YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

ON DISCRIMINATION, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

IN MONTENEGRO AND
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



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EXCERPT FROM THE RESEARCH

The research conducted among young people in Montenegro provides a comprehensive insight into their attitudes, experiences and perceptions of discrimination, as well as into young people's relationship with institutions, social participation, interethnic relations and human rights.

The findings show that young people recognize discrimination as a pronounced social problem present in their local communities. In their view, discrimination most often occurs in everyday life and in educational institutions, and particularly on social media, which stands out as the space where discriminatory patterns of behavior are most visible. LGBTI people, political dissenters, members of ethnic minorities and women are the social groups young people most often identify as being exposed to discrimination.

A particularly significant finding is that almost a third of respondents have personally experienced discrimination in the past two years. However, most young people who had such an experience did not report it. The most common reason for not reporting is not a lack of awareness of the procedures, but rather the belief that reporting would not lead to any change. This view is confirmed by the responses of those who did report discrimination, since most of them feel that the report did not lead to a concrete outcome, or that its result was unsatisfactory.

The results consistently point to a low level of trust in the institutional response to discrimination. Most young people believe that institutions do not respond adequately when discrimination occurs, while trust in local institutions is extremely low. At the same time, the research shows that young people are generally familiar with the basic mechanisms for protection against discrimination, indicating that the problem lies not solely in the level of awareness, but above all in the belief that existing mechanisms will be effectively applied.

When it comes to social relations, the research shows a markedly high degree of acceptance of diversity. Most young people support a multiethnic environment, have no problem with close relationships with members of other ethnic communities, and believe that reconciliation among the peoples of the region is possible. At the same time, young people recognize that the wars of the 1990s still affect relations among them, and that political actors often use the past to deepen social divisions.

The research shows that young people most often obtain information about discrimination through social media and family, followed by educational institutions, friends and traditional media. These findings confirm the importance of the education system, as well as of the digital space, as key sites for developing preventive activities and promoting human rights.

One of the most important findings relates to the social participation of young people. Most respondents feel they do not have enough opportunities to take part in decisions that affect their lives, nor do they believe their voice carries significant weight in the local community. Few young people took part in social or local initiatives over the past year, pointing to limited opportunities for active civic engagement.

Responses to the open-ended questions further confirm these findings. Young people identify better-quality education, greater access to information, continuous education on human rights and discrimination, more opportunities for employment and professional development, greater institutional support, and genuine inclusion of young people in decision-making processes as the most important preconditions for greater social inclusion.

Taken as a whole, the research results indicate that there is a marked potential among young people for the development of a more tolerant and inclusive society, but that realizing it requires a more effective institutional response, greater trust in public institutions, stronger civic education, and the creation of a space in which young people are active participants in social change, rather than merely its observers.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents the most important research findings arising from the analysis of all the data collected. The findings are presented according to their analytical significance and point to key patterns in the perception of discrimination, young people's experiences, and their relationship to institutions, social participation and intergroup relations.

- 2 out of 3 young people believe that discrimination is present in their community.
- Most frequently discriminated-against group: LGBTI people.
- Most common place for discrimination: social media.
- Most do not believe that institutions respond adequately.
- Most cases of discrimination go unreported.
- Most common reason for not reporting: the belief that reporting serves no purpose.
- Largest source of information: social media.
- Biggest challenge: low level of youth participation.
- Most common recommendation from young people: more education, information, and genuine participation in decision-making processes.

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination represents one of the key challenges to building an inclusive, democratic and safe society. Young people are a particularly important social group when it comes to recognizing, understanding and combating discrimination, since it is precisely their experiences, attitudes and level of civic engagement that shape future social relations and contribute to the development of more tolerant communities.

This research was conducted within the framework of the project From Insight to Impact, implemented by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, with the aim of collecting reliable data on the perception of discrimination among young people in Montenegro. In addition to examining the prevalence of discrimination and young people's experiences, the research also focused on their trust in institutions, their familiarity with protection mechanisms, sources of information, interethnic relations, attitudes toward reconciliation, and opportunities for more active youth participation in social life and decision-making processes.

The aim of the research was to provide a comprehensive insight into young people's experiences and attitudes regarding discrimination, to identify the areas where the greatest challenges exist, and to recognize potential mechanisms for improving social inclusion, mutual trust and the protection of human rights. The findings obtained provide a basis for formulating recommendations for decision-makers, educational institutions, institutions and civil society organizations working with young people, so that future policies and activities can be grounded in the needs and experiences of young people themselves.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted from March to mid-July 2026 on a sample of 501 young respondents from Montenegro. Data collection was carried out using a quantitative method, i.e. a survey completed online by young people in Montenegro. The professional licensed software WARP IT, designed for conducting public opinion and market research, was used for data collection and processing. The sample was post-stratified according to key demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, type of settlement and region, in order to reflect the structure of the target youth population as accurately as possible. Quality control was carried out on 20% of the completed interviews, in order to verify the accuracy of the survey's implementation and the reliability of the responses collected.

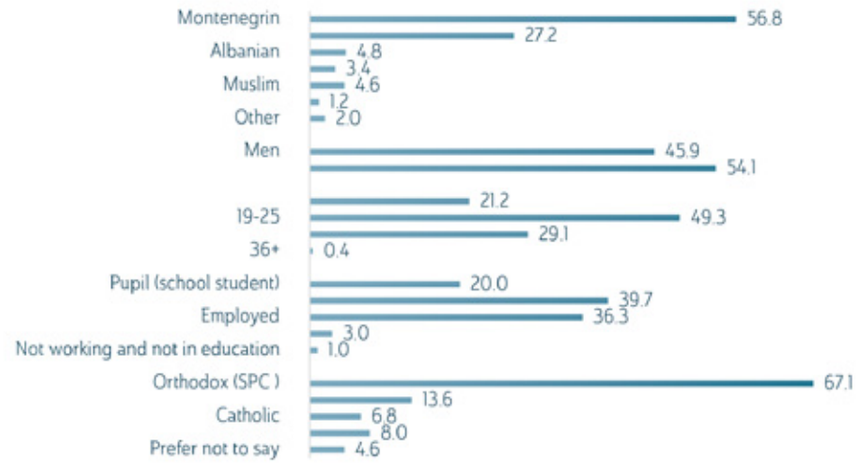
The questionnaire covered several thematic areas relating to the perception and experience of discrimination, the social groups most frequently subjected to discrimination, the places where discrimination occurs, the assessment of institutional performance, personal experiences with discrimination and reporting, interethnic relations, attitudes toward reconciliation, knowledge of human rights and protection mechanisms, sources of information about discrimination, trust in local institutions, youth civic participation, gender equality, and young people's recommendations for improving their participation in local communities.



SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The research was conducted on a sample of 501 young respondents from Montenegro. The sample was gender-balanced, with a somewhat higher share of women than men. In terms of age, almost half of the respondents belong to the 19–25 age group, while approximately a fifth make up the youngest group, aged 12–18. Young people aged 26–35 also make up a significant share of the sample, while respondents older than 35 are represented in negligible numbers.

Chart 1 Demographics, in %



When it comes to educational and employment status, the largest share of the sample consists of students, followed by employed young people, while one in five respondents is a pupil. A smaller number of respondents are unemployed, and the smallest group consists of those who are currently neither employed nor enrolled in education.

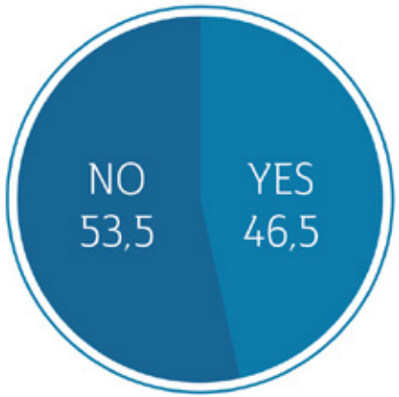
In terms of national/ethnic affiliation, the sample is dominated by respondents who identify as Montenegrins, followed by Serbs, while members of the Albanian, Muslim, Bosniak and Croatian communities are represented in smaller numbers. A small number of respondents identified in another way.

The largest number of respondents belong to the Orthodox faith, while adherents of the Islamic and Catholic faiths, as well as respondents without religious affiliation, are represented in smaller numbers. A smaller portion of respondents preferred not to declare on this question.

The sample included young people from almost all municipalities in Montenegro. The largest number of respondents come from Podgorica, while young people from Nikšić, Bar and Berane are also significantly represented. Young people from Budva, Danilovgrad, Cetinje, Kolašin, Pljevlja, Ulcinj, Bijelo Polje, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Tuzi, Mojkovac, Žabljak, Zeta, Tivat, Rožaje, Plav, Plužine, Gusinje, Petnjica, Andrijevica and Šavnik also took part in the research.

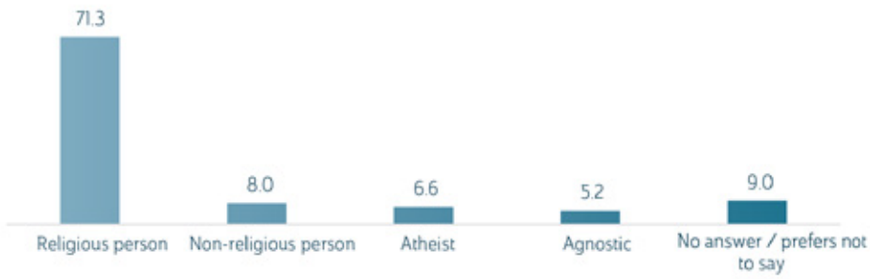
Almost half of the respondents stated that at some point in their lives they had lived outside their home municipality for longer than three months, indicating relatively pronounced spatial mobility among the young people in the sample. At the same time, most respondents describe themselves as religious, while a considerably smaller number identify as non-religious, atheist or agnostic, and some respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Chart 1.1 Have you ever lived outside your municipality for longer than 3 months? On the sample; in %



The results show that the experience of living outside one's home municipality is relatively common among young people. Slightly more than half of the respondents state that they have never lived outside their municipality for longer than three months, while almost half have had such an experience. This distribution indicates that the sample includes both young people who have spent most of their lives in their local community, as well as those who, due to schooling, work or other reasons, spent a certain period living elsewhere — which may contribute to the diversity of life experiences represented in the research.

Chart 1.2 Regardless of whether you go to church/mosque or not, would you describe yourself as... On the sample; in %



The results show that the majority of young people in the sample identify as religious. A considerably smaller share of respondents identify as non-religious, atheist or agnostic, while a number of respondents chose not to answer this question. This structure indicates that religious identity is present among most of the young people covered by the research, which represents an important characteristic of the sample and may be relevant for understanding certain attitudes analyzed later in the report.

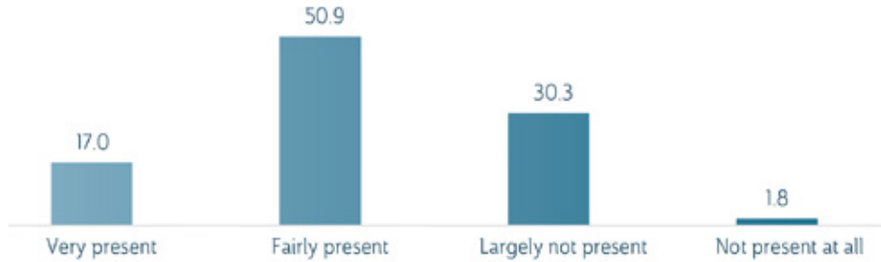
MAIN FINDINGS

The research results indicate that young people experience discrimination as a pronounced social problem present in their local communities, one that, in their view, most often occurs in everyday communication, in the educational environment and on social media. At the same time, the findings show a marked skepticism toward the effectiveness of the institutional response to discrimination, a low level of trust in local institutions, as well as limited youth participation in social and local initiatives.

On the other hand, the research shows that there is a high degree of support among young people for a multiethnic society, for the acceptance of diversity, and for the possibility of reconciliation in the region, while at the same time recognizing that past conflicts still affect interpersonal relations and that political actors often use the past to deepen social divisions.

The findings also indicate that young people attach the greatest importance to education, access to information, and greater inclusion in decision-making processes as key preconditions for reducing discrimination and strengthening their social participation. The detailed results of the research, organized by individual thematic areas, are presented in the remainder of the report.

Chart 2 In your opinion, to what extent is discrimination present in your community? On the sample; in %



Young people's perceptions indicate that discrimination is recognized as a phenomenon present in their local community. The largest number of respondents believe that discrimination is fairly present, while a significant share consider it to be very present. In contrast, a smaller number of young people believe that discrimination is largely not pronounced, while only a small share of respondents state that it is not present in their community at all. The distribution of responses shows that a prevailing conviction among young people is that discrimination is part of everyday social reality, although they differ in their assessment of its intensity. At the same time, the fact that a certain number of respondents assess discrimination as not present or barely present indicates that young people's experiences and perceptions are not entirely uniform, but rather depend on their immediate social environment and personal observations.

Chart 2.1 In your opinion, to what extent is discrimination present in your community? On the sample; in %



The results show that a clear conviction prevails among young people that discrimination is present in their local community. More than two-thirds of respondents assess that discrimination is present to a greater or lesser extent, while approximately a third believe it is largely not present. The resulting index value further confirms that the perception of the presence of discrimination has a pronounced positive intensity, meaning that discrimination represents a visible social problem from young people's perspective.

This finding represents an important starting point for understanding all the other results of the research. Indeed, the perception that discrimination is widespread is consistently confirmed by the answers to subsequent questions. Young people not only believe that discrimination exists, but also clearly identify the groups most often exposed to it, as well as the social spaces in which it most often manifests.

It is particularly significant that this perception coincides with the findings showing that almost a third of young people have personally experienced discrimination in the past two years. For a significant number of respondents, discrimination is therefore not only a social phenomenon they observe in their surroundings, but also a personal experience, which further contributes to a more pronounced perception of its presence.

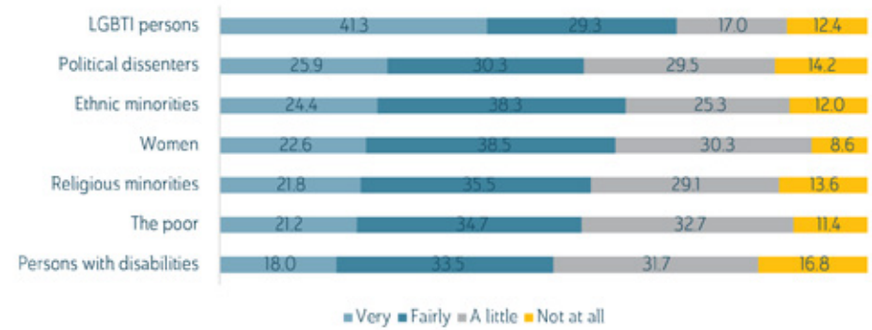
At the same time, the findings indicate that young people do not have sufficient trust in institutional protection against discrimination. Most respondents believe that institutions do not respond adequately when discrimination occurs, while among those who have been discriminated against, few decide to report it, most often because they believe the report would not lead to any result. These findings indicate that the perception of the prevalence of discrimination is not an isolated attitude, but is accompanied by a pronounced skepticism toward the effectiveness of the institutional response.

Further confirmation of this pattern is provided by the responses to the open-ended questions. When citing examples of positive institutional reactions, respondents most often highlighted swift and coordinated action by the competent authorities, showing what kind of response they consider desirable. However, when speaking about negative experiences, they predominantly mentioned the absence of an institutional response, the ignoring of reports, and inefficient handling. This contrast indicates that young people have relatively clear expectations of institutions, but at the same time feel that these expectations are not sufficiently met in practice.

Taken as a whole, the aggregated results show that young people experience discrimination as a widespread and socially relevant problem. The perception of its presence is not based solely on general impressions, but is supported by personal experiences, the observation of discrimination in various social settings, and limited trust in the ability of institutions to provide effective protection. For this reason, this finding represents one of the central points of the research and provides a framework for understanding all the results that follow.

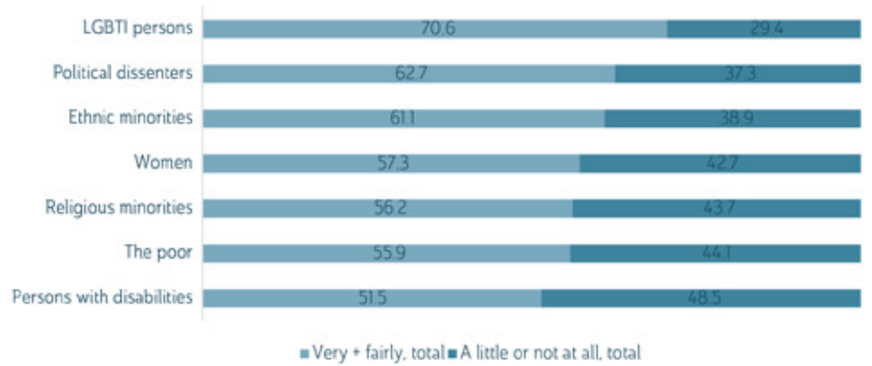
An index of 35.7 confirms that there is a clearly pronounced view among young people that discrimination is present in their local community. Although this is not a matter of complete consensus, the index value shows that the perception of the presence of discrimination significantly prevails over the opposite view.

Chart 3 In your opinion, to what extent are the groups listed below most often discriminated against. On the sample; in %



Young people most strongly identify LGBTI persons as the social group most exposed to discrimination. As many as seven in ten respondents believe that LGBTI persons are very or fairly often discriminated against, with more than two-fifths stating that they are discriminated against very often. In addition to them, a high level of perceived discrimination is also attributed to political dissenters, ethnic minorities, women, the poor, religious minorities and persons with disabilities. Although the intensity of perceived discrimination varies among the individual groups, the results show that most young people believe that all of the listed social categories are exposed, to a greater or lesser extent, to discriminatory treatment.

Chart 3.1 In your opinion, to what extent are the groups listed below most often discriminated against. On the sample; in %

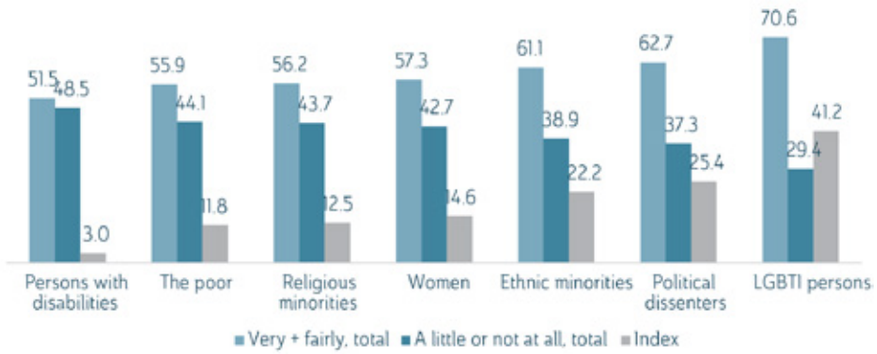


Most young people believe that all of the social groups presented are, to a certain extent, exposed to discrimination, although the intensity of these as-

sessments varies. LGBTI persons stand out as the group most often exposed to discrimination, with an overwhelming majority holding the view that they are frequently discriminated against. Immediately behind them come political dissenters and members of ethnic minorities, while a somewhat smaller, yet still majority, share of respondents believe that women, religious minorities and the poor are often subject to discrimination.

Only in the case of persons with disabilities are opinions almost completely divided. Although a slight majority in this group as well believe that discrimination is present, the gap between opposing views is the smallest of all the groups observed, indicating a less uniform perception of their position among young people.

Chart 3.2 In your opinion, to what extent are the groups listed below most often discriminated against. On the sample; in %



The aggregated results and index values show that young people do not perceive different social groups as equally exposed to discrimination. Although the prevailing view for all the groups observed is that they are discriminated against to a greater or lesser extent, the intensity of these assessments varies significantly.

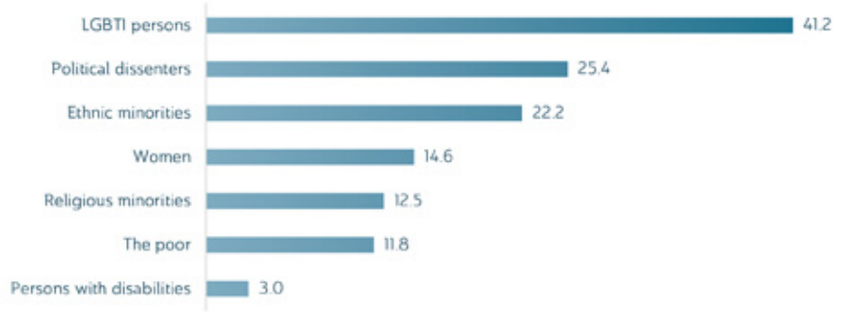
The most pronounced perception of discrimination is found with regard to LGBTI persons. They achieve by far the highest index value, indicating a clear and relatively widespread conviction among young people that this group is most often subjected to discrimination. Well behind them, but still with pronounced positive index values, are political dissenters and members of ethnic minorities, showing that young people recognize discrimination not only on the basis of personal characteristics, but also of political affiliation and ethnicity.

A medium level of index intensity is recorded for women, religious minorities and the poor. This indicates that most young people also recognize these groups as discriminated against, but the degree of agreement is somewhat weaker than for the categories mentioned above.

The lowest index value is recorded for persons with disabilities. Although a slight majority still holds the view that they are exposed to discrimination, the near-even split between positive and negative responses shows that there is not a sufficiently firm consensus among young people regarding their social position. This finding does not necessarily mean that persons with disabilities objectively face discrimination less often, but rather indicates that young people perceive their position less unambiguously than that of other social groups.

These results represent an important introduction to the findings that follow. Indeed, the perception that certain groups are more frequently exposed to discrimination later links up with assessments of the places where discrimination most often occurs, as well as with respondents' personal experiences. It is particularly significant that the groups young people identify as most vulnerable largely coincide with the grounds on which respondents state they themselves experienced discrimination, primarily on the basis of gender, ethnicity and political views. This shows that the perception of discrimination is not based solely on general social impressions, but is, to a significant extent, linked to experiences from one's immediate surroundings and to young people's own personal experiences.

Chart 3.3 In your opinion, to what extent are the groups listed below most often discriminated against. On the sample; in %



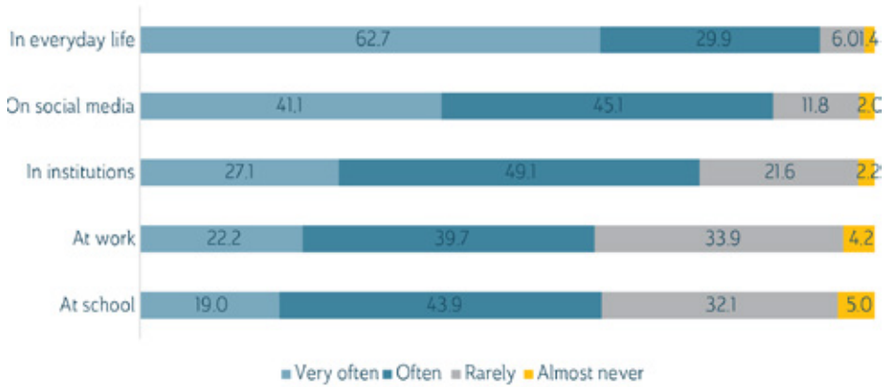
The index results further confirm that young people do not experience discrimination against all social groups with equal intensity. Although the indices are positive for all the groups observed, their values vary significantly, indicating differing degrees of agreement about which groups are most exposed to discrimination.

The lowest index was recorded for persons with disabilities. This result does not mean that young people believe this group is not discriminated against, but rather points to the greatest divergence of opinion in assessing their position. On the other hand, somewhat more pronounced, yet still relatively moderate, indices were recorded for the poor, religious minorities and women, indicating that for these groups there is a prevailing, but not entirely uniform, view that they are exposed to discrimination.

Higher indices were recorded for ethnic minorities and political dissenters, indicating a more pronounced consensus among young people that these groups in particular are often subject to unequal treatment. LGBTI persons have the highest index value, standing out by this measure as well as the group for which the belief that they face discrimination is the most widespread and strongly held.

Taken together with the previous research results, this distribution of indices confirms that young people most strongly recognize discrimination against groups that are more often the subject of social divisions, stigmatization, or political and identity-based conflicts in the public space. This confirms that the perception of discrimination is not evenly distributed among different social groups, but is most strongly tied to those that young people assess as being most visibly exposed to social exclusion and negative stereotypes.

Chart 4 How often does discrimination occur in the following places? On the sample; in %



The question on the frequency of discrimination in various social settings shows that young people recognize discrimination as a phenomenon present in almost all segments of everyday life, but that its intensity differs depending on the setting.

The most pronounced perception of discrimination relates to social media, which stands out as the space where discriminatory behavior is most often observed. The dominant impression among respondents is that discrimination on digital platforms occurs very often, indicating that young people identify the internet and social media in particular as the environment where hate speech, insults, exclusion and various forms of intolerance are especially pronounced.

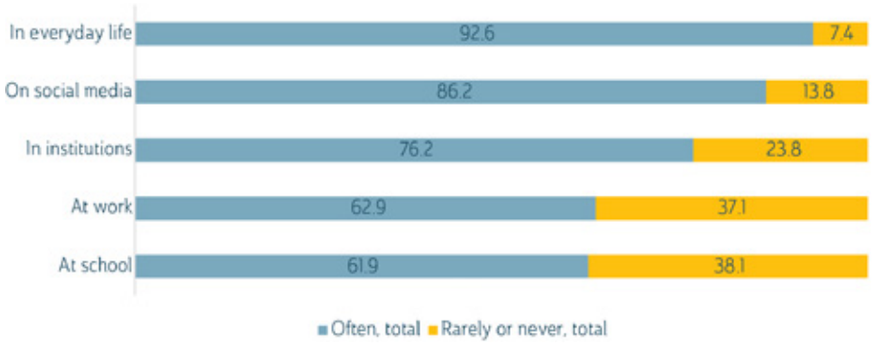
A high level of the presence of discrimination is also recognized in schools. The responses indicate that a significant number of young people believe that discrimination in the educational environment occurs often or very often, suggesting that school, despite its educational and formative role, is not perceived as a space in which all young people are equally protected from discriminatory behavior.

A similar perception is present when it comes to everyday life, where most respondents believe that discrimination occurs often. This shows that young people do not experience discrimination as an isolated phenomenon tied to individual institutions or situations, but as an experience that can be present in various aspects of everyday social relations.

With regard to institutions and the workplace, the responses likewise indicate that discrimination is most often perceived as a frequent occurrence, although the assessed intensity is somewhat lower than in schools and on social media. At the same time, a small number of respondents believe that discrimination almost never occurs in these settings, confirming that the perception of its presence is widespread regardless of the social context.

The overall findings show that young people recognize discrimination as a phenomenon present in various areas of life, with the digital space and the education system identified as the settings in which it is most visible, while institutions, the workplace and everyday social life are also perceived as places where discriminatory practices relatively often occur.

Chart 4.1 How often does discrimination occur in the following places? On the sample; in %



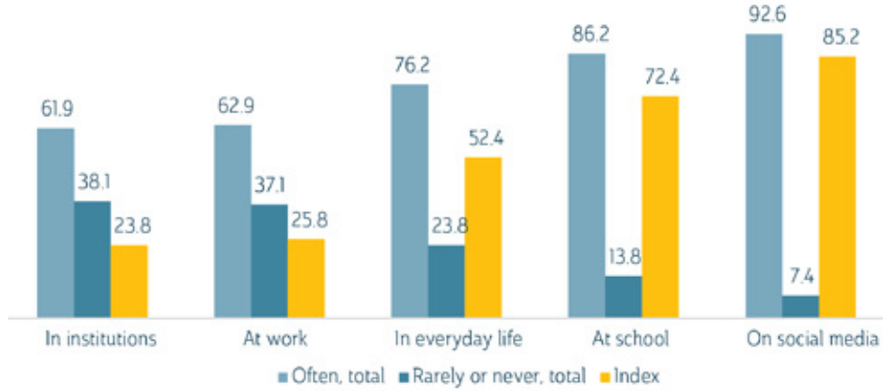
The results show that young people recognize discrimination as a phenomenon present in almost all areas of everyday life, but that there are significant differences in the assessment of its frequency across different social settings.

The most pronounced perception occurs with regard to social media, which the vast majority of respondents experience as a place where discrimination occurs often. Immediately behind it comes the school environment, which young people likewise largely recognize as a space where discriminatory behavior is frequent.

A high level of frequency of discrimination is also observed in everyday life, while a somewhat smaller, yet still majority, share of respondents believe that discrimination often occurs at work and in institutions. Although these two areas are assessed as somewhat less problematic compared to social media and schools, the prevailing view in these settings as well is that discrimination is more frequent than it should be.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that young people do not experience discrimination as an isolated problem occurring only in certain situations, but as a phenomenon present in various segments of everyday life.

Chart 4.2 How often does discrimination occur in the following places? On the sample; in %



The aggregated results and index values show a very high degree of agreement among young people that discrimination most often occurs in everyday social interactions, with the intensity of these assessments varying significantly across different settings.

The most pronounced perception of the frequency of discrimination relates to social media, which achieves by far the highest index value. This result points to an almost unanimous view among young people that the digital space is where discriminatory speech, hate speech and various forms of exclusion are especially pronounced. Immediately behind social media comes school, whose high index shows that young people also experience the school environment as a space in which discrimination occurs very often.

Somewhat lower, yet still pronounced, index values are recorded for everyday life, showing that respondents do not associate discrimination exclusively with particular institutions or formal situations, but recognize it as an integral part of everyday interpersonal relations.

The lowest index values are recorded for the workplace and institutions. However, despite the assessments in these areas being somewhat more moderate, the majority of young people still believe that discrimination occurs often here as well, indicating that none of the settings observed is perceived as a space where discrimination is rare.

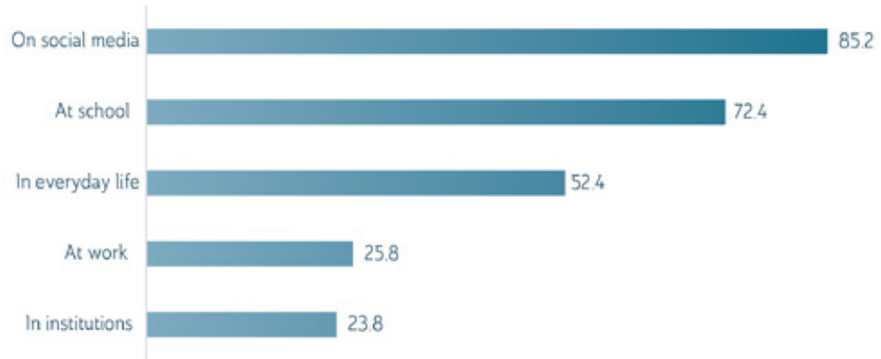
These findings very clearly complement the previous results of the research. Indeed, the fact that two-thirds of young people believe discrimination is present in their local community is further explained by identifying the specific places where it most often manifests. It is particularly significant that the highest index

values are not tied to formal institutions, but to the everyday settings where young people spend most of their time — social media, school and immediate social contacts.

At the same time, these results help to better understand the later findings of the research relating to personal experiences of discrimination. If young people recognize discrimination as a frequent occurrence precisely in the settings they are in daily contact with, it is not surprising that a significant share of respondents report having personally been exposed to discrimination in the past two years. On the other hand, the fact that institutions are among the settings where discrimination is also often recognized may help explain why young people express a low level of trust in institutional protection and why a large number of them do not report cases of discrimination.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that young people do not experience discrimination as a problem confined to isolated incidents or particular social groups. On the contrary, they recognize it as a phenomenon present in almost all segments of their everyday life, with the assessments relating to social media and the school environment being particularly concerning, as these are spaces that play an important role in young people's socialization, communication and attitude formation.

Chart 4.3 How often does discrimination occur in the following places? On the sample; in %



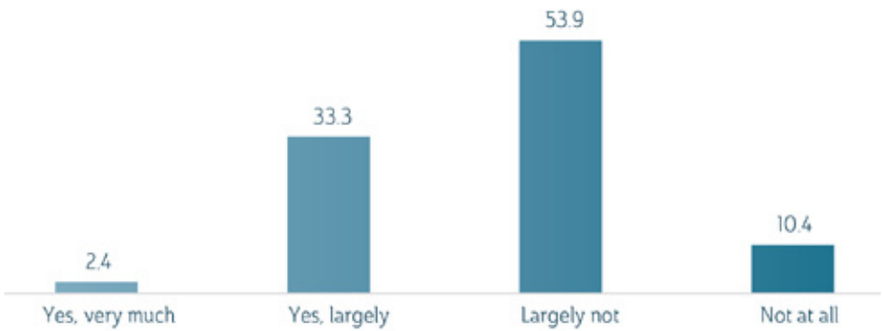
The indices clearly show that young people do not experience all social settings as equally risky when it comes to discrimination. Index values increase gradually from formal social systems toward the spaces where young people spend the most time on a daily basis, indicating an increasingly pronounced consensus on the frequency of discrimination in those settings.

The lowest index values were recorded for institutions and the workplace. Although the indices are positive in these cases as well, meaning that the prevailing view is that discrimination occurs often, their relatively moderate values point to greater diversity of opinion among young people and a less pronounced consensus than in the other settings.

In contrast, everyday life records a considerably higher index, showing that young people do not experience discrimination as an isolated institutional problem, but as a phenomenon present in everyday social relations. Even more pronounced indices were recorded for school and, especially, social media. The high values of these indicators point to a very high degree of agreement among respondents that these two spaces in particular are the most common settings in which discrimination manifests.

This pattern builds on the previous findings of the research. On the one hand, young people express low trust in the ability of institutions to respond adequately to discrimination, while on the other hand they believe that discrimination most often occurs precisely in the settings they are in direct daily contact with — at school, in everyday life, and especially on social media. This suggests that young people's experience of discrimination is not primarily tied to formal procedures or isolated incidents, but to patterns of behavior present in their everyday lives. For this reason, the results indicate that preventive activities should not be directed solely at the institutional response, but also at the education system, the digital space and everyday social interactions, where young people perceive the greatest risk of discriminatory behavior.

Chart 5 Do institutions respond adequately to discrimination when it occurs? On the sample; in %



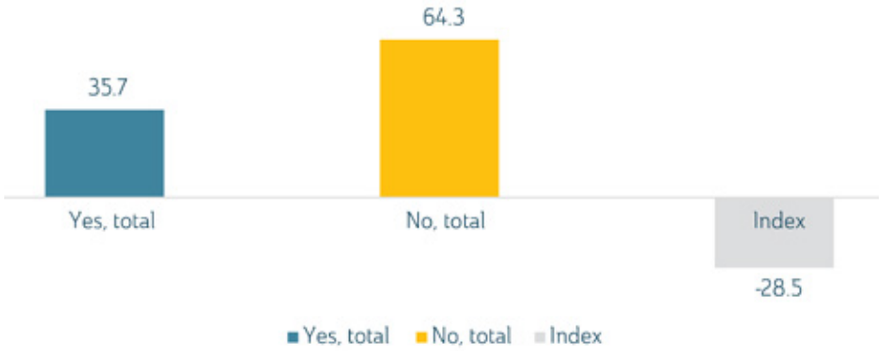
Young people's responses show that the prevailing view among them is that institutions do not respond adequately to cases of discrimination. The largest

number of respondents believe that institutions largely do not respond appropriately when discrimination occurs, while an additional share of young people express an even more critical view, assessing that institutions do not respond adequately at all. In contrast, a considerably smaller number of respondents believe that institutional responses are largely appropriate, while the belief that institutions handle such situations very well is present among only a small share of young people.

These findings point to a pronounced deficit of trust in institutional mechanisms for protection against discrimination. From young people's perspective, the dominant impression is that the existing system does not provide sufficiently effective and timely protection to persons exposed to discrimination, which may contribute to a sense of insecurity and discourage the reporting of discriminatory acts.

The perception of an inadequate institutional response at the same time points to the need for strengthening institutional capacities, improving how they handle cases of discrimination, and increasing the transparency and visibility of the measures taken. In addition to a genuine improvement of institutional responses, the findings also suggest the importance of building young people's trust in protection mechanisms, so that they have greater confidence that reported cases will be seriously reviewed and effectively resolved.

Chart 5.1 Do institutions respond adequately to discrimination when it occurs? On the sample; in %



More than two-thirds of young people believe that institutions do not respond adequately when discrimination occurs, while only slightly more than a third assess the institutional response as appropriate. The negative index further confirms that a prevailing distrust exists among young people regarding the ability of institutions to respond effectively to cases of discrimination.

This finding represents a logical continuation of the previous research results. Young people have already expressed the conviction that discrimination is widespread in their local communities, and that it frequently occurs in various social settings, including schools, everyday life, the workplace and institutions. The perception that institutions do not respond adequately may be one of the reasons why discrimination is experienced as a persistent and frequent social phenomenon.

At the same time, this finding provides an important framework for understanding the responses to the questions that follow in the research. If young people believe that institutions do not provide adequate protection, it is to be expected that they will be less willing to report discrimination, or to believe that reporting will lead to concrete change. Later in the research it will be possible to examine the extent to which this perception is reflected in young people's actual experiences with reporting discrimination and the outcomes of those reports.

Chart 6 Give an example of a positive/good institutional response to discrimination. On the sample; in %

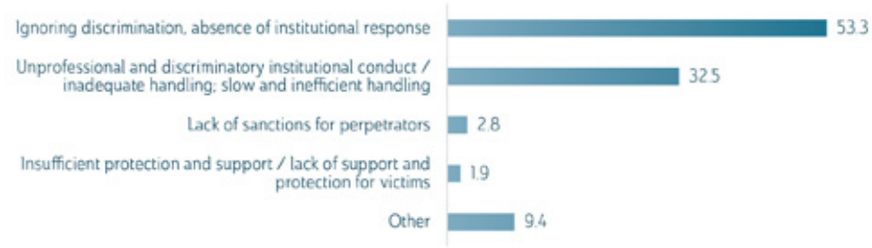


When asked to give an example of a positive institutional response to discrimination, young people most often highlighted cases in which institutions responded in a timely manner, took concrete steps, and cooperated in resolving the case. These responses indicate that an adequate institutional response is primarily associated with prompt action, effective implementation of procedures, and coordination among the competent actors.

In addition, some respondents cited the sanctioning of perpetrators of discrimination as a positive example, showing that young people consider accountability for discriminatory behavior to be an important element of effective protection. Responses relating to educational activities and preventive measures, as well as to the provision of protection and support to victims of discrimination, also stood out. Improvement of the legal and institutional framework for protection against discrimination was cited less often as an example of good practice.

However, it is particularly significant that almost a third of young people were unable to name a single positive example of an institutional response. This finding suggests that some young people perceive successful examples of adequate institutional conduct as insufficiently visible, or simply do not recognize them in their immediate surroundings. Taken together with the earlier findings on the assessment of institutional performance, these responses further point to the need for more consistent, more visible and more transparent handling of discrimination cases, in order to increase young people's trust in the institutional protection of their rights.

Chart 7 Give an example of a poor/negative institutional response. On the sample; in %



When asked to give an example of a poor or inadequate institutional response to discrimination, young people most often pointed to a complete absence of institutional response. More than half of the responses relate to situations in which institutions failed to respond to reported discrimination or ignored the problem, suggesting that inaction in particular is recognized as the most serious form of institutional failure.

In addition, a significant number of respondents cited unprofessional institutional conduct, inadequate handling, and slow and inefficient resolution of reported cases as examples of poor practice. These responses indicate that, even when institutions do respond, young people often feel that such conduct is not sufficiently competent, timely or effective.

Cited considerably less often as negative examples were the absence of sanctions for perpetrators of discrimination, as well as insufficient protection and support for victims, while a smaller portion of the responses comprised various individual examples that could not be grouped into a single common category.



Taken as a whole, young people's responses show that negative experiences with institutions are primarily linked to passivity and the absence of a response, and secondly to inefficient and unprofessional conduct when a response does occur. This perception indicates that young people do not expect merely formal action from institutions, but above all timely, consistent and visible protection for persons exposed to discrimination.

Chart 8 Have you personally experienced unjust treatment or discrimination in the past 2 years? On the sample; in %



Most young people report that they have not personally experienced unjust treatment or discrimination in the past two years. Nevertheless, a significant share of respondents report having had such an experience, indicating that discrimination is a reality faced by a considerable number of young people.

This finding suggests that, while personal experience of discrimination is not dominant among young people, it is not a rare occurrence either. On the contrary, the fact that almost every third respondent reported having been subjected to unjust treatment or discrimination indicates that this is a social problem affecting a significant share of young people, one that requires ongoing attention from institutions and other social actors.

This result confirms that discrimination is not experienced solely as a social phenomenon affecting others, but that some young people also have direct personal experience with various forms of unequal treatment. Such experiences can have long-term consequences for a sense of safety, trust in institutions, and young people's willingness to report discrimination or actively participate in combating it.

Chart 8.1 Have you personally experienced unjust treatment or discrimination in the past 2 years? On the sample; in %



Although most young people believe that discrimination is present in their local community, personal experience with discrimination is reported by approximately a third of respondents, while about two-thirds state that they have not experienced unjust treatment or discrimination in the past two years. The negative index value further confirms that personal experience of discrimination is not dominant among young people.

This finding points to an important distinction between the perception of a social problem and personal experience. Discrimination is recognized as a phenomenon that exists in the community and affects various social groups, but it does not necessarily have to be something the majority of young people have experienced directly. Such a distinction is not unusual and may indicate that young people recognize discrimination through other people's experiences, events in their surroundings, or information they are exposed to through the media, school and social media.

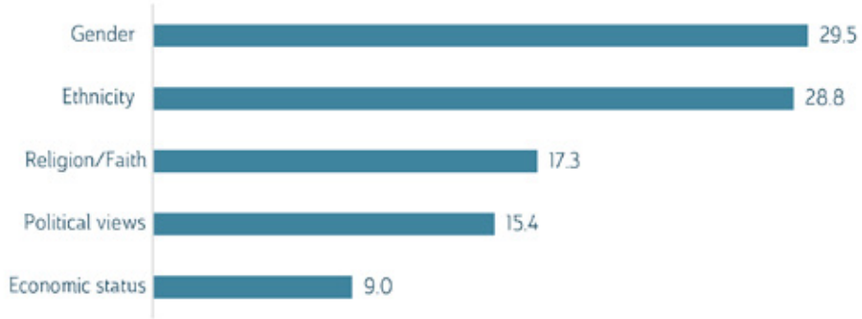
At the same time, the fact that almost every third young respondent nevertheless reported having been exposed to discrimination represents a significant finding. When linked with the following questions, it becomes clear that most of those who experienced discrimination did not report the case, most often because they did not believe the report would have any effect. This indicates that the scale of the problem cannot be assessed solely through the number of reported cases, since the research shows the existence of a significant unreported share of discrimination.

This result is also consistent with the earlier findings of the research, according to which young people consider discrimination to be a widespread phenomenon, particularly in schools, on social media and in everyday life, while at the

same time expressing pronounced distrust in the adequacy of the institutional response. For this reason, personal experience of discrimination can be viewed as part of a broader social picture in which the perceived frequency of discrimination and low trust in institutions are interconnected.

Chart 9 If your answer to the previous question about discrimination was YES... i.e., if you have experienced discrimination, please tell us on what grounds. On the sample; in %

n156



Note: This question was answered exclusively by respondents who had experienced discrimination, which represents a smaller subgroup of the overall sample.

Among young people who stated that they had personally experienced discrimination in the past two years, gender and ethnicity stand out as the most common grounds for discrimination. These responses indicate that young people's experiences of discrimination are most often linked to personal characteristics that form an important part of their identity.

Religious affiliation and political views are cited somewhat less often as reasons for discrimination, showing that some young people also consider these characteristics to be a potential basis for unequal treatment or unjust conduct.

The smallest number of respondents who had experienced discrimination cite economic status as the reason they were discriminated against. Although this ground is represented to a lesser extent than the others, its presence confirms that young people also recognize socioeconomic differences as a potential source of unequal treatment.

Taken as a whole, the results show that young people's personal experiences of discrimination are most often linked to identity-related characteristics, while other grounds for discrimination occur less frequently. This points to the need for further strengthening of measures that promote equality, respect for diversity, and protection against discrimination on all grounds.

Chart 10 Did you report it? On the sample; in % n172[1]

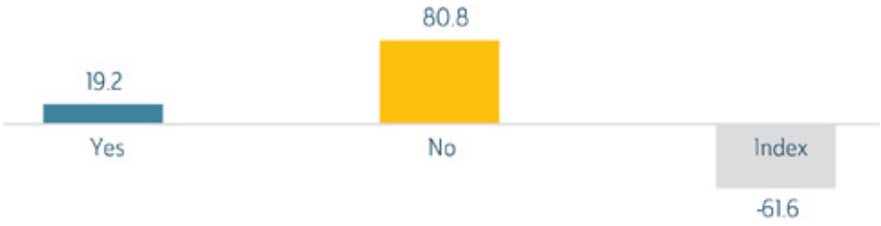


[1] Note: This question was answered exclusively by respondents who had experienced discrimination, which represents a smaller subgroup of the overall sample.

The research found that most young people who experienced discrimination in the past two years chose not to report the case to the competent institutions or other relevant actors. Reporting discrimination is the exception, while not reporting it is the dominant pattern of behavior among respondents with personal experience of discrimination.

This finding indicates that formal protection mechanisms remain underused among young people. Regardless of the nature of the discrimination they experienced, most respondents did not initiate a formal procedure to protect their rights, pointing to a significant gap between experiencing discrimination and being willing to report it to the relevant institutions.

Chart 10.1 Did you report it? On the sample; in %



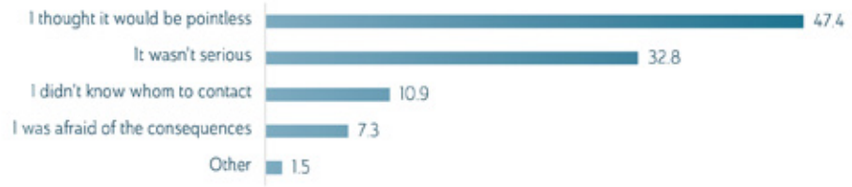
Among young people who reported having experienced discrimination in the past two years, only a small share decided to report the case, while a large majority received no formal response. The index value (-61.6) points to an extremely low level of discrimination reporting, representing one of the most striking findings of the research.

This result takes on additional meaning when viewed together with the preceding questions. Although a significant number of young people report having personally experienced discrimination, most of them did not take the next step and did not report the incident to the competent institutions or other relevant actors. This indicates that the existence of discrimination is not accompanied by a readiness to use protection mechanisms.

The reasons behind this pattern become clearer through the following question, which shows that young people most often did not report discrimination because they did not believe reporting would be meaningful, or because they assessed the case as not serious enough. At the same time, this finding is consistent with the attitudes expressed earlier regarding institutional performance — most respondents believe that institutions do not respond adequately when discrimination occurs, and the most commonly cited negative reactions were the ignoring of reports, the absence of a response, and inefficient handling.

Taken as a whole, the results point to a pronounced gap between the existence of formal protection mechanisms and young people's willingness to use them. The low reporting rate can be viewed as a consequence of limited trust in the effectiveness of institutional protection, but also as an indicator that a significant share of discrimination remains outside official records. For this reason, the number of reported cases cannot be a reliable indicator of the actual scale of discrimination among young people, and must instead be interpreted together with the data on personal experiences, reasons for not reporting, and assessments of institutional performance.

Chart 11 If you did not report it, why? On the sample; in % n137[1]



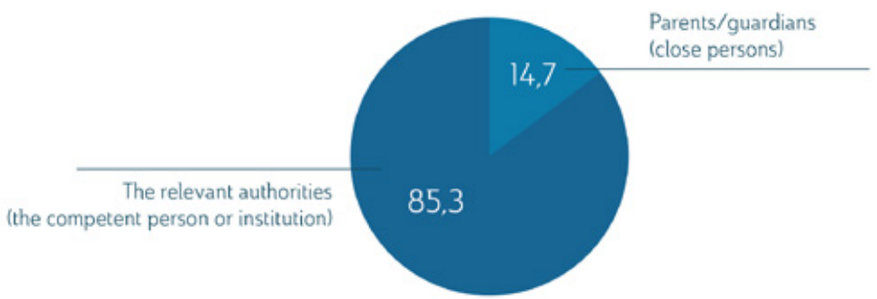
[1] Note: This question was answered exclusively by respondents who had experienced discrimination, which represents a smaller subgroup of the overall sample.

During the research, respondents who stated that they had not reported discrimination most often cited the belief that reporting would not lead to any concrete outcome. This response represents the most common reason for not reporting and points to a pronounced sense that formal protection mechanisms would not result in an effective resolution of the problem.

In addition, a significant share of young people felt that the discrimination they experienced was not serious enough to warrant reporting. A smaller number of respondents stated that they did not know whom they could report the case to, while an even smaller share cited fear of possible consequences as the reason they did not seek institutional protection. Other reasons were represented only sporadically.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that not reporting discrimination among young people is not primarily linked to fear or a lack of information, but above all to the belief that reporting would not lead to change, while some respondents assess that their experience was not serious enough to warrant a formal response.

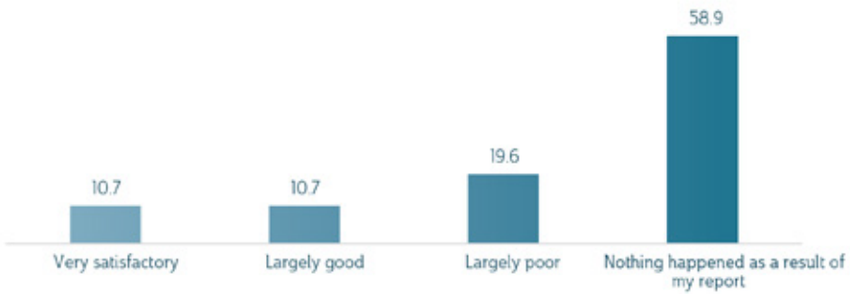
Chart 12 If you did report it, whom did you report it to? On the sample; in % n34



In most cases, respondents who reported discrimination turned to the competent persons or institutions, while a considerably smaller share sought help and support primarily from parents, guardians or other close persons.

This distribution of responses shows that when young people decide to report discrimination, they mostly opt for formal protection mechanisms, that is, turning to the institutions responsible for handling such situations. Turning to family members or other close persons is present to a lesser extent and represents a less common choice among respondents who had experience with reporting discrimination.

Chart 13 What was the outcome of the report? On the sample; in %. n56

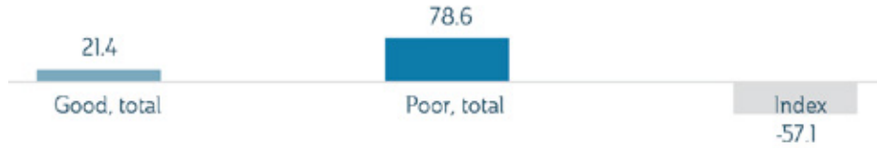


Among young people who reported discrimination, the most common response was that their report did not lead to any concrete consequences. More than half of the respondents stated that nothing changed after they reported it, which represents the dominant experience within this group.

At the same time, some respondents assessed the outcome of the report as largely poor, while a considerably smaller number stated that the institutional response was good or very satisfactory. According to respondents' answers, positive reporting experiences are considerably less common than negative ones.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that among young people who chose to report discrimination, the prevailing perception is that the report did not produce the expected institutional response, nor did it lead to a concrete outcome.

Chart 13.1 What was the outcome of the report? On the sample; in %

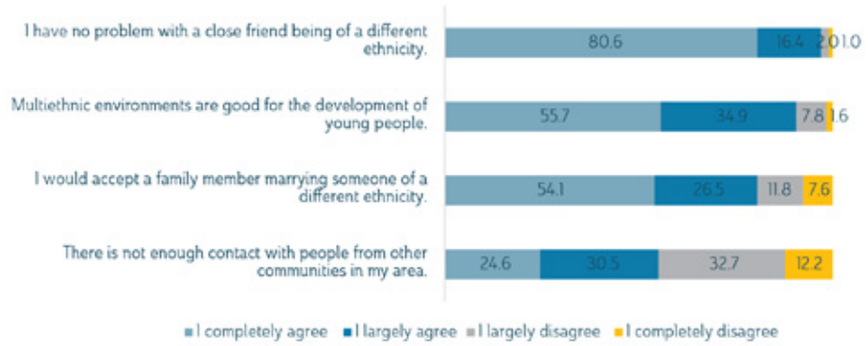


Although a relatively small number of those who personally experienced discrimination filed a report, the experiences of those who did report point to markedly unfavorable outcomes. Only slightly more than a fifth of respondents who filed a report assess its outcome as positive, while almost four-fifths believe the report did not lead to a satisfactory result. An index of -57.1 confirms the markedly negative assessment of reporting outcomes.

This finding logically builds on the previous research results. Young people largely believe that institutions do not respond adequately to discrimination, and among the most commonly cited reasons for not reporting, the belief that reporting "serves no purpose" dominates. At the same time, among those who did decide to report discrimination, the prevailing impression is that the report did not produce the desired effects. These findings complement one another and point to a pattern in which limited trust in institutional protection is grounded not only in perception, but also in the concrete experiences of the young people who went through the reporting process.

Taken together, the results suggest that the effectiveness of the institutional response represents one of the key challenges in combating discrimination. In addition to encouraging young people to report cases of discrimination, it is equally important to ensure that reports are reviewed in a timely manner, that they have visible outcomes, and that they contribute to building trust in protection mechanisms. Such an approach could represent an important precondition for increasing young people's willingness to report discrimination and use existing protection mechanisms in the future.

Chart 14 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



This question does not examine discrimination directly, but rather social distance, openness to diversity, and the perception of a multiethnic environment.

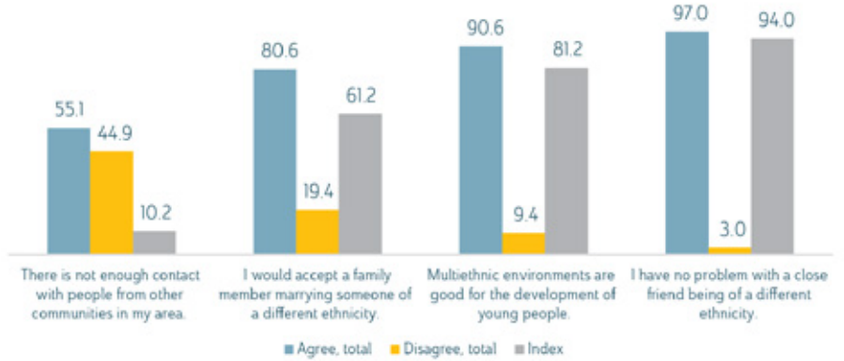
Respondents expressed a high degree of openness toward life and relationships with members of other ethnic communities. The strongest agreement was recorded for the statement that they have no problem with a close friend being of a different ethnicity, indicating a very high level of acceptance of diversity in immediate friendships.

Very positive attitudes were also recorded regarding the perception of multiethnic environments. A large majority of young people believe that a multiethnic environment contributes positively to the development of young people, while only a small number of respondents disagree with this view. Similarly, most respondents state that they would accept a family member marrying someone of a different ethnicity, further confirming a pronounced openness toward interethnic relations and the acceptance of diversity in the private sphere.

Unlike the previous statements, opinions on whether there is not enough contact with people from other communities in their area are considerably divided. While some young people feel that such contact is insufficient, an almost equal number of respondents do not share this view, indicating differing experiences and perceptions depending on the environment in which they live.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that positive attitudes toward interethnic relations, the acceptance of diversity, and the value of living in a multiethnic environment prevail among young people, while assessments of the actual opportunities for contact with members of other communities vary from one community to another.

Chart 14.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %

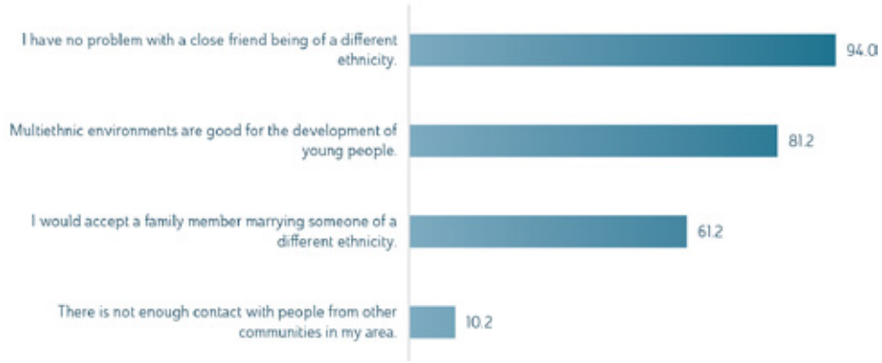


The results show that markedly positive attitudes toward interethnic relations and life in a multiethnic environment prevail among young people. The highest degree of agreement was recorded for the statement that respondents have no problem with a close friend being of a different ethnicity, which is also confirmed by the by-far highest index (94.0). A very high level of agreement is also present for the view that multiethnic environments are good for the development of young people (index 81.2), as well as for the willingness to accept a family member marrying someone of a different ethnicity (index 61.2). These findings indicate that young people largely accept diversity and show openness toward close interpersonal relationships with members of other ethnic communities.

At the same time, slightly more than half of respondents believe that there is not enough contact between people from different communities in their area. Although agreement with this statement is considerably weaker than with the other statements (index 10.2), it indicates that some young people recognize limited opportunities for everyday interaction and getting to know one another.

Taken together, the findings suggest that there is a high degree of acceptance of ethnic diversity and readiness to form close relationships with members of other communities among young people, while at the same time there is a perceived lack of such contact in everyday life. In other words, the results show that barriers to young people connecting with one another are not primarily a consequence of their personal attitudes, but rather of limited opportunities for mutual communication and joint activities. This finding provides an important context for understanding the later research results relating to the impact of past conflicts, social divisions, and the possibilities for building mutual trust among young people.

Chart 14.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The indices indicate that there is a very high degree of openness toward interethnic relations and acceptance of diversity among young people, but at the same time a certain critical attitude toward the social environment in which they live. The differences in index values clearly show that attitudes vary considerably depending on whether they relate to personal experiences or to assessments of the local community.

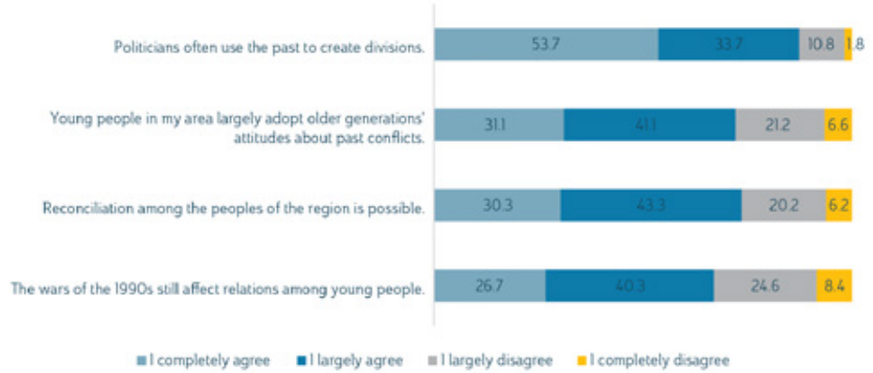
The lowest index was recorded for the statement that there is not enough contact with members of other communities in the place where they live. The relatively low value of this indicator shows that young people's opinions on this issue are fairly divided. Some respondents believe that mutual contact is insufficient, while others assess that there is enough such contact, indicating differing experiences among young people in different local settings.

On the other hand, all the remaining statements record markedly high indices, pointing to a very strong consensus among young people. The high index for willingness to accept a family member marrying someone of a different ethnicity indicates that interethnic relations in the private sphere are largely accepted, while the even higher index value for the view that multiethnic environments are good for the development of young people confirms a widely held belief that diversity represents a social value and a developmental asset.

The highest index value is recorded for the statement that respondents have no problem with a close friend being of a different ethnicity. This result points to an almost unanimous stance among young people and represents the strongest indicator of their openness toward immediate interpersonal relationships with members of other ethnic communities.

Taken as a whole, the indices show that a markedly positive value framework exists among young people when it comes to accepting ethnic diversity. At the same time, the fact that only the assessment of the frequency of contact between communities is considerably lower than the other indicators suggests that, in young people's view, the problem does not lie in a willingness to accept diversity, but rather in the lack of sufficient opportunities for mutual communication and connection. This finding is further consistent with the earlier research results, which showed that young people recognize multiethnicity as a social value and generally express positive attitudes toward members of other ethnic groups.

Chart 15 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



This question relates directly to one of the project's goals — understanding the factors that influence social cohesion, reconciliation and the intergenerational transmission of attitudes.

The results show that a prevailing conviction exists among young people that the legacy of the wars of the 1990s still affects relations among young people in the region. Most respondents agree with the statement that the consequences of past conflicts have not been fully overcome and that their impact is still felt in everyday relations among young people.

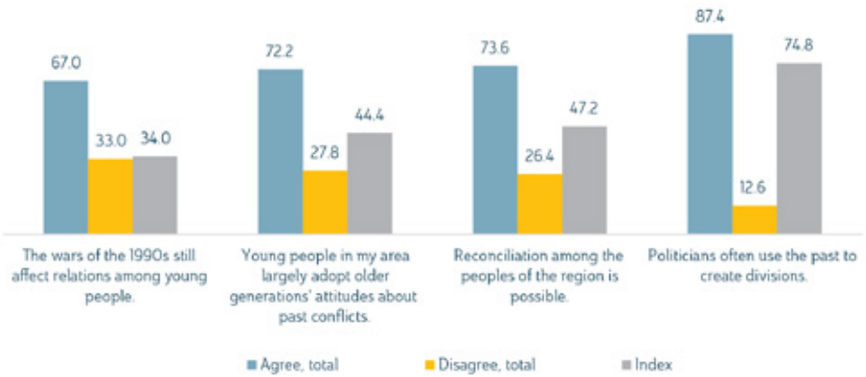
At the same time, despite recognizing the long-term consequences of the past, most respondents believe that reconciliation among the peoples of the region is possible. These responses indicate that young people, although aware of the existence of inherited divisions, nevertheless retain optimism when it comes to the possibility of building better interethnic relations in the future.

Most young people also believe that their generation, to a significant extent, adopts older generations' attitudes about past conflicts, indicating a perception that social narratives and values are passed down between generations and continue to shape the attitudes of young people.

The strongest agreement was recorded for the statement that politicians often use the past to create social divisions. This view is shared by an overwhelming majority of respondents, while only a small number of young people disagree with it.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that young people recognize a strong influence of historical legacy and political discourse on interpersonal relations, but at the same time express the conviction that reconciliation among peoples is possible, which represents an important indicator of their readiness to be part of a society built on cooperation, mutual understanding and overcoming past divisions.

Chart 15.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The results show that young people largely recognize that the past still shapes interethnic relations in the region, but at the same time express optimism regarding the possibility of improving them in the future. Two-thirds of respondents believe that the wars of the 1990s still affect relations among young people (index 34.0), while an even higher percentage believe that young people in their community, to a significant extent, adopt older generations' attitudes about past conflicts (index 44.4). These findings indicate that historical divisions and narratives continue to be passed down between generations and represent an important factor shaping young people's attitudes.

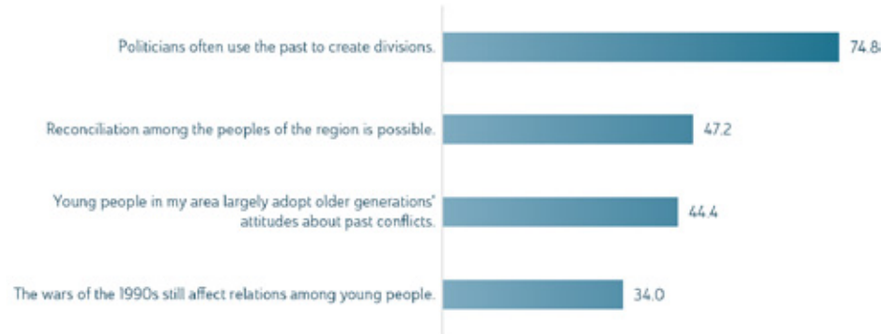
At the same time, almost three-quarters of respondents believe that reconciliation among the peoples of the region is possible (index 47.2). This result shows that recognizing the consequences of past conflicts does not mean an absence of belief in the possibility of overcoming them. On the contrary, young people simultaneously express awareness of the existing challenges and the conviction that building better mutual relations is achievable.

A particularly pronounced view is that political actors use the past to deepen

social divisions. An overwhelming majority of respondents agree with this statement, which is also confirmed by a high index (74.8), one of the highest in this part of the research. This indicates that young people largely see the causes of ongoing social tensions in contemporary political discourse, rather than solely in the legacy of past events.

Taken together with the previous findings, an interesting picture emerges. Although young people believe that the wars still affect relations among them and that attitudes about the past are often passed down from older generations, they simultaneously show a high degree of acceptance of ethnic diversity, a willingness to form close relationships with members of other ethnic communities, and a belief that reconciliation is possible. These results suggest that there is significant potential among young people for building more tolerant and open interethnic relations, despite their awareness of existing historical and political divisions. For this reason, strengthening mutual contact, dialogue and joint activities among young people can represent an important mechanism for overcoming inherited stereotypes and building long-term trust between communities.

Chart 15.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The index values show that a widespread belief exists among young people that the past still significantly shapes interethnic relations, while at the same time there is pronounced optimism regarding the possibility of reconciliation in the region. The indices indicate that consensus on these issues is not equally strong across the board, but rather that the intensity of agreement varies depending on the specific statement.

The lowest index was recorded for the statement that the wars of the 1990s still affect relations among young people. Although most respondents share this view, the relatively moderate index value shows that differing views neverthe-

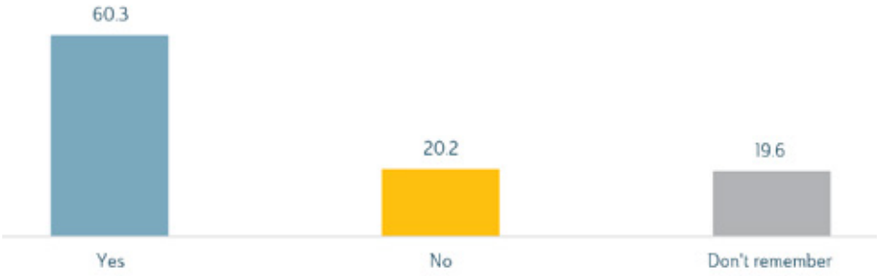
less exist among young people regarding the extent to which past conflicts still shape their relations with one another today.

A somewhat higher index is recorded for the statement that young people largely adopt older generations' views on past conflicts, indicating a more pronounced agreement that narratives about the past continue to be passed down between generations. Similarly, a positive and relatively high index for the possibility of reconciliation shows that, despite the awareness of the legacy of past conflicts, the prevailing conviction among young people is that better interethnic relations are achievable.

The highest index in this block relates to the statement that politicians often use the past to create divisions. This value points to a very high degree of agreement among respondents and represents the strongest finding within this question. Unlike the other statements, where opinions are somewhat more varied, here there is an almost unanimous perception that the political instrumentalization of the past is an important factor in sustaining social divisions.

Taken together, these findings point to a complex picture of young people's attitudes. On one hand, they recognize that the wars of the past still leave a mark on relations among them and that attitudes about these events are often passed down through family and the social environment. On the other hand, they strongly believe that reconciliation is possible, seeing the greatest obstacle not in young people themselves, but in the continued political use of the past to deepen social divisions. These findings logically build on the previous block of questions, in which young people expressed a very high degree of acceptance of ethnic diversity and markedly positive attitudes toward a multiethnic society, suggesting that a readiness for cooperation exists among young people, but that its full development is conditioned by the broader social and political context.

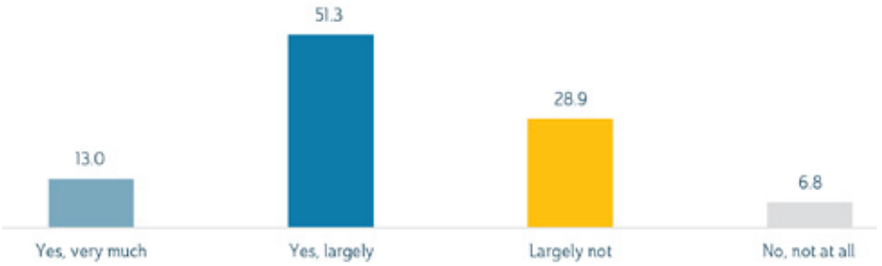
Chart 16 Did you learn about human rights in school? On the sample; in %



Regarding education on human rights, the results show that most young people report having had the opportunity to learn about this topic during their schooling. Nevertheless, a significant share of respondents state that such content was not part of their education, or that they do not remember learning about human rights in school. These findings indicate that human rights education is still not uniform, nor sufficiently recognizable, among all young people.

The fact that a relatively large number of respondents are unsure whether they learned about this topic may indicate that the content was covered only in passing, without much practical relevance or a sufficiently strong impression. This points to room for improving formal education through a more systematic and substantive inclusion of topics such as human rights, equality, tolerance and the prohibition of discrimination, so that young people acquire not only basic knowledge, but also the ability to recognize and respond adequately to various forms of discrimination.

Chart 17 How familiar are you with the ways, laws and/or mechanisms for protection against discrimination? On the sample; in %

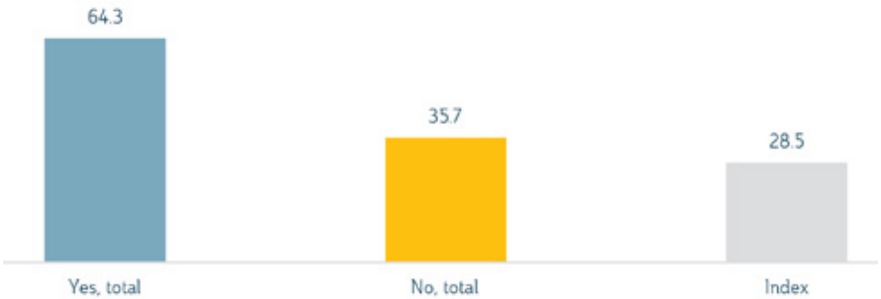


Young people mostly assess that they are familiar with the ways, laws and mechanisms for protection against discrimination, with most stating that they are

largely familiar with them, while a smaller share report being very well acquainted with them. At the same time, a significant number of respondents assess that they do not have sufficient knowledge of the available protection mechanisms, either because they are largely unfamiliar with them or are not familiar with them at all.

These results indicate that, although a certain level of awareness of protection against discrimination exists among young people, their knowledge is not fully developed nor sufficiently confident. The fact that only a smaller number of respondents express a high degree of familiarity with legal and institutional mechanisms suggests there is room for further improving awareness and education. Strengthening knowledge of rights, protection procedures and the institutions young people can turn to can contribute to a greater sense of security, as well as to their readiness to act in situations when discrimination occurs.

Chart 17.1 How familiar are you with the ways, laws and/or mechanisms for protection against discrimination? On the sample; in %



The results show that most young people believe they are familiar with the ways, laws and mechanisms for protection against discrimination. Almost two-thirds of respondents state that they are acquainted with the existing protection mechanisms, while slightly more than a third assess that they do not have sufficient knowledge of them. An index of 28.5 indicates that overall awareness outweighs the lack thereof, but also that there is significant room for its improvement.

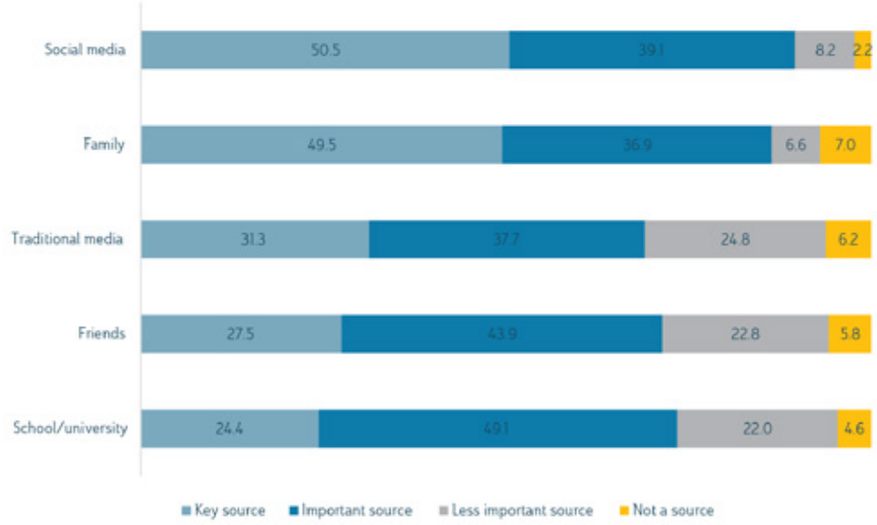
Taken together with the previous findings, an interesting pattern can be observed. Although most young people believe they are familiar with protection mechanisms against discrimination, a considerably smaller number of those who have experienced discrimination decide to report it. Moreover, among the reasons given for not reporting, the belief that reporting serves no purpose is the most common, while the experiences of those who did report discrimination show that the outcomes of the reports were largely unsatisfactory.

This indicates that awareness of existing mechanisms alone is not enough to encourage their use.

These findings suggest that knowledge of laws and procedures is an important, but not the only, precondition for effective protection against discrimination. Equally important factors are trust in institutions, the belief that reporting will lead to concrete results, and the experience that institutions respond in a timely and impartial manner. For this reason, improving the institutional response and increasing the visibility of successfully resolved cases may be just as important as continuing to inform young people about their rights and the available protection mechanisms.



Chart 18 To what extent do you consider the following to be a source of information on topics related to discrimination. On the sample; in %



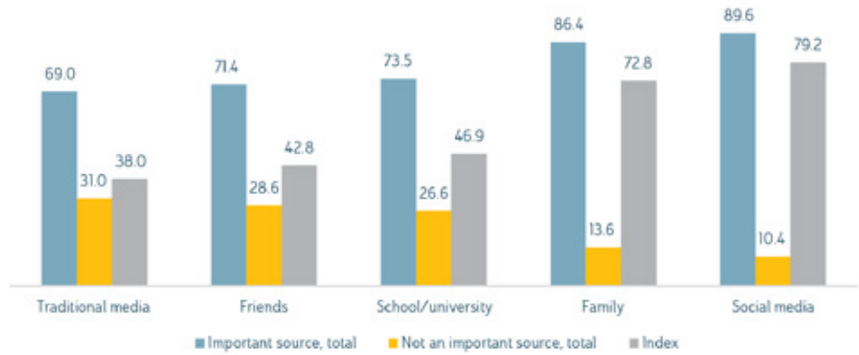
This question shows very clearly where young people most often form their knowledge and attitudes about discrimination. The results indicate that social media and family stand out as the most important sources of information, recognized by the largest number of young people as key or important sources on this topic. This shows that a considerable share of information-gathering takes place through informal channels and everyday surroundings, rather than exclusively through the formal education system or institutional sources.

School and university also play a significant role, since most respondents view them as an important or key source of information. Although their contribution is recognized, the results show that educational institutions are nevertheless not the primary source of information, ranking behind family and social media in the importance young people attach to them.

A similar pattern is observed for friends and traditional media. These sources play an important role in informing young people, but are somewhat more often experienced as supplementary rather than primary sources of knowledge about discrimination. At the same time, a relatively small number of respondents state that any of the listed sources plays no role at all in informing them, indicating that young people obtain information on this topic from various interconnected channels.

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that informal sources of information, primarily social media and family, are currently dominant in shaping young people's knowledge of discrimination. At the same time, the importance of school, friends and the media shows that young people's access to information is not tied to a single channel, but represents a combination of formal and informal sources, pointing to the need for messages about human rights and protection against discrimination to be developed in a coordinated way across all these social spheres.

Chart 18.1 To what extent do you consider the following to be a source of information on topics related to discrimination. On the sample; in %



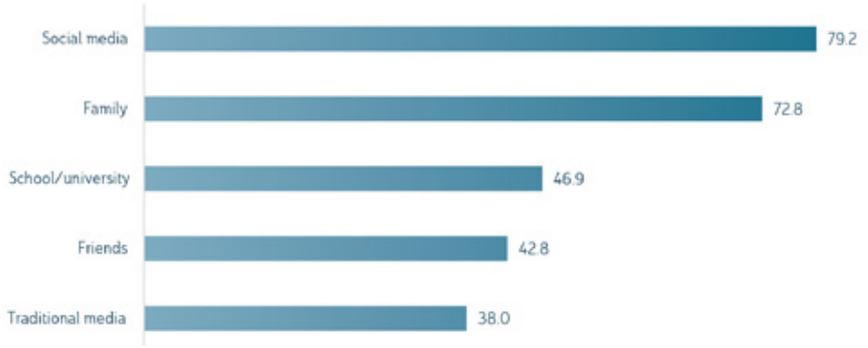
The results show that young people obtain information about discrimination from a range of different sources, with social media and family standing out as the most important. Almost nine out of ten respondents consider social media to be an important source of information on topics related to discrimination, which is also confirmed by the highest index (79.2). Family comes immediately behind it (index 72.8), while school and university, friends and traditional media are likewise recognized as significant sources of information, albeit with somewhat lower index values.

These results indicate that young people's attitudes toward discrimination are shaped through a combination of formal and informal channels of information. It is particularly significant that, alongside family and the education system, social media also plays a very important role, representing the dominant communication space for young people and one of the main sources of information on social issues.

These findings largely build on the previous questions. Most respondents stated that they learned about human rights during their schooling, while almost two-thirds believe they are familiar with the laws and mechanisms for protection against discrimination. At the same time, the fact that social media carries the greatest weight as a source of information suggests that young people's knowledge and attitudes are shaped not solely through formal education, but to a great extent also through the digital space, as well as through the immediate family environment.

This structure of information sources carries important practical implications. If the goal is to increase young people's knowledge of human rights, discrimination and the available protection mechanisms, activities directed solely at educational institutions are unlikely to be sufficient. The results point to the need for educational campaigns and informational content to be developed simultaneously through schools, as well as through digital platforms and social media, with the involvement of the family as one of the important actors in shaping young people's attitudes.

Chart 18.2 To what extent do you consider the following to be a source of information on topics related to discrimination. On the sample; in %



The index values show that young people do not draw on all sources of information about discrimination equally, but that clear differences exist between them. The indices indicate that the immediate social environment and digital media carry the greatest weight, while formal sources of information occupy a somewhat less prominent place.

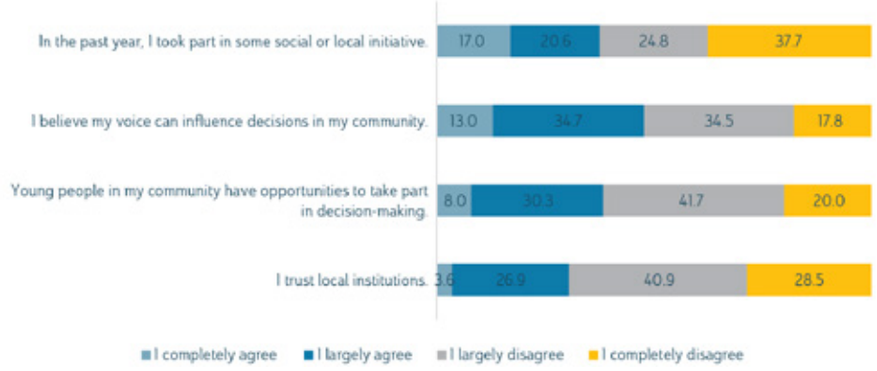
The lowest index was recorded for traditional media, indicating that, although still recognized as a relevant source of information, they have the smallest influence relative to the other sources observed. Friends record a somewhat higher index, showing that the peer environment represents an important channel for exchanging information and forming attitudes about discrimination.

School and university achieve an even higher index, indicating that educational institutions play a significant role in informing young people about these topics. Still, their role remains less pronounced than the influence of family and social media, which stand out as the two dominant sources of information.

Particularly high index values are recorded for family and social media, with social media achieving the highest index in this question. This finding points to a very high degree of agreement among young people that the digital space today represents the most important channel through which they obtain information and form attitudes about discrimination, while family retains a strong role in transmitting values and shaping views on social issues.

These results can be linked to other findings of the research. On one hand, young people identify social media as the most important source of information, but in earlier questions they also assessed it as the place where discrimination most often manifests. This points to the dual role of the digital space — it represents both the main channel of information and the environment in which young people are most often exposed to discriminatory content and behavior. On the other hand, the relatively high index for school and university confirms that the education system holds significant potential for developing knowledge about human rights and non-discrimination, but the results of other questions show that this potential has not yet been fully realized. It can therefore be concluded that precisely the combination of education, the family environment and a more responsible digital space represents one of the key preconditions for improving awareness and building more tolerant attitudes among young people.

Chart 19 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



Young people largely lack a sense that they have real influence over decision-making processes in their local community. The largest share of respondents do not trust local institutions, while trust was expressed by a considerably smaller number of young people. These findings indicate that institutions are not perceived by young people as sufficiently open, accessible and responsive to their needs and interests.

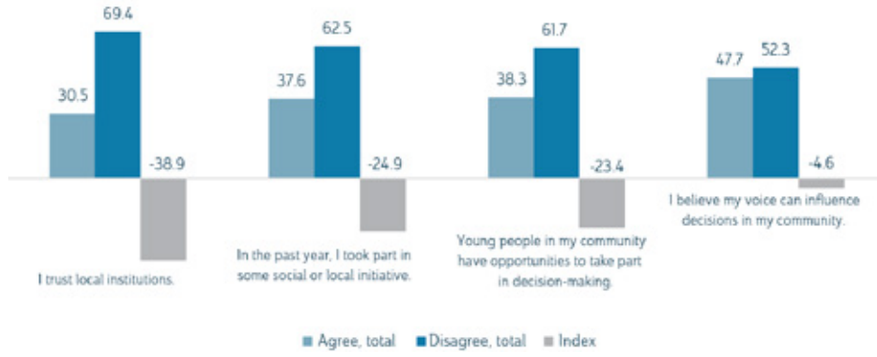
A similar picture emerges when it comes to opportunities for participation in decision-making. Most young people believe that there are not enough opportunities in their community to actively participate in processes affecting the local community, while only a smaller share assess that such opportunities exist. This points to a pronounced sense of exclusion from public life and a limited space for youth participation.

When assessing their own influence, attitudes are somewhat more moderate. Although some respondents believe their voice can have a certain influence on decisions in the place where they live, the prevailing conviction remains that an individual young person's voice does not carry sufficient weight. This perception may contribute to reduced motivation for more active involvement in social processes.

At the same time, the results show that the social and civic engagement of young people is relatively low. Most respondents state that they did not take part in any social or local initiative during the previous year, while active participation was reported by a smaller share of young people. This indicates that, alongside limited trust in institutions and a sense of insufficient influence, there is also a low level of practical youth involvement in local community activities.

Taken as a whole, the findings indicate that young people largely experience their role in the local community as passive. The dominant impression is that institutions are not sufficiently open toward young people, that opportunities for participation are not developed to the extent they should be, and that individual engagement rarely leads to visible change. This perception represents an important challenge for the development of active citizenship and youth participation, particularly given that a sense of being valued and of being able to influence decisions is one of the basic preconditions for their longer-term social engagement.

Chart 19.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The results point to a pronounced sense of limited social and civic inclusion of young people in local communities. None of the statements offered received a predominantly positive assessment, and all the indices are negative, indicating that a critical attitude prevails among young people toward the opportunities for participation in social life and the functioning of local institutions.

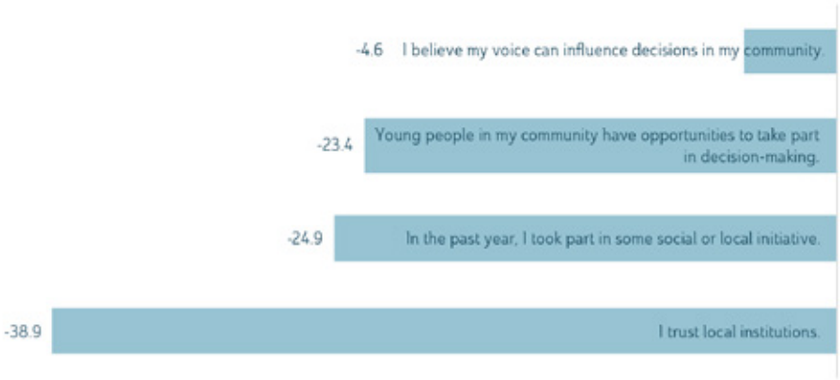
The most pronounced negative assessments relate to trust in local institutions. Only a smaller share of respondents express trust in their work, while most state the opposite view, which is also confirmed by the lowest index (-38.9). This finding is entirely consistent with the earlier research results, according to which most young people believe that institutions do not respond adequately to discrimination, as well as with the findings showing that reporting discrimination rarely leads to satisfactory outcomes. Taken together, these results point to a relatively low level of institutional trust among young people.

A similar perception is present when it comes to opportunities for active participation. Most respondents believe that young people in their community do not have enough opportunities to take part in decision-making, while an even smaller number state that they were involved in any social or local initiative during the previous year. These findings indicate that formal and informal mechanisms of participation are not sufficiently developed, or are not sufficiently accessible to young people.

A somewhat more balanced result is obtained for the statement that one's own voice can influence decisions in the local community. Although a slightly negative index (-4.6) is recorded here as well, the gap between positive and negative responses is considerably smaller than for the other statements. This suggests that a certain potential for civic engagement nevertheless exists among young people, but that it is not matched by adequate opportunities for genuine involvement in decision-making processes.

These findings become especially significant when linked to the responses to the open-ended question about what would most contribute to greater youth inclusion in the local community. Young people most often cite the need for greater participation in decision-making, greater regard for their opinions, better communication with institutions, and the creation of more opportunities for active involvement in community life. In other words, the results show a high degree of correspondence between their assessment of the current situation and what they identify as the key directions for improving it. This consistency in the findings further confirms that young people are not simply asking for more activities designed for them, but above all for greater space for genuine participation and influence over decisions that directly affect their lives.

Chart 19.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The index values show that a pronounced sense of distance from local institutions and from opportunities for active participation in community life prevails among young people. Unlike the previous questions, where the indices were mostly positive, here all the indicators record negative values, indicating that negative attitudes outweigh positive ones.

The most pronounced negative index was recorded for trust in local institutions. This result points to a very low level of institutional trust among young people and confirms the findings from the earlier questions, in which respondents assessed that institutions largely do not respond adequately to discrimination, and that reporting discrimination most often does not lead to a satisfactory outcome. Taken together, these findings indicate that distrust toward institutions is not limited to their handling of discrimination, but represents a broader pattern in young people's relationship with local public institutions.

Negative indices were also recorded for the assessment of opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making, as well as for actual participation in social and local initiatives during the previous year. These results indicate that young people generally do not perceive sufficient space for active involvement in decision-making processes, nor do they often take part in initiatives carried out in their local communities. This is consistent with the responses to the open-ended question on what would contribute to greater youth inclusion, where the most common suggestions were precisely greater regard for young people's opinions, their genuine inclusion in decision-making, and the creation of more opportunities for active participation in community life.

The least negative index was recorded for the statement on whether one's own voice can influence decisions in the place where young people live. Although negative attitudes slightly prevail here as well, the fact that the index is considerably closer to the neutral value than the other indicators suggests that some young people nevertheless believe in the possibility of personal influence. This may represent an important developmental potential, as it shows that a sense of political efficacy has not been entirely lost, and that there is room, through greater inclusion, more open institutional conduct and genuine participation mechanisms, to further strengthen trust and active civic engagement among young people.

Taken as a whole, these indices point to one of the key challenges identified by this research. The problem lies not only in the low level of trust or weaker participation individually, but in how closely they are interconnected. When young people do not trust institutions, feel they do not have enough opportunities to take part in decision-making, and rarely get involved in local initiatives, a vicious circle of civic passivity is created that can further weaken their connection to the local community and reduce their willingness to actively engage in addressing social problems. For this reason, strengthening youth participation requires simultaneously improving trust in institutions, creating genuine opportunities for participation, and demonstrating that youth engagement can produce visible and concrete results.

Chart 20 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



Young people's perceptions of gender equality show that, despite recognizing a degree of progress, significant reservations remain regarding equality and safety. Positive assessments prevail for all three statements examined, but at the same time a significant share of respondents express disagreement, indicating that young people's experiences and perceptions are not uniform.

Most respondents believe that young people in their community generally feel safe in public spaces, regardless of gender. Nevertheless, a noticeable share of young people do not share this view, indicating that the sense of safety is not equally present among all respondents and that a certain number of young people do not experience public space as a fully safe environment.

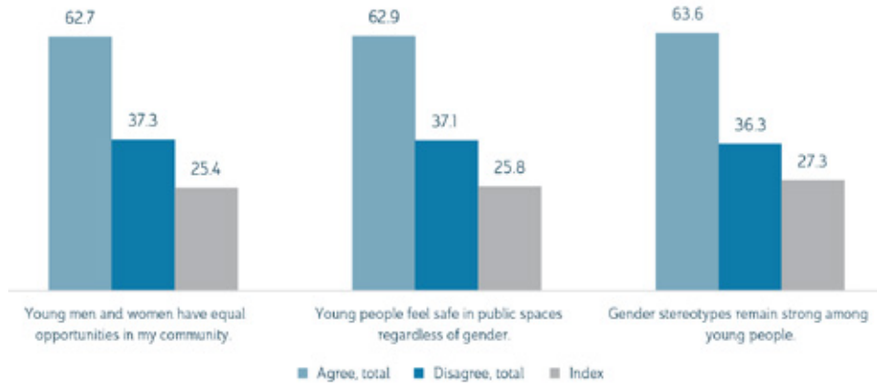
Similarly, most young people assess that men and women have equal opportunities in the place where they live. However, a relatively significant number of respondents believe that such equality has not been fully achieved, showing that the issue of gender equality remains a topic on which experiences and perceptions differ.

At the same time, a significant majority of respondents believe that gender stereotypes remain strongly present among young people. This finding indicates that, even where formal opportunities are assessed as becoming more equal, traditional patterns of thinking and expectations regarding gender roles continue to play an important role in everyday relations among young people.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that young people recognize certain advances when it comes to gender equality and safety, while at the same time

believing that gender stereotypes still represent a significant social pattern. This suggests that formal equality and changes in social attitudes do not necessarily progress at the same pace, which is why the issue of gender norms remains an important challenge in building a more inclusive social environment for young people.

Chart 20.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



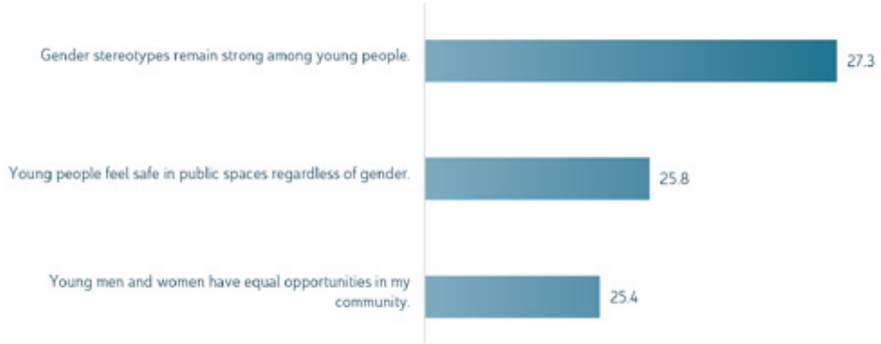
The results show that young people, more than anything, believe that gender stereotypes remain strongly present among young people. At the same time, most respondents assess that young men and women have equal opportunities in their community, and that young people generally feel safe in public spaces regardless of gender. Although the differences between these three statements are relatively small, it is precisely the perception of the existence of gender stereotypes that is the most pronounced.

This finding indicates that young people do not experience formal equality of opportunity as sufficient confirmation of genuine equality. On the contrary, even though most believe that opportunities for young women and men are largely equal and that public space is relatively safe, they simultaneously recognize that traditional patterns of thinking and gender stereotypes still have a significant influence on everyday relations and social norms.

These findings can also be linked to the earlier research results. In previous questions, young people identified women as one of the groups most often discriminated against, while in their open-ended responses they repeatedly emphasized the need for greater respect for gender equality, education on discrimination, and a change in social attitudes. Taken together, the results suggest

that young people recognize a certain degree of progress with regard to formal equality, but at the same time believe that social patterns, stereotypes and prejudices still represent an important obstacle to full equality. This indicates that improving the position of young people does not depend solely on institutional measures, but also on long-term changes in social values, education, and a culture of mutual respect.

Chart 20.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements. On the sample; in %



The index values show a moderately pronounced consensus among young people when it comes to gender equality, with all three indicators observed showing very similar values. This indicates that young people do not view gender relations one-sidedly, but simultaneously recognize both certain positive advances and challenges that remain present.

The lowest index was recorded for the statement that young men and women have equal opportunities in the place where they live. Although positive, this index shows that agreement is not complete and that some young people believe that equality of opportunity has not yet been fully achieved.

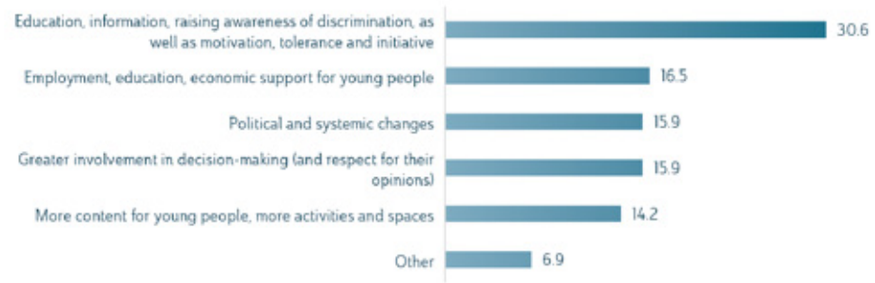
A very similar value is recorded for the index relating to young people's sense of safety in public space regardless of gender. This result indicates that most respondents assess public space as relatively safe, but that a significant share of young people do not share this assessment. This suggests that the sense of safety is not a universal experience among all young people, but may depend on personal experiences and the social environment.

The highest index in this block relates to the statement that gender stereotypes remain strongly present among young people. Although the difference relative to the other two indicators is not large, this result in particular points to a somewhat more pronounced consensus that traditional patterns and expectations based on gender roles still represent an important part of everyday social life.

Taken together, these indices point to an important characteristic of young people's attitudes. Most respondents recognize that certain conditions for gender equality exist in terms of opportunity and safety, but at the same time believe that social norms and stereotypes still represent an obstacle to their full realization. In other words, young people distinguish formal conditions from social reality — they believe that opportunities are largely available, but that cultural patterns and gender stereotypes still affect the everyday relations and position of young women and men.

This finding also builds on the earlier research results. In previous questions, women were identified as one of the groups more often exposed to discrimination, while in their open-ended responses, respondents often emphasized the need for greater gender equality, mutual respect, and education on gender roles. Taken as a whole, the results suggest that young people recognize a degree of progress in the area of gender equality, but at the same time believe that changing social attitudes and stereotypes remains one of the key preconditions for its full realization.

Chart 21 In your opinion, what would most contribute to greater inclusion of young people in your community? On the sample; in %. n346



At the end of the research, young people were given the opportunity to state, without pre-set answer options, what would most contribute to their greater inclusion in local community life. The responses obtained show that young people view the issue of social participation very broadly, not linking it solely to the possibility of taking part in decision-making, but also to quality of life, education, employment, and how institutions relate to young people.

The largest number of responses relate to the need for greater education, better access to information, raising awareness of discrimination, and strengthening motivation, tolerance and civic initiative among young people. These responses

indicate that respondents recognize the importance of continuous education and information as a basic precondition for more active youth participation in social life.

At the same time, a large number of young people believe it is necessary to improve opportunities for employment, education and economic support, emphasizing that a more secure life outlook represents an important precondition for greater social engagement. In addition, almost as often cited is the need for greater youth involvement in decision-making and genuine regard for their views, as well as for broader political and systemic changes that would create a more favorable environment for their active participation in the community.

A significant number of responses also relate to the need for more content aimed at young people, including activities, programs and spaces for gathering, socializing and developing various interests. These responses indicate that young people believe local communities should offer more opportunities for spending free time in a meaningful way and for more active involvement in social life.

Taken as a whole, young people's responses show that greater inclusion does not depend on a single factor, but on the simultaneous improvement of several areas. Young people expect more opportunities for education, employment and personal development, greater openness of institutions to their proposals, better-quality information and education, as well as the creation of an encouraging social environment in which their voice is respected and their participation in the local community has real meaning.



SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

Taken as a whole, the research results point to several interconnected patterns that shape the way young people experience discrimination, the functioning of institutions, and their own role in society.

First and foremost, discrimination is recognized among young people as a pronounced social problem. Most respondents believe it is present in their local community, and associate it in particular with schools, social media and everyday life. At the same time, LGBTI persons, political dissenters, members of ethnic minorities and women stand out as those most exposed to discrimination, indicating that young people do not experience discrimination as an isolated phenomenon, but as a problem affecting various social groups.

Although approximately a third of respondents stated that they had personally experienced discrimination in the past two years, a considerably smaller number decided to report such an experience. The most common reason for not reporting is the belief that reporting would not lead to any change, while the results on the outcomes of reported cases further confirm this view. Most of those who did report discrimination state that the report did not produce any concrete consequences, or that its outcome was unsatisfactory.

These findings are closely linked to the perception of institutional performance. Young people, for the most part, believe that institutions do not respond adequately to cases of discrimination, while at the same time expressing a low level of trust in local institutions. Taken together, these results point to a pronounced deficit of institutional trust, which may represent one of the key obstacles to reporting discrimination and to making more active use of existing protection mechanisms.

At the same time, the results show that relatively good awareness of protection mechanisms against discrimination exists among young people. However, awareness of one's rights alone is not enough to encourage their use if there is no accompanying trust that institutions will respond effectively and impartially. In other words, awareness is an important, but not a sufficient, precondition for greater institutional protection.

The research also points to a high degree of acceptance of diversity among young people. Pronounced support for a multiethnic environment, a willingness to form close relationships with members of other ethnic communities, and optimism regarding the possibility of reconciliation in the region represent an important social asset. At the same time, young people recognize that the wars of the 1990s still affect relations among them, that attitudes about past conflicts are often passed down between generations, and that political actors not infrequently use the past to deepen social divisions.

When it comes to access to information, the results show that young people most often obtain information about discrimination through social media and family, followed by the education system, friends and traditional media. This distribution of information sources indicates that activities aimed at preventing discrimination should be developed through multiple interconnected communication channels, with educational institutions and digital media carrying particular importance, as the spaces where young people spend their time on a daily basis.

Finally, the findings point to a relatively low level of social participation among young people. Most respondents believe they do not have enough opportunities to take part in decision-making in their community, that their voice does not carry enough influence, and that they have not been involved in social or local initiatives in the recent period. At the same time, the responses to the open-ended question clearly show that young people themselves see the greatest potential for change in greater participation in decision-making, better-quality education, improved access to information, more employment opportunities, as well as the development of content and activities designed for young people.

Taken as a whole, the research shows that young people recognize discrimination as a serious social problem, while at the same time expressing a readiness to accept diversity and to become more actively involved in social processes. The greatest challenges relate to strengthening trust in institutions, improving the effectiveness of institutional protection, empowering youth civic participation, and creating conditions in which their participation in decision-making is genuine rather than merely formal.

CONCLUSION

The research results show that young people recognize discrimination as a significant social problem present in their local communities, one most often associated with everyday life, the school environment and the digital space. It is particularly concerning that a large number of young people believe institutions do not respond effectively enough to cases of discrimination, which is also reflected in a low level of trust in their performance.

Although a significant number of respondents had personal experience of discrimination, most did not report it. The most common reasons for not reporting are not a lack of familiarity with the procedures, but rather the belief that reporting would not lead to concrete change. Even among those who did report discrimination, the prevailing impression is that the report did not have the desired effect. These findings indicate that, in addition to improving the normative framework, further work is needed to strengthen the effectiveness and visibility of institutional protection.

At the same time, the research points to encouraging patterns when it comes to young people's attitudes toward diversity. Most respondents express a high level of acceptance of members of other ethnic communities, support a multiethnic environment, and believe that reconciliation among the peoples of the region is possible. On the other hand, young people recognize that past conflicts still affect relations among them, and that political narratives often contribute to sustaining social divisions.

The findings also show that young people have a certain level of knowledge of their rights and of the mechanisms for protection against discrimination, but that making more effective use of them requires strengthening trust in institutions and improving their accessibility and accountability.

A particularly important finding relates to the social participation of young people. Most respondents believe they do not have enough opportunities to take part in decisions affecting their community, nor do they believe their voice carries significant influence. At the same time, greater youth participation, better-quality education, improved access to information and more employment opportunities are most often identified as preconditions for their more active involvement in social life.

Taken as a whole, the results indicate that significant potential exists among young people for building a more open, tolerant and participatory society. Realizing that potential, however, requires stronger institutional action, continuous investment in education and the development of civic competencies, and the creation of space in which young people are equal participants in decision-making processes. In the long run, improving the position of young people and providing more effective protection against discrimination are interconnected processes that contribute to strengthening social cohesion, democratic culture and trust in institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be identified for improving the position of young people, strengthening their social participation, and enabling more effective prevention of, and protection against, discrimination.

1. STRENGTHENING TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AND IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION

- Improve the efficiency and transparency of institutional handling of discrimination cases.
- Ensure faster and more consistent responses by the competent authorities to reported cases of discrimination.
- Increase the visibility of institutions and protection mechanisms through regular public reporting on their work and results.
- Develop cooperation between local self-governments, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and institutions responsible for the protection of human rights.
- Encourage young people's trust through more active institutional engagement in addressing issues of direct relevance to them.

2. IMPROVING EDUCATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- Strengthen educational content relating to human rights, discrimination, tolerance and civic participation.
- Develop non-formal education programs, workshops and campaigns aimed at young people.
- Use digital platforms and social media as key channels for informing young people about their rights and the available protection mechanisms.
- Strengthen the role of schools, universities and youth organizations in developing critical thinking, mutual respect and a culture of dialogue.
- Promote positive examples of successfully resolved discrimination cases in order to increase trust in the protection system.

3. STRENGTHENING YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- Provide more opportunities for genuine, not merely formal, youth participation in decision-making at the local and national levels.
- Develop youth councils, forums, public consultations and other participatory mechanisms in which young people play an active role.
- Support youth initiatives, volunteering, peer programs and local projects launched by young people.
- Increase the availability of cultural, sports and social content aimed at young people, particularly in smaller communities.
- Encourage the development of internship, entrepreneurship and youth employment programs as important factors in their social inclusion.

4. STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

- Continue activities that promote intercultural dialogue, tolerance and respect for diversity.
- Organize joint activities for young people from different ethnic, religious and social groups through educational, cultural and sports programs.
- Support programs that contribute to peacebuilding, regional cooperation and the exchange of experience among young people.
- Develop activities that contribute to reducing gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality.
- Continuously monitor young people's attitudes and experiences so that public policies are grounded in reliable data and the actual needs of young people.

The results of this research show that young people represent an important resource for the development of a more open, fairer and more inclusive society. For this reason, the recommendations arising from this research should be regarded as guidelines for the further improvement of public policies and the development of programs that will enable young people to participate more actively in social life, benefit from greater protection of their rights, and have more equal opportunities for personal and professional development.

YOUTH IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES REGARDING DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY CONDUCTED AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The findings presented in this part of the report relate exclusively to young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who took part in the same survey conducted among young people in Montenegro, adapted to the local context. The findings should be interpreted as indicative, that is, as a general insight into the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of young people from the local communities covered by the survey, rather than as generalized conclusions about young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

The sample of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina is predominantly female, with a somewhat smaller share of males — slightly less than two-thirds of respondents are girls and young women, while the remainder are young men. By status, the largest number of respondents are university students, while a significant share are also secondary school pupils, as well as employed young people; the unemployed make up a negligible share.

In terms of national/ethnic affiliation, the overwhelming majority of the sample consists of young people of Bosniak ethnicity, while young people of Croatian and Serbian ethnicity are represented to a lesser extent, as are those who identify as Bosnians/Bosnian women, that is, as citizens without emphasizing ethnic affiliation. In terms of religion, the Islamic faith dominates, while a quarter of respondents state that they do not belong to any religious community; the Catholic and Orthodox faiths are represented to a lesser extent. Regardless of formal religious affiliation, slightly more than half of respondents describe themselves as religious, while the rest identify as agnostic, atheist, non-religious, or do not answer this question.

The sample includes young people from several parts of the country, with the highest concentration in Sarajevo Canton (Novo Sarajevo, Centar, Stari Grad, Ilidža), Tuzla Canton (Tuzla, Živinice, Lukavac, Banovići), and Una-Sana Canton (Velika Kladuša, Cazin). A smaller number of responses also come from Zenica-Doboj Canton (Zenica, Visoko, Tešanj, Bugojno, Vitez), as well as from Goražde, Brčko District, Banja Luka and Trebinje, indicating a certain geographic diversity within the sample, although it is not evenly distributed across all parts of the country. Approximately half of respondents state that, at some point in their lives, they lived outside their municipality for longer than three months, while the other half have spent their entire lives in their place of origin.

PERCEPTION OF THE PRESENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina largely recognize discrimination as a phenomenon present in their local community. Slightly less than half of respondents believe that discrimination is fairly present, while an additional share assess it as very present — overall, around two-thirds of young people believe that discrimination is, to a greater or lesser extent, part of everyday life in their community. In contrast, slightly more than a third of respondents believe that discrimination is largely not present.

This distribution is very similar to the one recorded among young people in Montenegro, where the prevailing conviction is likewise that discrimination is a widespread social phenomenon, although respondents differ in their assessment of its intensity.

GROUPS MOST OFTEN EXPOSED TO DISCRIMINATION

As in Montenegro, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina also most strongly identify LGBTI persons as the group most often exposed to discrimination — around three-quarters of respondents believe these persons are very or fairly often discriminated against, with more than half assessing that they are discriminated against very often. A similar level of perceived exposure to discrimination is recorded for members of ethnic minorities, with around three-quarters of respondents believing they are often or very often subjected to unequal treatment — a finding that is particularly indicative in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its post-war social reality.

A somewhat lower, yet still pronounced, level of perceived discrimination is recorded for political dissenters and the poor, with slightly more than half of respondents believing they are often exposed to discrimination, while a similar share hold this view regarding women and religious minorities. Persons with disabilities stand out as the group with the lowest, though still moderately positive, level of perceived exposure — young people's opinions on their position are more divided than for the other groups observed.

PLACES WHERE DISCRIMINATION MOST OFTEN OCCURS

As in Montenegro, social media stands out as the space in which young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina most often recognize discriminatory behavior — almost all respondents believe that discrimination on digital platforms occurs often or very often, with two-thirds stating that it occurs very often. A high level of the presence of discrimination is also recognized in schools, where a large number of respondents believe that discriminatory behavior occurs often or very often.

A similar, though somewhat milder, perception is present when it comes to institutions and everyday life, while the workplace stands out as the setting where young people somewhat less often recognize discrimination, although even there the majority still believe it occurs often. This pattern almost entirely matches the findings for Montenegro, where the digital space and the education system were likewise identified as the settings in which discrimination is most visible.

TRUST IN THE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO DISCRIMINATION

A pronounced skepticism toward the effectiveness of the institutional response to discrimination prevails among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina — a large number of respondents believe that institutions largely or entirely fail to respond adequately when discrimination occurs, while only a smaller share express trust that the institutional response is appropriate. This finding is almost identical to the one recorded in Montenegro and indicates that distrust in institutional protection against discrimination represents a shared pattern among young people in both contexts.

When asked, through an open-ended question, to give examples of a positive institutional response, respondents most often mentioned the launching of an investigation, dialogue with the parties involved, the imposition of disciplinary measures and the sanctioning of those responsible, as well as examples in which educational or healthcare institutions responded quickly and cooperated with the affected party. A notable number of respondents, however, were unable to give a single positive example, indicating that successful examples of institutional conduct are not sufficiently visible among young people.

"An institution (e.g. a school or a company) receives a report that a person has been discriminated against because of their nationality. It immediately launches an investigation, talks to those involved, and sanctions the person responsible. It also organizes workshops on tolerance and equality to prevent future cases."

On the other hand, the most commonly cited examples of a poor institutional response are a complete absence of any response, the ignoring of reports, downplaying the seriousness of the problem, and slow or inefficient handling. Several respondents also cited more specific, more serious examples — ranging from the absence of sanctions in cases of gender-based violence, to discrimination in employment on ethnic grounds, to systemic issues such as the separate schooling of pupils according to national/ethnic affiliation.

"As a negative example, I can cite the response of the competent institutions to the 'two schools under one roof' system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although courts have determined that separating pupils according to national affiliation constitutes discrimination, the competent educational institutions have not implemented the rulings and have not abolished this system."

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION AND REPORTING

Slightly less than half of respondents state that they personally experienced unjust treatment or discrimination in the past two years, while slightly more than half denied having had such an experience. The share of young people with personal experience of discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina is somewhat higher than in Montenegro, where such an experience was reported by approximately a third of respondents.

Among those who had such an experience, ethnicity is cited as the most common ground for discrimination, immediately followed by gender and religious affiliation, while a smaller number of respondents cite political views or sexual orientation as the ground for unequal treatment. The prominence of ethnicity as the most common ground for discrimination represents one of the most visible differences compared to Montenegro, where respondents most often cited gender and ethnicity as the ground for discrimination in roughly equal measure.

The vast majority of young people who experienced discrimination did not report the case to the competent institutions. The most common reason for not reporting is the belief that reporting would serve no purpose, immediately followed by the assessment that the case was not serious enough to warrant reporting; a smaller number of respondents state that they did not know whom to turn to, or that they were afraid of the consequences of reporting. Among the small number of respondents who did report discrimination, the prevailing impression is that the report did not lead to any concrete outcome, or that its outcome was unsatisfactory.

INTERETHNIC RELATIONS, THE LEGACY OF WAR, AND RECONCILIATION

Despite a pronounced perception of ethnically based discrimination, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina display a very high level of personal openness toward members of other ethnic communities. Almost all respondents agree that they have no problem with a close friend being of a different ethnicity, and a large majority would also accept a family member marrying someone of a different ethnicity. Similarly, almost all respondents believe that multiethnic environments are good for the development of young people. At the same time, slightly more than two-thirds of respondents agree that there is not enough contact with people from other communities in their area, pointing to a certain gap between declared openness and the actual opportunities for interethnic connection.

When it comes to the legacy of the wars of the 1990s, a large majority of young people believe that the wars still affect relations among young people today, and that young people in their community largely adopt older generations' attitudes about past conflicts. Despite this, a large majority at the same time believe that reconciliation among the peoples of the region is possible, while all respondents, without exception, agree that politicians often use the past to create social divisions. This pattern — the simultaneous presence of personal openness, awareness of the burden of the past, and a belief in the possibility of reconciliation — largely matches the findings for Montenegro, with a somewhat more pronounced sensitivity among respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the issue of ethnicity as a ground for discrimination.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS OF PROTECTION MECHANISMS

A large majority of young people report having learned about human rights in school, while a smaller share either do not recall this topic being covered or state that they did not learn about it. When it comes to familiarity with the specific ways, laws and mechanisms for protection against discrimination, slightly more than two-thirds of respondents believe they are largely or very well informed, while the rest admit they do not know enough about them. This finding, similar to the one from Montenegro, indicates that insufficient reporting of discrimination does not stem primarily from a lack of awareness of existing protection mechanisms, but rather from a lack of trust that their application would lead to a real outcome.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT DISCRIMINATION

Unlike Montenegro, where social media stands out as the most important source of information on topics related to discrimination, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina most often cite family as a key or important source of information, immediately followed by school/university and social media, which are almost equal in importance. Friends also stand out as a significant source of information, while traditional media are perceived as a somewhat less relevant source compared to the other channels. This difference relative to Montenegro — where the digital space clearly leads — may point to a somewhat greater importance of the family and educational environment in shaping attitudes about discrimination among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although, given the limited size of the sample, this finding should be interpreted with caution.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND TRUST IN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Slightly more than two-thirds of young people believe that their voice can influence decisions in their community, while opinions are divided on whether young people actually have opportunities to take part in decision-making — slightly more than half agree with this, while the rest believe the opposite. A significant number of respondents — around two-thirds — report having taken part in some social or local initiative in the past year, a share higher than might be expected given the otherwise pronounced skepticism toward institutions, which may partly reflect the way the survey was distributed among already engaged young people.

Trust in local institutions is markedly low — slightly less than three-quarters of respondents disagree with the statement that they trust local institutions, while only slightly more than a quarter express such trust. This finding is entirely consistent with the general pattern of pronounced distrust in institutional actors that runs throughout the research, in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

GENDER EQUALITY

Slightly more than half of young people agree that young men and women in their community have equal opportunities, while a significant share — slightly less than half — believe the opposite. Despite this, an overwhelming majority of respondents — around eight in ten — agree that gender stereotypes remain strong among young people, indicating that the perception of formal equality of opportunity does not preclude the simultaneous recognition of deeper, entrenched gender patterns. Opinions on whether young people feel safe in public spaces regardless of gender are almost evenly split, suggesting that, unlike general attitudes toward equality, the sense of personal safety in public space remains a sensitive and uneven issue among young people.

WHAT, IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEW, WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO GREATER INCLUSION

When asked, through an open-ended question, what would most contribute to greater inclusion of young people in their community, respondents most often highlighted the need for concrete opportunities to take part in decision-making, primarily through stronger youth councils and more regular communication with local authorities. A large number of responses also related to the need for more content aimed at young people — workshops, cultural and sports activities, volunteer and youth programs — as well as for financial and organizational support for initiatives launched by young people themselves.

"More real opportunities for decision-making. That means stronger youth councils in municipalities and the city, where young people's opinions are not just 'heard,' but actually incorporated into decisions. When young people see that their ideas are genuinely adopted, their motivation grows."

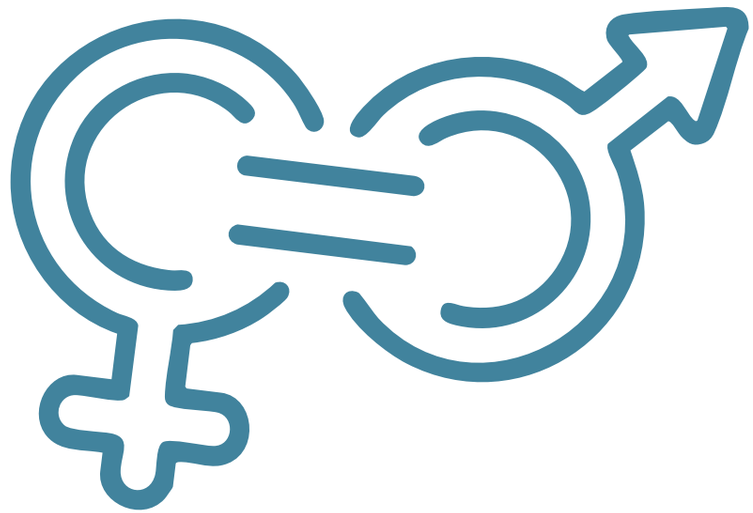
Several respondents particularly emphasized the importance of education — both in terms of introducing topics relevant to young people into school curricula, and in terms of education on laws, institutions and mechanisms for civic participation. A number of responses also pointed to a broader, more systemic framing of the problem, linking greater youth inclusion to changes in political culture and in the way institutions relate to young people in general.

KEY FINDINGS FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The findings gathered among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although of limited scope for the time being, largely reflect the patterns recorded among young people in Montenegro: discrimination is recognized as a widespread phenomenon, most pronounced on social media and in schools; LGBTI persons and ethnic minorities are identified as the groups most often exposed to discrimination; trust in the institutional response is low, and discrimination is most often not reported because reporting is considered pointless.

At the same time, certain specificities of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context stand out: a somewhat higher share of young people report personal experience of discrimination, ethnicity is more often recognized as a ground for unequal treatment, and family and school, rather than social media, are identified as the most important sources of information on these topics. At the same time, young people display a very high level of personal openness toward members of other ethnic communities and a belief in the possibility of reconciliation, alongside a clear awareness that political actors often use the past to deepen social divisions.

These findings represent a first, indicative insight into young people's attitudes and experiences and should be regarded as a basis for further research, rather than as a final, statistically comprehensive picture of the position of young people in the country.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The aim of this qualitative research was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of representatives of local communities regarding the position of young people in Montenegro, with a particular focus on various forms of discrimination, social inclusion, intergroup relations and opportunities for the active participation of young people in local communities.

The research aimed to identify the key challenges young people face, to recognize the factors contributing to their social exclusion or inclusion, and to point to opportunities for improving public policies and local support mechanisms for young people.

Particular attention was devoted to understanding how representatives of institutions and organizations working with young people recognize various forms of discrimination, assess the effectiveness of existing institutional responses, and see opportunities for improving the position of young people through the development of local policies, intersectoral cooperation, and more active involvement of young people themselves in decision-making processes.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out using the focus group method, which allows for a more detailed understanding of participants' attitudes, experiences and patterns of thinking through guided group discussion. This approach is particularly well suited to researching complex social phenomena, such as discrimination, social participation and young people's relationship with institutions, as it allows for the identification of different perspectives, common patterns and specific regional experiences.

The discussions were conducted on the basis of a pre-prepared guide covering several thematic areas: perceptions of the position of young people, various forms of discrimination, experiences of working with young people, intergroup relations, civic education, awareness of rights, youth participation in local communities, volunteering, and the gender dimension.

The analysis was carried out using thematic content analysis, whereby the transcripts of all focus groups were analyzed as a single qualitative corpus. Rather than presenting each focus group individually, common themes, patterns and regional specificities recurring across different local communities were identified. Where necessary, the findings are illustrated with characteristic statements from participants, with their anonymity fully preserved.

1.3. ORGANIZATION OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

Within the research, three focus groups were conducted, involving representatives of local self-governments, youth services and civil society organizations from three geographic areas of Montenegro — the northern, central and southern regions. This made it possible to identify both regional specificities and the common challenges faced by young people in different parts of the country.

Participants in the focus groups were persons who, through their professional engagement, work directly with young people or take part in the creation and implementation of local youth policies. The discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes and were led by a trained moderator, with adherence to the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality.

All focus groups were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, after which transcripts were produced, forming the basis for the qualitative analysis presented in this report.

1.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The findings presented in this report should be interpreted in accordance with the nature of qualitative research. Focus groups are not intended for the statistical assessment of how widespread certain attitudes or experiences are within the youth population, but rather for gaining a deeper understanding of them, identifying dominant patterns, and recognizing participants' different perspectives.

The research results are based on the experiences and perceptions of the focus group participants, who took part in the research as representatives of local self-governments, civil society organizations and other institutions working directly with young people. Their views represent a valuable source of insight into the functioning of local youth policies, the challenges young people face, and the ways in which institutions and organizations respond to those challenges.

Although the findings are not statistically representative of the overall youth population in Montenegro, the recurrence of similar patterns across focus groups held in different regions of the country points to the existence of shared problems and challenges that go beyond the local context. At the same time, the

research made it possible to identify certain regional specificities that further contribute to understanding the position of young people in different settings.

The findings of this research should therefore be viewed as a qualitative contribution to understanding discrimination, social inclusion and youth participation, one that can serve as a basis for shaping public policy, developing local support measures, and planning future quantitative research.

Given that the focus group participants came from different local communities and institutional settings, the research made it possible to examine the phenomenon from multiple complementary perspectives, further increasing the analytical value of the findings gathered.

2. LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES: GENERAL PICTURE

The first part of the discussion was devoted to the general position of young people in local communities. Although participants came from different regions of Montenegro and represented different institutions and organizations working with young people, their assessments showed a significant degree of agreement regarding the key challenges young people face.

The dominant impression among participants is that the position of young people is characterized by limited opportunities for personal development, insufficient inclusion in the social life of the community, and a pronounced uncertainty about the future. Almost all focus groups emphasized that young people have potential and abilities, but that the existing social and institutional framework is often not sufficiently encouraging to allow that potential to fully develop.

One theme that ran through all three focus groups is the passivity and insufficient interest of some young people in social, cultural and youth activities. However, participants generally did not interpret this phenomenon as a consequence of a lack of potential or motivation among young people, but rather as the result of a long-standing feeling that their participation cannot meaningfully influence decision-making or improve their position. Several participants cited examples of workshops, training sessions or international programs for which few young people apply, or for which those who do apply fail to show up at all, despite the activities being free of charge and organizationally accessible to them. At the same time, it was noted that there is a smaller group of highly active young people who regularly take part in the work of youth clubs, non-governmental organizations and volunteer activities, but that their number is limited.

The question of content aimed at young people proved to be one of the central topics of discussion. Participants from several areas pointed to a lack of spaces for gathering, non-formal education, and continuous programs of work with young people. At the same time, some representatives of local self-governments emphasized that their municipalities have youth clubs, youth centers or developed support programs, but that young people's interest often falls short of expectations. This opened up, through the discussions, the question of whether the problem lies solely in the lack of content, or also in how well that content matches young people's actual interests, as well as in the way such content is planned and communicated. It was particularly emphasized in the central region that programs are often created "from the top down," without prior involvement of young people in defining their needs.

The departure of young people from local communities is probably the most notable shared concern among focus group participants. This topic was especially pronounced in the northern region, where long-term negative demographic trends, a declining number of young people, and difficulty retaining highly educated staff after graduation were pointed out. However, participants from the southern region also noted that a significant number of young people plan to leave their communities, or Montenegro altogether, after finishing their education, while in the central region an important problem identified was young people's tendency to seek professional and developmental opportunities outside their local communities. Participants most often link the departure of young people to limited employment opportunities, a lack of prospects, and the feeling that professional development is more easily achieved in larger centers or abroad.

Although shared problems dominated, the discussions also pointed to certain regional differences. In the northern region, depopulation, a lack of infrastructure for young people, and a sense of developmental neglect are at the forefront. In the central region, participants spoke more about the quality of communication with young people, their involvement in shaping local policies, and the need for more modern models of participation. In the southern region, the discussion focused more on the functioning of youth clubs and centers, the relationship of educational institutions to youth programs, and the challenges of motivating young people to make use of existing opportunities.

Alongside numerous challenges, participants also cited several examples of good practice. Positive examples highlighted included the development of youth centers and clubs, cooperation between local self-governments and non-governmental organizations, the involvement of young people in drafting local action plans, support for international mobility and volunteering programs, as well as individual examples where ongoing programs of work contributed to greater inclusion of young people who had previously been socially passive or at risk of social exclusion.

3. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUNG PEOPLE – BETWEEN EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL PATTERNS

3.1. DO YOUNG PEOPLE RECOGNIZE DISCRIMINATION?

One of the first conclusions to emerge from the focus groups is that participants generally believe discrimination is an integral part of everyday life for young people in Montenegro, although its frequency and visibility differ between local settings. While some participants, particularly from smaller or more homogeneous communities, assessed that overt cases of discrimination are rare or barely visible, most interlocutors emphasized that discrimination does exist, but that it often goes unreported or manifests through subtler forms of social exclusion.

Participants pointed out that young people not infrequently fail to recognize certain behaviors as discrimination, particularly when it comes to peer relations or communication on social media. At the same time, several participants believe that young people often refrain from reporting discrimination because they believe institutions will not respond adequately, or that reporting could further worsen their position. It was particularly emphasized that a lack of trust in institutions is an important reason why many cases remain invisible.

It is characteristic that participants did not view discrimination solely through the lens of ethnic or religious affiliation. On the contrary, the discussions show that unequal treatment of young people is increasingly associated with social status, political affiliation, economic position, place of residence, or personal characteristics, pointing to a broader understanding of discrimination than that implied by traditional definitions.

3.2. WHO IS MOST EXPOSED TO DISCRIMINATION?

When discussing the groups most exposed to discrimination, focus group participants cited several different categories of young people, with no single hierarchy of vulnerability emerging. On the contrary, the perception was that different forms of discrimination overlap, and that certain groups can simultaneously be exposed to multiple forms of social exclusion.

Young members of the Roma community were most often identified as a particularly vulnerable group. In all regions, problems related to education, poverty and difficult social integration were pointed out. Particular emphasis was placed on early school leaving, language barriers, children's involvement in begging, and limited opportunities for full participation in social life, despite the existence of local support programs.

Persons with disabilities were likewise recognized as one of the most vulnerable groups. However, participants spoke considerably more often about institutional than about interpersonal forms of discrimination. Key problems cited included the inaccessibility of public institutions, insufficiently adapted infrastructure, limited participation in social activities, and occasionally symbolic inclusion in local policies. At the same time, some participants noted that a greater degree of acceptance exists among peers than is the case at the institutional level.

The position of LGBT youth was described as particularly sensitive. Several focus groups noted that this topic is rarely discussed, especially in smaller and more traditional communities, leaving a large number of young people completely invisible. Participants pointed out that fear of stigmatization and of having their privacy compromised is one of the main reasons why LGBT youth rarely report discrimination or seek institutional support.

In addition to the legally recognized grounds for discrimination, participants often pointed to the importance of young people's socioeconomic position. Poverty was particularly emphasized in the northern municipalities, where it is linked to limited opportunities for education, employment and staying in the local community. At the same time, several participants noted that young people from rural areas have fewer opportunities to take part in cultural, educational and youth programs compared to their peers from larger urban centers.

Participants paid particular attention to the political dimension of social inequalities. In several focus groups, the view was expressed that young people often believe that employment opportunities, professional advancement, or inclusion in certain processes are conditioned by political connections or affiliation with particular social networks. In this context, the favoring of the children of officials or socially influential families was mentioned, which creates among some young people a sense of unequal chances and discourages their more active social engagement.

3.3. NEW FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

One of the most significant findings of the focus groups is that participants do not link discrimination solely to traditional social divisions, but also point to the emergence of new, often less visible forms of social exclusion. Various forms of status-based discrimination among young people stand out in particular. Participants note that material status, style of dress, and the possession of certain brands or modern technology are becoming important criteria for social acceptance within peer groups. Such patterns are particularly pronounced in the school environment, where differences in economic status can become grounds for ridicule or social exclusion.

Several participants pointed to the growing importance of the digital space as a place where discrimination and peer violence manifest in new ways. Examples mentioned included exclusion from shared communication groups, insults via social media, the public singling out of individuals, and various forms of digital pressure that often remain beyond the reach of formal protection mechanisms. The discussions also repeatedly mentioned the favoring of children whose parents hold socially or politically influential positions. Participants believe such phenomena create a sense of unequal opportunity among young people and contribute to the belief that success does not depend solely on knowledge and ability, but also on social connections and family standing.

Finally, the focus groups show that discrimination among young people is increasingly taking on indirect and hard-to-detect forms. Instead of open rejection or verbal violence, participants describe patterns of social distancing, being ignored, exclusion from peer networks, and restricted access to various social opportunities. Precisely because of their subtlety, such forms of discrimination often go unreported, but according to participants they can have long-term consequences for young people's sense of belonging, self-confidence and social inclusion.

4. INSTITUTIONS AND THE RESPONSE TO DISCRIMINATION

4.1. REPORTING DISCRIMINATION – BETWEEN SILENCE AND DISTRUST

In all focus groups, participants emphasized that formal reporting of discrimination among young people is not a common occurrence. However, this finding was not interpreted as evidence that discrimination does not exist, but rather as an indication that a significant number of cases remain unreported or unrecognized.

According to participants, young people often assess that reporting would not lead to concrete change, or that it could further expose them to unpleasantness and stigmatization. It was particularly emphasized that certain groups of young people, such as LGBT persons, not infrequently avoid turning to institutions for fear of having their privacy compromised or their personal circumstances unwillingly disclosed. Participants also cited examples in which the very manner of institutional handling further undermined young people's trust in the protection system.

At the same time, some participants believe that young people themselves often fail to recognize certain forms of discrimination or peer violence as behavior that should be reported. For this reason, in their view, the number of registered cases does not reflect the actual scale of the problem.

4.2. WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE STAY SILENT?

The reasons why young people do not report discrimination proved to be multilayered. Focus group participants pointed to a combination of individual and systemic factors that discourage turning to the competent institutions.

Most often mentioned was a lack of trust that a report would lead to effective protection or to concrete consequences for the perpetrators of discrimination. Participants believe that young people often assess that reporting would represent an additional burden, while the outcome would remain uncertain. In some cases, fear of further victimization or of damaging relationships with peers, teachers, or the wider community was also mentioned.

In addition, several participants emphasize that certain forms of discrimination become normalized over time, particularly when they occur through everyday communication, social media, or peer relations. Under such circumstances, young people often come to believe that such behaviors are "part of growing up," which is why they rarely recognize them as a problem requiring an institutional response.

4.3. TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

The question of trust in institutions was one of the shared themes across all focus groups. Although participants did not deny that individual examples of quality work and good cooperation between different institutions exist, the dominant impression was that institutional responses are still not sufficiently coordinated, continuous, or visible to young people.

It was particularly emphasized that a large number of activities remain limited to individual projects, workshops, or campaigns, without longer-term monitoring of their effects. Several participants pointed out that one-off activities, while useful, are not in themselves sufficient to produce lasting changes in young people's attitudes and behavior, and that systemic, continuous support programs need to be developed instead.

In some communities, participants also pointed to the problem of insufficient coordination between institutions working with young people, as well as to the fact that responsibility for certain problems is often shifted from one institution to another, which further hampers an effective response.

4.4. THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Schools were recognized in the discussions as a key space for preventing discrimination, but also as institutions whose role is often underutilized.

On one hand, participants cited positive examples of cooperation between certain schools and local self-governments and civil society organizations, particularly with regard to organizing workshops, training sessions and prevention programs. On the other hand, several participants pointed to varying degrees of openness among schools toward cooperation, as well as to situations in which information about activities failed to reach pupils, or in which schools did not recognize certain forms of peer violence and discrimination.

Some participants noted that schools sometimes respond more to the consequences than to the causes of a problem, while others emphasized the need for stronger development of life skills programs, civic education, mental health support, and violence prevention.

4.5. LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The role of local self-governments and civil society organizations was assessed largely positively, though with clearly recognized limitations to their capacities.

Representatives of local self-governments highlighted the existence of various youth support programs, youth clubs, local action plans, youth councils and other participation mechanisms. At the same time, several participants pointed out that young people's interest in these programs often falls short of expectations, which further complicates their implementation. In several communities, the need for more modern models of communication with young people and their more active involvement in planning activities was emphasized.

Civil society organizations were recognized as an important partner to institutions, particularly in the areas of non-formal education, work with vulnerable groups, and the development of participatory programs for young people. Participants repeatedly emphasized that the most successful examples of work with young people arise precisely through cooperation between local self-governments, schools and civil society organizations. At the same time, it was noted that the sustainability of such activities often depends on project funding, which is why successful programs not infrequently come to an end together with the projects through which they were implemented.

5. SOCIAL DIVISIONS, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

5.1. NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

The focus group discussions showed that national and religious relations continue to represent an important dimension of social relations among young people, but that their intensity and the way they manifest differ across regions of Montenegro.

In some communities, particularly those with a more pronounced multiethnic population structure, participants assessed that young people function together on a daily basis, attend the same schools, and maintain ordinary peer contacts without major open conflicts. At the same time, it was emphasized that the formal absence of conflict does not necessarily mean a complete absence of social distance or prejudice.

In contrast, particularly among participants from the northern region, it was pointed out that national and religious affiliation still represent a significant factor in social relations among young people. Interlocutors stated that political and identity-based divisions occasionally carry over into the school environment, everyday communication, and social media, with the intensity of these phenomena changing depending on social and political circumstances.

It is characteristic that participants rarely spoke of open conflicts, and considerably more often of the existence of latent divisions that become more visible during periods of heightened social or political tension.

5.2. THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION

One of the themes that emerged spontaneously during the discussions is the strong impact of political polarization on the everyday life of young people. Participants from different regions repeatedly pointed out that political divisions not infrequently shape interpersonal relations, affect mutual trust, and create a sense of social division.

It was particularly emphasized that young people often adopt political narratives from their immediate surroundings, which is why political differences easily grow into social distance among peers. In some communities, participants pointed out that political affiliation can also affect young people's willingness to cooperate within local initiatives or youth activities, while others spoke of the belief that certain social opportunities are more accessible to young people with political or family connections.

At the same time, several participants expressed the view that young people themselves are often not the initiators of these divisions, but that political tensions are predominantly transmitted from the broader social environment.

5.3. THE LEGACY OF CONFLICTS

The question of the impact of the wars and social conflicts of the 1990s elicited varied responses from focus group participants, but a shared conclusion is that the past continues to influence the attitudes of some young people.

Most participants believe that young people have no direct experience of the war events, but that they acquire attitudes about the past through family, the media, and the broader social environment. Some participants emphasized that young people often adopt one-sided interpretations of historical events, while others assessed that these topics are not among young people's priority interests, except in situations when they become the subject of intense social or political debate.

It was particularly emphasized that identity-based issues intensify during periods of political campaigns or other social events, when national and religious questions once again become dominant in the public space. Participants believe that such dynamics make it more difficult to build mutual trust among young people and slow down processes of social cohesion.

5.4. MIXED MARRIAGES

Discussions about mixed marriages showed that they serve as a good indicator of the degree of social openness in local communities.

In some communities, participants assessed that mixed marriages are still relatively rare and encounter a certain degree of social resistance or reservation, particularly when they involve different national or religious communities. In other communities, it was emphasized that such marriages are accepted much more naturally today than in the past, and that younger generations show a greater degree of openness compared to older ones.

It is important to note, however, that participants did not view mixed marriages as an isolated issue of family relations, but as an indicator of broader social processes, the level of mutual trust, and the community's readiness to accept diversity.

5.5. THE ROLE OF FAMILY, SCHOOL AND THE MEDIA

In all focus groups, participants agreed that young people's attitudes toward diversity do not arise spontaneously, but are shaped through processes of socialization within the family, the education system, and the media environment.

Family was most often identified as the primary source of the values and attitudes young people acquire at the earliest age. At the same time, participants believe that schools have an important role in developing tolerance, civic values and critical thinking, but that existing educational programs still do not make sufficient use of this potential. Several participants pointed to the importance of civic education, the development of life skills, and more open discussion of sensitive social topics.

Particular attention was devoted to the role of the media and social media. Participants believe that the digital space today represents one of the most important sources of information for young people, but at the same time also a space in which stereotypes, political messages, hate speech and social divisions spread quickly. For this reason, several participants emphasized the need to strengthen media literacy and young people's critical attitude toward the content they are exposed to on a daily basis.

6. AWARENESS, CIVIC COMPETENCIES AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

6.1. KNOWLEDGE OF YOUTH RIGHTS

One of the conclusions of the focus groups is that participants generally believe young people are not sufficiently informed about their rights, nor about the possibilities for obtaining institutional support. This assessment recurred across several different local communities, with emphasis placed on the fact that insufficient awareness relates not only to formal rights, but also to the available services, support programs and protection mechanisms at young people's disposal.

Several participants pointed out that young people are often unaware of whom they can turn to when facing problems such as discrimination, violence, or mental health difficulties. At the same time, some interlocutors emphasized that even the existing information is not sufficiently visible or accessible to young people in a way that matches their information-seeking habits.

6.2. CIVIC EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC COMPETENCIES

During the discussions, the importance of education in developing tolerance, democratic values and active citizenship was repeatedly emphasized. Participants believe that schools play a significant role in developing civic competencies, but that existing approaches are not sufficient to address the challenges young people face today.

Particular emphasis was placed on the need for greater development of critical thinking, understanding of human rights, acceptance of diversity, and active participation of young people in social life. Several focus groups also pointed to the need to strengthen civic education both through the formal education system and through non-formal education carried out by civil society organizations and local communities.

At the same time, some participants believe that civic competencies cannot be developed solely through classroom teaching, but through the continuous involvement of young people in joint activities, volunteering, intercultural programs, and local-level decision-making processes.

6.3. SEXUAL EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Although these topics were not a dominant part of the discussions, participants repeatedly and spontaneously raised them as areas in which they recognize serious shortcomings.

When it comes to sexual education, some participants pointed out that young people have access to a limited number of reliable sources of information, and that the formal education system devotes insufficient attention to this area. As an example, they cited educational sessions on sexual and reproductive health, which generate considerable interest among pupils precisely because such topics are rarely discussed within regular education.

Mental health was likewise recognized as an area requiring greater institutional attention. Participants noted that young people often seek additional information and professional help after workshops devoted to mental health, but that local communities not infrequently lack sufficiently developed services or professional capacities to respond to these needs. In addition, it was repeatedly pointed out that discrimination, social exclusion and a sense of not belonging can have negative consequences for the psychological well-being of young people.

6.4. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The focus group discussions indicated that the issue of informing young people is not primarily a problem of a lack of information, but rather of how that information is disseminated and reaches the target group.

Several participants noted that local self-governments, schools and civil society organizations organize a significant number of activities aimed at young people, but that information about them often does not reach potential beneficiaries, or is not perceived by young people as relevant. It was particularly emphasized that traditional methods of communication are no longer sufficient, and that it is necessary to develop communication models that match young people's contemporary habits and allow for a two-way exchange of information.

At the same time, participants believe that social media today represent one of the most important sources of information for young people. However, precisely because of their dominant role, the need to develop media literacy and a critical attitude toward the content young people are exposed to on a daily basis was emphasized. In addition, several interlocutors pointed out that successful communication with young people requires them to be active participants in creating content and programs, rather than merely passive recipients of information.

7. YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL POLICIES

7.1. WHY DON'T YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

Focus group participants generally assess that youth involvement in local policies, the work of institutions, and civil society activities is limited. However, the reasons behind this state of affairs are not simple, nor can they be reduced solely to a lack of interest among young people.

In several local communities, participants cited examples of poor turnout at workshops, public discussions, youth programs and volunteer activities. They mentioned situations in which activities were free of charge and information was available, yet participants still failed to show up or dropped out without prior notice. In some municipalities, representatives of institutions noted that it is difficult to form a stable group of young people to work with continuously, particularly after secondary school pupils go on to university or leave the local community.

Nevertheless, participants themselves often qualified the assessment of youth

passivity. They pointed out that many programs are not adapted to young people's actual interests, that content is often planned without prior consultation with young people, and that communication channels are inadequate. In the central region, it was particularly emphasized that many programs are created "from the top down," while young people remain in the role of users of already-designed activities, rather than participating in their creation.

Another important reason cited for weak participation is young people's sense that their voice is used only formally — to fulfill project or institutional obligations — but has no real influence on decision-making. In the northern region, the view was expressed that young people are brought in when certain quotas need to be filled or when symbolic actions require participants, while their ideas and knowledge are not used in the processes where decisions about their future are actually made.

The political coloring of local institutions and initiatives was also recognized as an obstacle. Participants pointed out that young people sometimes view people, institutions and activities through the lens of party affiliation, which means that getting involved in certain initiatives can be perceived as taking a political side.

The findings thus show that limited participation is the result of the interplay of several factors: the departure of young people, weak communication, insufficiently tailored programs, distrust in institutions, a sense that their opinions are not valued, and a lack of visible benefits from getting involved.

7.2. WHAT DO INSTITUTIONS OFFER?

Representatives of local self-governments cited various mechanisms and programs through which they seek to involve young people. These include local action plans, youth councils, youth clubs and centers, student/pupil parliaments, public discussions, non-formal education programs, support for sports and cultural activities, scholarships, international exchanges, and cooperation with civil society organizations.

In some municipalities, it was highlighted that a significant number of activities are carried out over the course of the year, and that young people are involved in drafting local action plans or in consultations with institutions. In Tivat, for example, the existence of a Youth Council and a large number of annual activities was cited, along with financial support for young people in education, sports and other activities.

In the central region, the involvement of young people in preparing local action plans — through surveys, focus groups and direct consultations — was cited as a positive example. Specific youth initiatives that local self-governments supported technically, organizationally or financially were also mentioned.

Nevertheless, the offer is not evenly developed. While some municipalities have larger budgets and more diverse programs, in smaller and northern municipalities a lack of infrastructure, human capacity and local organizations limits the number and continuity of activities. In some communities, programs exist only formally, on paper within local plans, while their actual implementation amounts to occasional training sessions or activities carried out merely to fulfill administrative obligations.

An important finding is also that the mere existence of programs does not in itself guarantee youth involvement. Participants repeatedly emphasized that activities must be relevant, practical, and linked to concrete interests and benefits for young people. Greater interest was cited as an example when participants receive a certificate, a reference, an opportunity to travel, gain experience, or some other clearly recognizable benefit.

7.3. YOUTH CENTERS AND YOUTH SERVICES

Youth centers and clubs were recognized as an important element of local infrastructure for young people, but participants' experiences revealed significant differences in how they function.

In some municipalities, youth centers represent a space where young people can gather, take part in workshops, develop ideas and receive support. Examples were also cited of young people who found a safe environment in a youth center after experiences of discrimination or peer exclusion. In such cases, the youth center serves not only a programmatic function, but also a social and protective one.

In other communities, youth centers or clubs either do not exist, are housed in inadequate premises, or lack sufficiently developed programs and human capacity. Some participants pointed out that a center's location can be decisive for its attendance, which is why the space must be easily accessible and situated where young people naturally spend time. In Zeta, for example, it was emphasized that the future center is located in the center of the settlement precisely so that it would be accessible to young people.

In the central region, a proposal was made to form a broader social or youth center that would bring together, in one place, youth organizations, a youth office, an information desk and psychological support. Such a model was envisioned as offering young people direct and accessible contact with institutions, without complex administrative procedures.

Still, some participants raised the question of whether traditional youth centers remain a sufficient or the most effective way of working with young people. Particularly in the southern region, it was pointed out that, despite the existence of space, equipment and programs, young people often do not respond. This suggests that the success of a youth center does not depend solely on the physical space, but on the quality of its programs, the way it is managed, communication with young people, and their genuine participation in decision-making.

7.4. VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering was recognized in all focus groups as an important form of participation, but also as an area with numerous limitations. It is most often associated with the work of the Red Cross, schools, humanitarian actions, environmental protection, and cultural and sports events.

In several municipalities, there are small, relatively stable groups of young people who volunteer continuously. However, most participants believe it is difficult to expand this base and involve a larger number of young people. In some communities, volunteer clubs that previously brought together dozens of young people have weakened following a generational shift, as new generations are harder to mobilize.

One of the key problems is the perception of volunteering as unpaid physical labor from which the organizers benefit, rather than young people themselves. Participants noted that young people sometimes feel used, particularly when they are involved only for photo opportunities, promotional activities, or to fulfill project obligations, without further contact, recognition, or inclusion in the project's final outcomes.

At the same time, young people are often not sufficiently aware of the benefits volunteering can have for their education, employment, and applications for scholarships and international programs. Volunteer record books and the formal registration of engagement are rarely used, and participants also pointed to complicated procedures and insufficient familiarity with the legal framework.

In the central region, particular emphasis was placed on the need to change the very perception of volunteering. Volunteering should not be reduced to formal actions and physical labor, but rather linked to socializing, music, culture, learning and concrete experiences that appeal to young people. Organizations that succeed in combining socially useful work with a sense of community and fun, thereby building a stable volunteer base, were cited as a positive example.

The findings show that a willingness to volunteer does exist, but that it requires clearer recognition, better organization, visible benefits, mentoring support, and respect for young people's time and contribution.

7.5. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Although participants often spoke about the weaknesses of the existing system, a number of concrete examples of good practice were also identified through the transcripts.

Among them, the following stand out:

- involving young people in drafting local action plans and in consultations on local policies;
- cooperation between local self-governments and student/pupil parliaments, schools, and civil society organizations;
- support for international exchanges, Erasmus and SALTO programs;
- organizing camps, and cultural, sports and environmental activities;
- supporting young people through scholarships, awards, transport, and funding for their initiatives;
- developing spaces where young people can access information, professional support, and the opportunity to carry out their own ideas;including young people who were previously passive, marginalized or exposed to discrimination in cultural and youth programs;
- activities of the Red Cross and other organizations that have a more stable base of volunteers.

Particularly valuable are examples in which young people are not merely participants, but initiators and creators of activities. In the northern region, the active involvement of young people in decision-making and the use of existing mechanisms, such as student/pupil parliaments and attendance at sessions of local assemblies, was highlighted as a key need.

At the same time, good results are most often linked to the engagement of specific individuals — teachers, local self-government officials, youth workers or activists — who invest extra energy in bringing young people together and motivating them. This demonstrates the strength of individual commitment, but also the weakness of a system whose success often depends on personal initiative rather than on stable, institutionalized mechanisms.

The shared conclusion is that youth participation cannot be increased simply by expanding the number of activities. Young people need to be given genuine influence, involved in designing programs, offered content that matches their needs, and their contribution needs to be made visible and socially recognized.

8. REGIONAL SPECIFICITIES

8.1. NORTHERN REGION

The discussions in the northern region were considerably more focused on the structural problems shaping the position of young people. Unlike the other regions, participants spoke very often about depopulation, the departure of young people, a lack of infrastructure, and a sense of developmental neglect in northern Montenegro.

The departure of young people was identified as one of the greatest challenges. Participants pointed out that a large number of young people leave their municipalities after finishing secondary school or university and rarely return, which further weakens local communities and makes the development of youth policies more difficult. At the same time, it was repeatedly emphasized that opportunities for education, employment and social engagement are considerably more limited than in the central and southern parts of the country.

Unlike the other two regions, participants from the north spoke much more openly about national and political divisions, the social consequences of the legacy of war, poverty, and a sense of institutional neglect. Particular attention was devoted to the position of Roma people, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, as well as to the fact that numerous activities remain occasional and project-dependent, without longer-term systemic solutions.

At the same time, despite the numerous challenges, participants pointed to the existence of strong motivation among individuals and local organizations to improve the position of young people through the development of youth centers, strengthening cooperation between institutions and civil society organizations, and greater involvement of young people in decision-making processes.

8.2. CENTRAL REGION

Unlike the southern region, where the dominant theme was young people's motivation to take part in existing programs, discussions in the central region focused more on the quality of participation and the relationship between institutions and young people.

Participants frequently pointed out that young people are not sufficiently involved in shaping the policies that directly affect them, and that activities are often planned without their genuine participation. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to develop new models of communication with young people, greater involvement in drafting local action plans, and the creation of spaces where young people could have direct contact with institutions and develop their own initiatives.

In this focus group, considerable space was also devoted to discussing changes in young people's values and way of life. Participants spoke of a more pronounced individualism, changes in patterns of social engagement, and the need for institutions to adapt their programs to new generations. At the same time, it was emphasized that young people are not necessarily less interested in social engagement, but rather expect different forms of participation and content that matches their interests.

Particular attention was given to examples of cooperation between local self-governments and civil society organizations, as well as to initiatives for developing youth centers, youth councils, and other participatory mechanisms that would enable young people to become more directly involved in local community life.

8.1. SOUTHERN REGION

The discussion in the southern region shows that local self-governments and organizations are largely focused on developing youth programs, youth clubs, and various forms of non-formal education. Participants cited a large number of activities carried out, including international exchanges, workshops, and youth support programs, with particular emphasis on initiatives run by youth centers, youth clubs, and local secretariats.

However, despite a relatively well-developed range of content, almost all participants pointed to the problem of limited interest among young people in taking part in these programs. A particular challenge identified was the difficulty of involving a broader circle of young people, since most programs rely on a smaller group of already active individuals. It was emphasized several times that young people often do not show up for activities they had previously expressed interest in, or that considerable effort is needed simply to motivate them to participate.

Participants also pointed to the need to improve cooperation between schools, local self-governments, and organizations working with young people, as well as the need for existing programs to be better tailored to young people's interests. Particular attention was also devoted to the importance of youth centers as spaces for support, inclusion and non-formal education, as well as to the question of their long-term sustainability and their ability to attract new users.

9. KEY FINDINGS

1. In all regions, participants assess that young people face limited opportunities for active involvement in the social life of local communities.
2. Discrimination against young people is recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon that goes beyond national and religious affiliation, encompassing socioeconomic status, place of residence, political affiliation, and other forms of social inequality.
3. Young people from the Roma community, persons with disabilities, LGBT youth, young people from rural areas, and young people of lower socioeconomic status are most often identified as particularly vulnerable groups.
4. Participants believe that a significant number of discrimination cases remain unreported due to insufficient trust in institutions, fear of stigmatization, and the belief that reporting will not lead to change.
5. The position of young people is largely shaped by a sense of unequal opportunity and the perception that social success often depends on political and social connections.
6. National, religious and political divisions continue to affect social relations among young people, although their intensity varies across regions.
7. Family, school, the media and social media are recognized as key factors in shaping young people's attitudes toward diversity and social divisions.
8. Participants assess that young people are not sufficiently informed about their rights, the support services available to them, and the mechanisms for protection against discrimination.
9. Local self-governments and civil society organizations have developed various programs for young people, but their uptake often falls short of expectations.
10. Limited youth participation is linked to insufficient involvement in decision-making processes, inadequate methods of communication, and a sense that their opinions carry no real influence.
11. Youth centers, youth services and non-formal education programs represent important mechanisms of support for young people, but their effectiveness largely depends on the quality of the programs, their accessibility, and continuity of work.
12. Volunteering is recognized as an important form of social engagement, but its expansion is limited by insufficient motivation, the low visibility of its benefits, and the limited capacities of organizers.
13. Positive examples of cooperation between local self-governments, educational institutions and civil society organizations were identified in all regions, but participants believe that successful models are still not sufficiently systematized or evenly developed.
14. Regional differences exist primarily in the dominant challenges: in the north, depopulation and the departure of young people stand out; in the central region, the quality of participation and communication with young people; and in the southern region, motivating young people to make use of existing programs and services..

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Strengthen civic education content through the development of practical competencies for active citizenship, human rights, media literacy and critical thinking.
- Introduce continuous programs for the prevention of discrimination, peer violence and hate speech, tailored to pupils' age.
- Improve education on mental health and sexual and reproductive health through interdisciplinary, professionally led programs.
- Develop models of non-formal education that complement the formal teaching process and enable the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills.

10.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

- Involve young people in all stages of developing local youth policies – from identifying needs to evaluating implemented activities.
- Develop programs based on the needs expressed by young people, rather than solely on administrative or project priorities.
- Improve communication with young people by using the channels they use on a daily basis.
- Pay particular attention to including young people from rural areas and other harder-to-reach groups.
- Ensure the continuity of successful programs independent of the duration of individual projects.

10.3. PREPORUKE ZA MINISTARSTVO

- Develop a unified framework for monitoring local youth policies and their effects.
- Strengthen institutional support for local self-governments with weaker administrative and financial capacities, particularly in the northern region.
- Encourage intersectoral cooperation between the education, social welfare, health and youth policy sectors.
- Support the development of long-term programs for preventing discrimination and improving the social inclusion of young people.
- Develop mechanisms for the systematic involvement of young people in shaping national policies that directly affect them.

10.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- Develop a school culture based on inclusion, respect for diversity, and open dialogue.
- Strengthen cooperation between schools and local self-governments, youth services, and civil society organizations.
- Develop prevention programs that equally address peer violence, discrimination, and digital violence.
- Give pupils more opportunities to take part in decisions affecting school life.
- Encourage the development of pupil-led initiatives and volunteer activities.

10.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH SERVICES AND YOUTH CENTERS

- Develop programs in whose creation young people themselves actively take part.
- Strengthen outreach work and activities aimed at young people not yet involved in existing programs.
- Develop programs that combine education, socializing, culture, sport and volunteering.
- Ensure the availability of psychological support and quality information within youth services.
- Continuously monitor user satisfaction and adapt content to their needs.

10.6. PREPORUKE ZA ORGANIZACIJE CIVILNOG DRUŠTVA

- Continue developing programs aimed at empowering young people from vulnerable social groups.
- Strengthen partnerships with local self-governments, schools and other institutions.
- Develop participatory methods of work in which young people play an active role in planning and implementing activities.
- Devote greater attention to developing local leaders among young people and to long-term mentoring.

- Continue developing programs that promote intercultural dialogue, tolerance and social cohesion.

10.7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA

- Promote positive examples of activism, volunteering and social engagement among young people.
- Report on young people in a way that contributes to understanding their needs and potential, avoiding stereotypes and sensationalism.
- Develop content that contributes to media literacy and a critical attitude toward information.
- Devote greater attention to the topics of discrimination, mental health, and the social inclusion of young people.
- Encourage public dialogue that affirms tolerance, mutual respect, and social cohesion.