using such solutions through surveys covering the assessment of the quality of education and the friendliness of the administrative environment.

On the one hand, the above information may mean that the currently operating policies effectively guarantee counteracting discriminatory behavior, preventing their occurrence, but on the other hand, it may suggest insufficient promotion of the existing methods of reporting incidents related to unequal treatment or violence through formally applicable procedures. The legitimacy of the second conclusion would be evidenced by the differences observed during meetings with senior staff and a meeting with employees of the administration, as well as students. The second group was less familiar with the official procedures so far provided by the university or the competences of the person employed as the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality.

The group focus research also showed the challenge of integration between Polish and foreign students. While WSB University provides the opportunity to take advantage of, among others, regular meetings on multiculturalism, in practice they are mainly used by foreign students. As a result, there is effective integration between students of international groups, in which, however, students of Polish descent are often not included. The latter do not choose to participate in the workshops, despite providing them with such an opportunity. This raises

the question of, on the one hand, the promotion of such events, and, on the other hand, the impact of distance learning on the involvement of students, who have been living in Poland for a long time or come from Poland, in integration classes. Both of these questions remain open, and the problem posed will be a challenge for WSB University in the coming years of its functioning. The basic goal of intercultural meetings should be the participation of all groups - on equal terms.

During the analysis of the results of the qualitative study, the elements such as the actual access of people from lower status groups to all positions were also checked. In this case, WSB University, taking into account external factors such as the location of its facilities, meets high standards - both in terms of the employment of women in senior positions and in terms of participation in the university's activities of employees, employees or representatives of local governments of other nationality than the Polish one. Thus, the most important decisions regarding the functioning of a diverse university are determined by a diverse environment. This proves, on the one hand, the availability of positions for each person, and on the other hand, the implementation of diversity also at the level of university organization.

From the perspective of creating a safe and comfortable environment for all groups, it is also important what was not said during the interviews or was outlined only superficially. The respondents almost never talked about issues such as sexual orientation, transgender or, broadly understood, inclusive language (including feminine forms, the use of preferred pronouns or names in communication with students, and not those available in official documents). On the one hand, it may mean, as before, no problems in this context. On the other hand, this may indicate that the academic staff is not well prepared to perceive potential inequalities or discrimination against, for example, LGBT+ people.

In the context of the latter group, the question of one of the respondents addressed to experts, which concerned addressing a transgender person, seems interesting. The task can be interpreted both as a symptom of sensitivity to issues related to non-normative gender

identification, as well as insufficient knowledge about the possibilities of solutions that can be implemented by the university to create comfortable learning and working conditions for transgender people.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

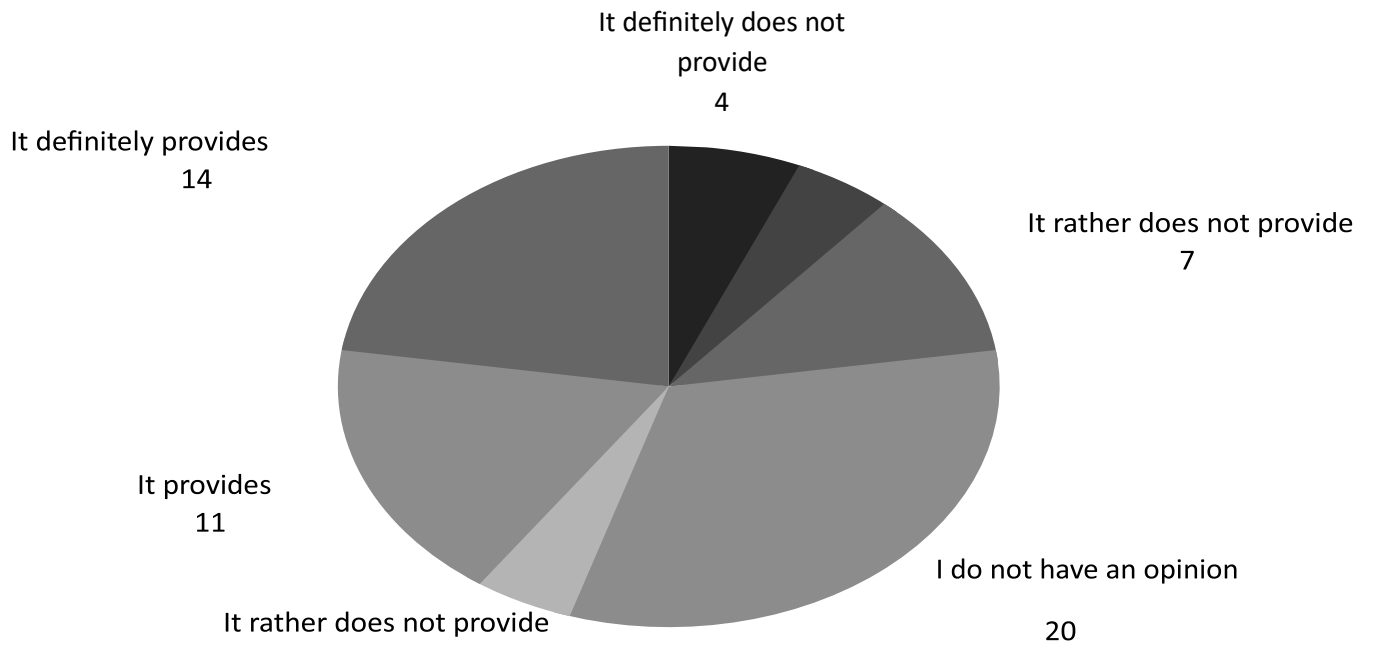
As part of the development of *the Diversity Policy of WSB University*, the team of the Institute of Social Security also conducted an anonymous and voluntary quantitative research among students of the WSB University. The research was conducted remotely in two language versions - Polish and English - in order to reach both Polish and foreign speakers. 62 people took part in the study, including 36 people of Polish origin and 26 people of non-Polish origin, including Uzbek, Ukrainian and Azeri.

In total, they were asked 17 questions - 13 closed and 4 open-ended, including 2 mandatory questions regarding the origin and language of instruction and 2 voluntary, supplementary information from closed questions. The latter can be grouped into four categories: a) related to integration activities, b) related to the effectiveness of the university authorities in resolving conflicts, c) related to the perceived discriminatory behaviour within the university, as well as cases of hate speech, d) related to the knowledge of an internal university body responsible for responding to reported incidents. The most important results are presented below in the form of graphs. The figures presented on them indicate the number of people who gave a given answer.

THE RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

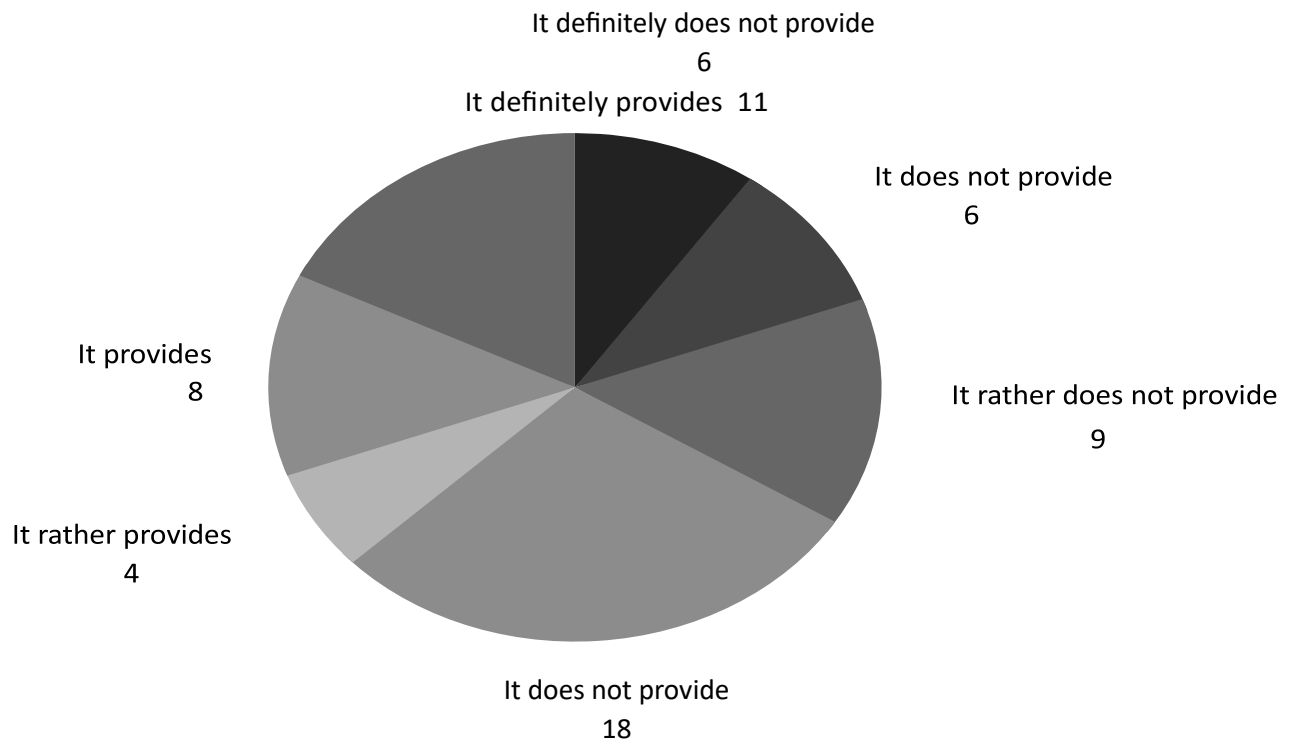
To what extent do you feel that the student government provides you with opportunities to integrate with other male / female students of your nationality?

Chart 1



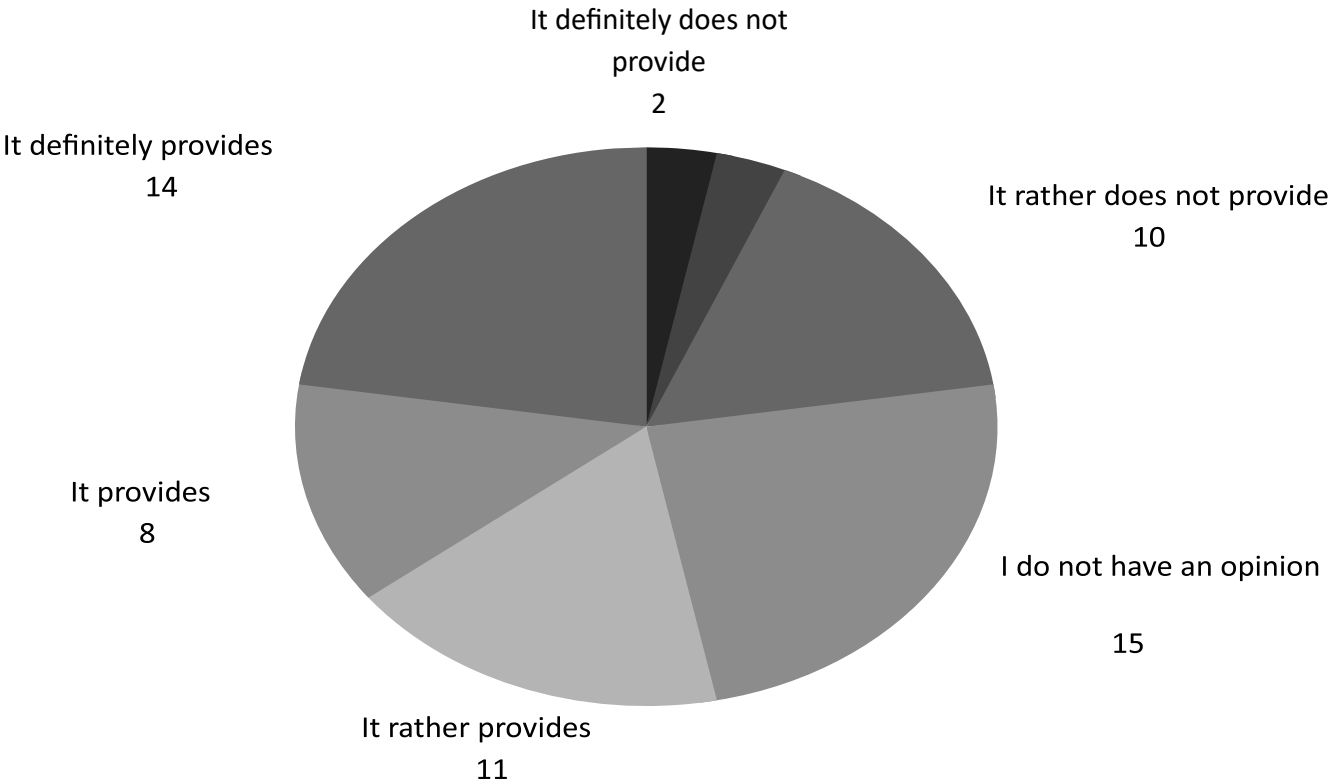
To what extent do you feel that the student government provides you with opportunities to integrate with other male / female students of a different nationality than yours?

Chart 2



To what extent do you feel that the university provides you with opportunities to integrate with other male / female students of your nationality?

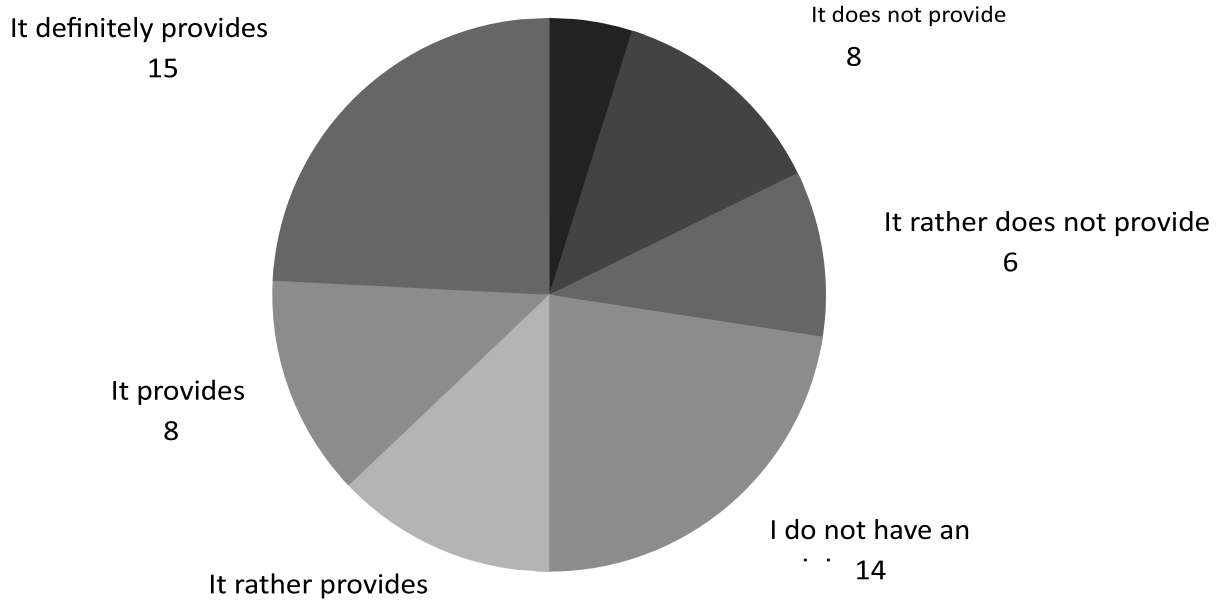
Chart 3



To what extent do you feel that the university provides you with opportunities to integrate with other male / female students of a different nationality than yours?

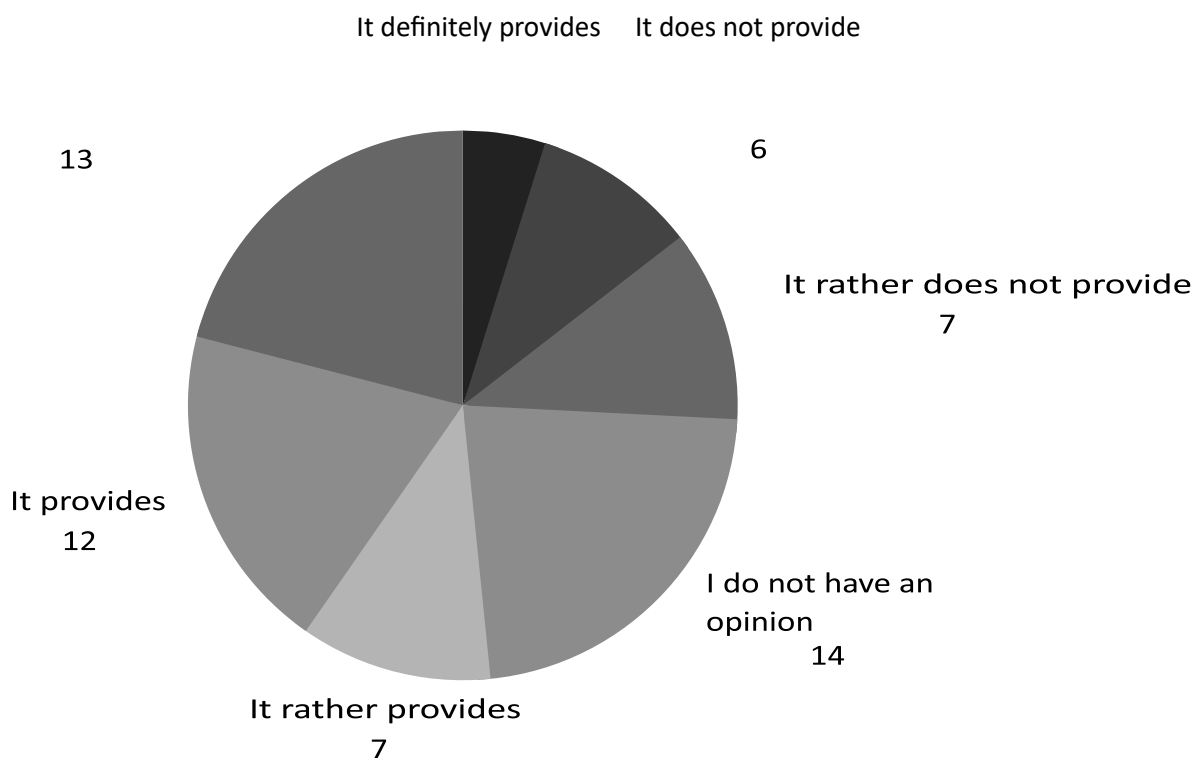
Chart 4

It definitely does not provide
3



To what extent do you feel that in the event of conflicts between male students or between female students and staff, the university will provide effective assistance in resolving them?

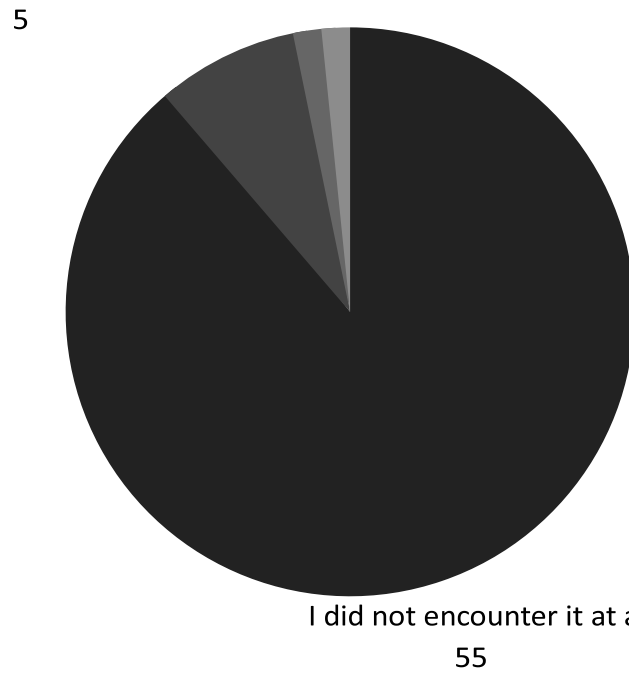
Chart 5



How many times in the last three months have you encountered discrimination against you at the university or during online classes?

Chart 6

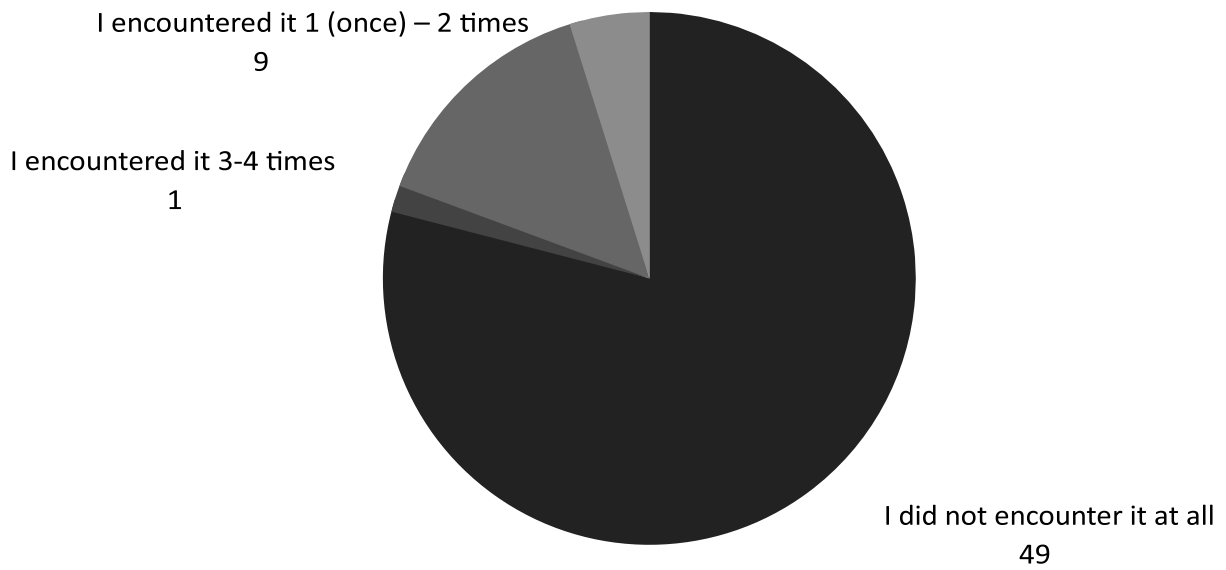
I encountered it 1 (once) -2 times



How many times in the last three months have you encountered discrimination against someone other than yourself at the university or during online classes?

Chart 7

I encountered it more than 5 times
3



In the last three months, have you heard hate speech against yourself (e.g. insults or negative comments related to your nationality, orientation or religion, etc.) at the university or during online classes?

Chart 8

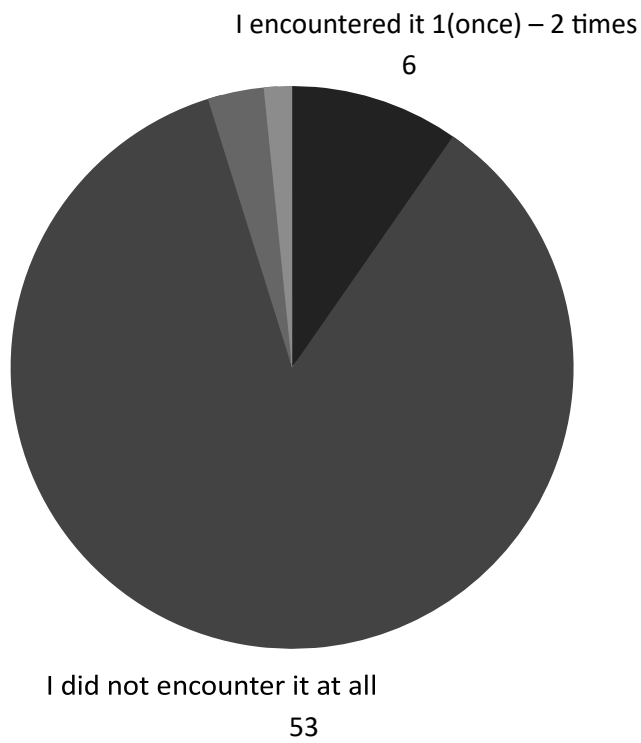
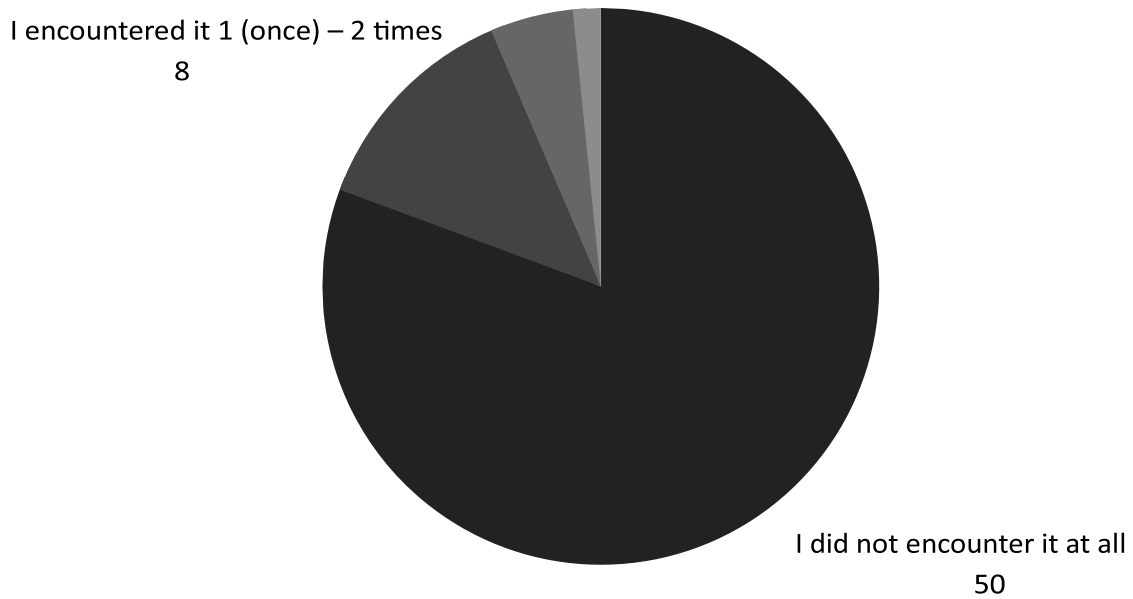
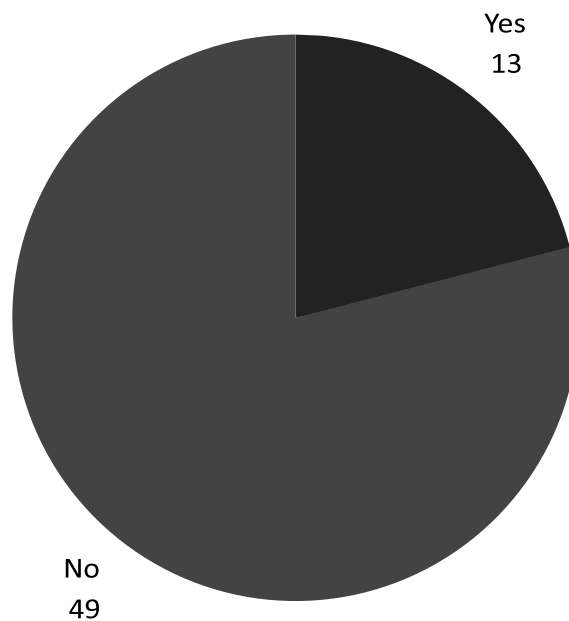


Chart 9



Do you know who to turn to if you experience discrimination or hate speech at the university or during online classes?

Chart 10



The research results suggest that the majority of students of WSB University are convinced that the university provides intercultural integration activities. Also, some of the respondents encounter discrimination or hate speech, even though - as stated earlier - no cases of discrimination have been officially reported to the university authorities. This confirms the conclusions identified during the analysis of the focus group research results. According to the quantitative research, most people do not know who they could turn to in the event of discrimination or hate speech (this conclusion is additionally confirmed by an open question

regarding the provision of a specific position/person, which was not answered by some of the respondents who declared that they knew where should return). It should be remembered, however, that relatively few people took part in the quantitative study (N = 62), which limits the possibility of certain conclusions, although at the same time it is worth emphasizing that the same conclusions were drawn on the basis of focus group interviews.

OBLIGATIONS

Considering the conclusions drawn from both qualitative and quantitative research, as well as believing in diversity as a fundamental value, we undertake to comply with the principles of equal treatment due in particular to: nationality, skin color, ethnic origin, gender, religion, non-religiousness, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, as well as the basis of employment and the scope of duties performed at work and political beliefs (with the exception of beliefs that strike the basis of diversity, such as fascist and extreme nationalist, which are completely intolerant).

At the same time, we undertake to promote diversity and disseminate anti-discrimination principles among all members of the academic community, so that they have access not only to basic information related to the activities undertaken by WSB University, but also to be able - in the event of a discriminatory problem – efficiently find the right entity to address it. The procedures should be short, transparent and ensure anonymity of reports where possible.

We want to continue to create a safe working and learning environment. Therefore, in particular, we are obliged to:

- create an organizational culture based on the principles of mutual respect, participation in diversity, equal opportunities and total lack of tolerance for all forms of discrimination, violence, as well as disseminating views that strike at diversity;
- regular education for the entire academic community (including people of Polish descent who have not participated in some events so far) about diversity and ways to protect it, including, above all, how to report signs of discrimination, hate speech, violence or mobbing to an independent entity within the university;

- introduction of anti-discrimination monitoring, including the preparation of annual publicly available reports on the implemented measures and their results, based on research already conducted, including in particular an analysis of the cases reported so far or the lack of such reports;
- ensure such a level of powers of the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Equality that they allow for activity independent of the Rector's or Dean's authority and enable efficient conflict resolution, taking into account the well-being of the victims, including the possibility for these people to remain anonymous when reporting any signs of violence (also mobbing and sexual violence);
- adapt the current and create new detailed policies covering the principles of equal treatment in various areas, in particular in the area of recruitment for studies, recruitment for work, promotions, remuneration, awards, grants, as well as counteracting mobbing and exclusion;
- create a space for discussion on the adopted principles regarding diversity and equal treatment, as well as openness to introduce changes to them in justified cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the practical dimension of this document, the team of male and female experts from the Institute of Social Security recommends in the first place:

- conducting by an external male or female specialist an obligatory training for students of the WSB University on the possibility of reporting unequal treatment, discrimination and related procedures of the WSB University;
- conducting by an external male or female specialist a mandatory training for male and female employees of the WSB University on the possibility of reporting all forms of mobbing, unequal treatment, discrimination and related procedures of the WSB University;
- conducting a training for male and female employees by a male or female specialist representing the LGBT+ community on the use of inclusive language towards this group
 - with particular emphasis on transgender people;

- using this inclusive language – towards both LGBT+ people and other traditionally discriminated groups, including women (feminine forms) – in all official university communications addressed to male and female students and male and female employees;
- introducing changes regarding the powers of the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Equality by extending them to allow for activities independent of the Rector's or Dean's authority, and then widely promoting the new powers among the student community and male and female employees;
- appointing an internal team for a term of office, whose task will be to prepare and provide access to annual reports on pro-equality activities undertaken by the university, an analysis of cases of unequal treatment or discrimination reported so far.

CONCLUSION

Such activities and constant attention to equal treatment are necessary to build a university that is safe and accessible to all, where diversity is protected and promoted. This document is, on the one hand, a summary of the activities undertaken so far, and on the other hand, a reference to their verification and improvement. That is why it was created in cooperation with the Institute of Social Security and the authorities of WSB University, which allowed both to ensure the independence of the expertise and insight into the current activities of the university related to diversity.