PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE STUDENT COMMUNITY

COMBATING DISCRIMINATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREȘTI
VIRTUTE ET SAPIENTIA

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST
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WHY THIS GUIDE?

NON-DISCRIMINATION is a basic principle of democracy and a fundamental right recognised at both international and national level. International conventions, European legislation and Romanian law firmly condemn discrimination and provide clear sanctions against it.

In recent years, the phenomenon of discrimination has become more visible, alongside increased international mobility, cultural diversity and, at the same time, the rise of extremist discourse. In the university environment, discrimination manifests itself in lecture halls, in online working groups and in students' everyday interactions.

Recent data show that a significant number of students report experiences of discrimination during their studies. On average, approximately one in five European students (21%) state that they have gone through such an experience. In Romania, the proportion reaches 26%, among the highest in Europe. The most frequently mentioned ground is gender, with 8% of respondents stating that they have been discriminated against on this basis (Eurostudent VIII, Mandl & Menz, 2024).

It is important to draw a clear distinction from the outset: this guide addresses discrimination. Discrimination can lead to abuse or violence, but these are distinct phenomena, regulated and sanctioned through different legal instruments.

The **University of Bucharest** assumes responsibility for preventing and sanctioning discrimination whenever it occurs. Discussions with our students have shown that many do not have a clear picture of what discrimination means or where it begins, and some have said it is not always easy for them to recognise situations in which they are marginalised or excluded. This guide therefore aims to clarify basic concepts, provide examples that reflect the reality of student life, and present resources and concrete steps for support.

WHAT DOES DISCRIMINATION MEAN?

DISCRIMINATION

DISCRIMINATION LIMITS YOUR RIGHTS AND ACCESS.

Direct discrimination – a person is treated differently compared with another person, in the same situation, because of a ground such as gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

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Indirect discrimination – a decision or an apparently neutral practice disadvantages a certain group of people within the same category.

HARASSMENT

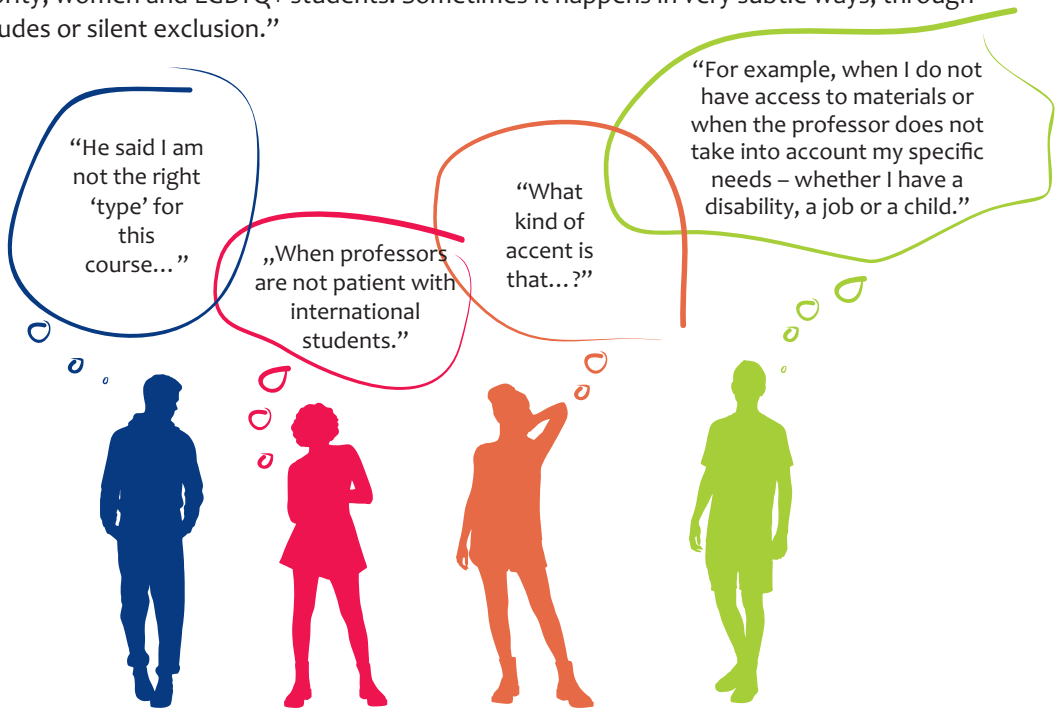
HARASSMENT IS A FORM OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE THAT AFFECTS A PERSON'S DIGNITY AND DETERIORATES THE CLIMATE IN WHICH THEY LIVE, STUDY OR WORK.

It has both an interpersonal and a structural character, linked to attitudes, words and actions. It is a form of psychological, verbal or sexual violence. It is, above all, an interpersonal act, related to attitudes, words and actions.

	DISCRIMINATION	HARASSMENT
DEFINITION	Unequal treatment based on grounds protected by national legislation. It limits access to rights and opportunities.	Unwanted behaviour related to protected grounds that affects dignity and creates a hostile environment.
HOW IT MANIFESTS	Rules Decisions Institutional practices Behaviours and attitudes	Insulting words Offensive jokes Disturbing gestures or attitudes
EXAMPLE	Refusal to use the chosen name of a trans person. Criteria for social scholarships that do not recognise specific situations.	Sexist comments directed at a student.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION. FROM SPEECH TO ACTION

"I think the most frequent forms of discrimination we observe at university are those related to ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation and disability. The groups most affected are ethnic minorities – especially Roma, but also refugee students, religious persons who are not part of the majority, women and LGBTQ+ students. Sometimes it happens in very subtle ways, through attitudes or silent exclusion."



"It is also a form of institutional rigidity that penalises any deviation from the norm of the ideal student."

"Discrimination at university also appears between students, not only from professors or the institution. If you are from the countryside, if you do not speak academically, if you dress more simply, you are automatically seen as inferior. A kind of student elitism is created, a culture of permanent comparison."

"The professor called out the roll, including the names from our ID cards, which was very uncomfortable. We are not allowed to change our names in the university applications, and this affects trans students."

"One example would be when a female professor refuses to offer an adaptation for a student with special educational needs (CES) because 'it is not her job'. This means that the system does not support equity. Discrimination can appear at the level of the institution, not only at the level of the individual."

LEGISLATION

Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination

- Basic legislative act in the field of discrimination.
- Defines direct and indirect discrimination, as well as victimisation.
- Establishes administrative sanctions applied by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD).

Direct discrimination:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, social category, beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic non-communicable disease, HIV infection, belonging to a disadvantaged category, as well as any other ground which has the purpose or effect of restricting, removing the recognition, use or exercise, on equal terms, of human rights and fundamental freedoms, or of rights recognised by law, in the political, economic, social or cultural fields or in any other field of public life.

Indirect discrimination:

Provisions, criteria or apparently neutral practices that disadvantage certain persons, on the grounds provided by current legislation, compared with other persons, except where these provisions, criteria or practices are objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Victimisation:

Any adverse treatment that occurs as a reaction to a complaint or legal action regarding the breach of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination.

Multiple discrimination:

A person or a group of persons is treated differently on the basis of two or more discrimination grounds, cumulatively.

LEGISLATION – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Constitution of Romania

Law on Higher Education no. 199/2023

Labour Code, Law no. 53/2003

Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities between women and men

Criminal Code, Law no. 286/2009 (republished)

National Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma Minority (2022–2027)

More information on the project website: www.nodiscriminationub.org

RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS

CONSILIUL NAȚIONAL pentru COMBATEREA DISCRIMINĂRII

National Council for Combating Discrimination

Specialised institution that investigates and sanctions acts of discrimination.
www.cncd.ro

AVOCATUL POPORULUI

Ombudsperson

May intervene in cases of discrimination concerning constitutional rights.
www.avp.ro

DISCRIMINATION CRITERIA

CATEGORY	SPECIFIC CRITERIA	TYPE OF CRITERION
Origin / identity	race, nationality, ethnicity, language	PROVIDED IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION
Beliefs / religion	religion, beliefs	
Social status	social category, belonging to a disadvantaged group	
Gender / orientation	sex, sexual orientation	
Age / health	age, disability, chronic non-communicable disease, HIV infection	
Other criteria provided by law	any other similar ground that leads to exclusion, restriction or unequal treatment	

EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION IN STUDENT LIFE

OFFENSIVE JOKES OR REMARKS

classmates making racist, sexist or homophobic comments.
"you don't look like a real Romanian"
"this is a subject for boys, not for girls"

SOCIAL MARGINALISATION

students isolated in working groups because they come from another ethnicity, speak with an accent or have a disability. *"they speak to you differently just because you have an accent or you don't share the same political views"*

UNEQUAL TREATMENT IN DAILY ACTIVITIES

professors give the floor more often to certain students (usually men), consistently ignoring female students.
"a seminar instructor who calls only the boys to the board"

UNCLEAR OR DISCRIMINATORY ADMISSION CRITERIA

when a university applies rules that disadvantage a group.
"unjustified age requirements, rejecting candidates from certain regions"

FREQUENT OBSTACLES FACED BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Language barrier
(in interactions, during classes, in official communication; lack of translation of regulations or essential information; lack of access to support in English)
Social exclusion
(closed groups, cultural jokes that cannot be understood, cultural and ethnic/racial stereotypes)
"when professors are not patient with international students"

BIASED ASSESSMENT

professors give different grades based on prejudices related to gender, ethnicity, religion or social status, rather than on academic performance; professors assess differently female students who address topics related to human rights.

"one example would be when a female professor refuses to offer an adaptation for a student with special educational needs (CES) because it's not her job."

LACK OF ACCESSIBILITY

buildings or classrooms without ramps for wheelchair users, or lack of adapted materials for students with visual and/or hearing impairments.

"if I think about students with disabilities, discrimination can exist in the sense that they do not have the resources they need to move around, for example if there are no functioning lifts or platforms for those who use wheelchairs."

REFUSAL OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

a student with a disability requests extra time for an exam or adapted materials, but the request is rejected without justification.

"a girl who has hearing difficulties, it seems to me that every time she speaks she is ignored anyway."

ABUSIVE REACTIONS TO COMPLAINTS

a student who reports harassment later becomes the target of marginalisation or reprisals.

"since you complained, you are no longer accepted in projects."

ALLOCATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS OR ACCOMMODATION PLACES

non-transparent criteria or practices that favour certain categories on unjustified grounds.

GROUPS OF PEOPLE FREQUENTLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST – CRITERIA

On the basis of ethnicity / origin: Roma people, immigrants, international students.

On the basis of gender and gender identity: women (especially in technical sciences), transgender or non-binary persons.

On the basis of sexual orientation: queer persons.

On the basis of disability: students with visual, hearing, mobility or other disabilities.

On the basis of age: persons who resume their studies at ages not traditionally associated with the study period.

On the basis of religion or belief: persons belonging to religious minorities, persons with non-religious beliefs (atheist, agnostic, freethinking).

On the basis of socio-economic status: students from disadvantaged backgrounds or low-income families.

On the basis of health: persons living with chronic illnesses or HIV / AIDS.

PLACES AND CONTEXTS WHERE SITUATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION MAY ARISE

IN THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

- **ADMISSIONS:** unclear criteria or interviews in which biased questions are used.
- **COURSES AND SEMINARS:** sexist or racist jokes, ignoring certain students, biased grading.
- **ASSESSMENT:** different treatment based on gender, ethnicity or social status.
- **SCHOLARSHIPS AND ACCOMMODATION:** non-transparent or discriminatorily applied criteria.
- **STUDENT CONFERENCES AND PROJECTS:** exclusion of minority groups from organisational or research activities.

IN STUDENT LIFE AND ACADEMIC SPACES

- **STUDENT DORMITORIES:** refusal of accommodation based on ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.
- **STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS AND GROUPS:** unequal participation or lack of inclusion of minority groups.
- **SOCIAL EVENTS:** offensive attitudes or remarks, negative stereotypes.

IN PUBLIC SPACE / EVERYDAY LIFE

- **TRANSPORT AND HOUSING:** refusal to rent accommodation to a person of another ethnicity or nationality.
- **WORKPLACES** (part-time, internships): rejecting candidates because they are women, Roma or have a disability.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN A SITUATION OF DISCRIMINATION?

1.ASSESS THE SITUATION

INDICATIVE EXAMPLES

I avoided a class because of a comment.

I heard comments, jokes or insulting remarks about a category (women, minorities, etc.) in my presence.

I was excluded or marginalised in a social or professional activity because of a personal characteristic.

I felt I had to "prove more" than others in the same group who do not share that characteristic.

I notice a gender / ethnicity / other imbalance in leadership positions in an organisation where I work / participate.

I heard expressions such as "this is not suitable for you" or "this is not your role".

2.WRITE DOWN

what happened:
date, place, what was said/done.

3.TALK

to someone you trust.

4.DECIDE

whether you want to report the situation.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...
Be listened to with respect.
Not be asked why you did not report earlier.
Submit a complaint in the language in which you study.
Be informed about the steps that follow after submitting a complaint.
Choose whom you address (professor, year coordinator, counsellor, etc.).
Receive psychological support and confidential counselling.
Express your point of view in a safe environment.
Request that your identity remains confidential.

WHO CAN YOU CONTACT?

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREŞTI
VIRTUTE ET SAPIENTIA

- Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Service
- Ethics Committee
- Ombudsperson
- Career Counselling and Guidance Department
- Psychological and Educational Assistance and Intervention Clinic (CAIPE)
- University of Bucharest Students' Association (ASUB)

INFORMAL SUPPORT

- Partner NGOs specialised in gender, ethnicity, migration, etc.

FORMAL COMPLAINT OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY

- National Council for Combating Discrimination
- Ombudsperson Institution

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT A PERSON WHO IS GOING THROUGH SUCH A SITUATION?

- **Response guide.** Listen actively, validate non-verbally, offer options. "*I'm sorry you went through this. How can I help you?*"
- **What NOT to say:** "*You're exaggerating, I don't think that's what they meant.*"
- **How to be an ally** (even if you are not directly affected): avoid an indifferent attitude. Show that you care.
- **Solidarity matters:** your support can make the difference between isolation and the courage to speak up. Small gestures of support help create a safer and more inclusive university environment.

WE WANT AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY

HOW EACH OF US CONTRIBUTES

- **Feedback culture:** how and when we offer feedback.
- **Active student representation** in committees and projects.
- **Diversity Month.**
- **Beginning-of-year trainings** for professors and students.
- **Discussions** in the first course of the academic year.
- **Regular workshops** on unconscious bias and inclusion for students and teaching staff.

USEFUL RESOURCES

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

- **University Charter:**
  https://bit.ly/4pbmM6W
- **Code of Ethics and Deontology of the University of Bucharest:**
  https://bit.ly/442Wj3m
- **University Ombudsman:**
  https://bit.ly/3X1wNaW
- **Internal Regulations adopted by the University of Bucharest:**
  https://bit.ly/4hYAisi
- **Code of Rights and Obligations of the Student at the University of Bucharest:**
  https://bit.ly/3LGT4Zh
- **Council for Student Issues:**
  https://bit.ly/400vrZ7
- **Bucharest University Students' Association (ASUB):**
  https://as-ub.ro

Support pages and social media accounts of organisations against discrimination

- **FILIA Center::** https://centrulfilia.ro
- **Feminism Romania:** https://www.feminism-romania.ro
- **E-Romnja**: https://e-romnja.ro
- **ACCEPT Association:** https://acceptromania.ro
- **MozaiQ**: https://www.mozaiqlgbt.ro
- **Coalition of Patient Organisations with Chronic Diseases in Romania (COPAC):** https://www.copac.ro/
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM Romania):** https://romania.iom.int/ro

Guides, brochures, orientation materials, explanatory sheets:

- **Center for Legal Resources**, *Anti-Discrimination ABC: Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity from an Intersectional Perspective:* https://bit.ly/47J6e0r
- **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights**, *Handbook of European law on non-discrimination*: https://bit.ly/3JXVgeb
- **EUROSTUDENT thematic module**, *Discrimination in the context of higher education*: https://bit.ly/3JCwEI5
- **Universitatea din Kent**, *Hate Incidents and Discrimination*: https://bit.ly/40FQXDo
- **Universitatea din Gothenburg**, *About discrimination at the University*: https://bit.ly/4pggJyf
- **Universitatea din Bremen**, *Anti-discrimination Policy. Putting the anti-discrimination policy into practice!*: https://bit.ly/40Cy4RX
- **Universitatea din Edinburgh**, *Discrimination*: https://bit.ly/48ebVn8
- **Universitatea Oxford**, *What is discrimination?*: https://bit.ly/40HxMt5
- **Universitatea Paris Nanterre**, Guide pratique à destination des associations étudiantes : lutter contre les violences sexistes, sexuelles et les discriminations: https://bit.ly/40FRe90

Complaint templates

- **National Council for Combating Discrimination**: www.cncd.ro/depune-o-petitie
- **Ombudsperson:** https://bit.ly/4nZYf42
- **Anti-discrimination Coalition, other complaint templates**: https://bit.ly/4iaZkEQ

DID YOU KNOW?

1. At Université de Bordeaux, students can submit a complaint in any language on a dedicated online platform. The university provides a directory of victim-support associations and a practical guide that quickly identifies the organisations able to offer specialised assistance.

2. At the University of Barcelona, the Equality Unit offers confidential support to students facing discrimination or LGBTIQ+phobic violence and implements a clear prevention and intervention protocol. Students also have access to psychological and legal counselling provided by university specialists.

3. At Université Paris 13 (Sorbonne Paris Nord), all professors receive at the beginning of the academic year a guide on discrimination, with clear instructions on conduct and the obligation to respect equal opportunity rules.

4. At the University of Amsterdam, each faculty has a Diversity Officer. These officers form a network that regularly meets with student associations to address concerns, discuss problems and develop concrete measures against discrimination.

5. At Université de Lausanne, the Aide UNIL service provides a free "trusted person" hotline. External and independent counsellors offer confidential support to students experiencing discrimination and quickly guide them towards safe and non-traumatising solutions.

6. At the University of Oxford, students can report discrimination confidentially through the "Report + Support" platform, choosing between anonymous support or direct counselling. The university has an equality policy that prohibits any form of discrimination at all levels of academic life.

DO YOU RECOGNISE THE SITUATION?

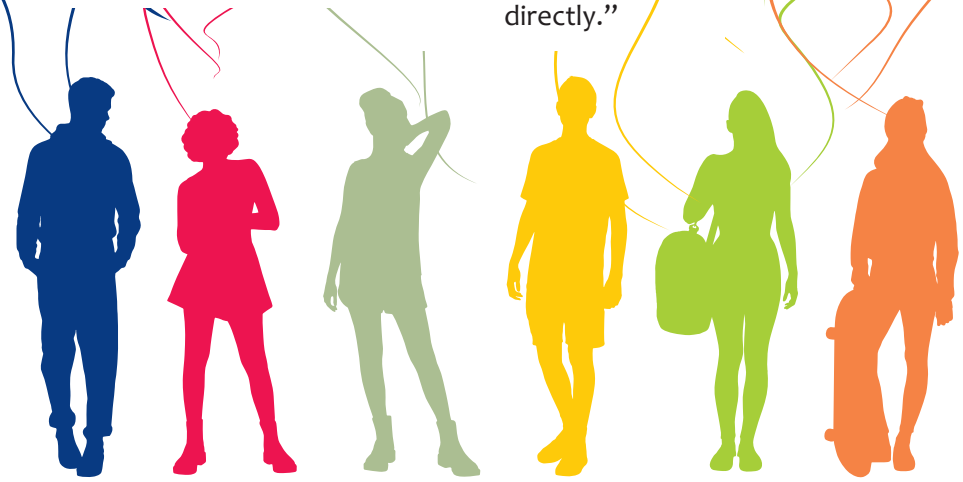
"Discrimination can also occur based on race if there are students with different types of disabilities, whether physical or mental. These are the forms I have most frequently encountered in the university environment."

"Discrimination, a kind of isolation, so to speak. Those who clearly experience it, in our context here in Romania, are Roma persons."

"One form of discrimination is based on age. In my cohort there is a person around 60 and you can see the attitudes of students who are up to 23, let's say, towards her."

"Discrimination based on hometown or background, because a city or locality carries a reputation. When they hear where you are from, they distance themselves from you."

"Indirect discrimination occurs when you do not say directly '*I do not accept you*', but your actions show it. For example, if a person is gay and constantly hears jokes about LGBTQ persons, they will feel excluded even if no one has said anything to them directly."



GLOSSARY

Affirmative action / positive measure: an action intended to facilitate access to rights guaranteed for all categories of persons.

Anti-Roma racism: a specific form of racism directed at Roma persons, an ideology based on racial superiority and a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism fuelled by historical discrimination, manifested through violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most flagrant forms of discrimination.

Disadvantaged group: a group of people exposed to a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence than the general population, including but not limited to ethnic minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, isolated older persons and children.

Direct discrimination: discrimination in which a person is treated less favourably on grounds of sex and gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity than another person is, has been, or would be treated in a comparable situation.

Diversity: differences in values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, competences, knowledge and life experiences at the level of each person within a group of people.

Gender: social attributes and opportunities associated with being a woman or a man, and the relations between women and men, girls and boys, as well as relations among women and among men.

Gender equality: equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. It refers to the fact that individuals' rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on being born female or male. Gender equality requires that the interests, needs and priorities of women and men are taken into account, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality between women and men is considered a matter of human rights and a condition, an indicator of people-centred development and democracy.

Gender identity: each person has an internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal perception of one's own body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modifying bodily appearance or functions through medical, surgical or other means) and other gender expressions, such as clothing, speech or gestures.

Indirect discrimination: discrimination that occurs when an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice disadvantages persons who have a particular religion or belief, a particular disability, a particular age or a particular sexual orientation compared with other persons.

Intersectionality: an analytical tool to study, understand and respond to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other individual characteristics/identities and how these intersections shape unique experiences of discrimination.

Marginalised group: a group of people from a particular culture, context or historical period exposed to the risk of multiple discrimination due to the interaction of individual characteristics such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education, income or due to their geographic location.

Multiple discrimination: any combination of forms of discrimination experienced by persons on grounds of belonging to a particular sex, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or other characteristics, or because they are perceived as having those characteristics.

Queer: all persons who do not conform to normative gender and sexual norms.

Sexual orientation: each person's capacity for profound emotional, affective and sexual attraction towards persons of another gender, of the same gender or of more than one gender, and to have intimate and sexual relations with them.

Structural inequality: gender inequalities in social structures, based on institutionalised concepts of gender difference. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity, expectations related to women's and men's behaviour, internalised prejudices, prescribed social roles and behavioural norms for men and women all contribute to the organisation and persistence of gender inequality in social structures.

Systemic discrimination: involves the procedures, routines and organisational culture of any institution which, often unintentionally, contributes to outcomes that are less favourable for minority groups than for the majority population, through the organisation's policies, programmes, staff practices and services. The term is also used under other names, such as institutional discrimination or structural discrimination.

Victimisation: any adverse treatment, including dismissal in cases of unequal treatment at the workplace, as a reaction to a complaint.

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SPACE FOR YOU

WRITE DOWN SOMETHING YOU HAVE LEARNED

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY AFTER READING THIS GUIDE?

OFFER ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK ABOUT THE GUIDE:

- what did you feel was missing from this guide?
- what suggestions do you have for the next edition?
- in what way did this guide help you?

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Website: https://nodiscriminationub.org

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UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREȘTI

UNIVERSITATEA BUCUREȘTI
CENTRUL DE CERCETARE
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UEFISCDI
Unitatea Executivă pentru Finanțarea Învățământului Superior, a Cercetării, Dezvoltării și Inovării

CPES

FACEM AUZITE VOCILE FEMEILOR!
FILIA

UNDETERRED