# Good Stories from the "Face Discrimination" Project

### The Advocate of the Principle of Equality and its partners are concluding a two-year EU funded project titled *Face discrimination*. As part of the project, a training programme on protection against discrimination was developed. More than 200 civil servants from different public institutions from across the country participated in the programme. The Advocate will continue to run these training sessions after the completion of the project. Awareness raising about protection against discrimination will also be further facilitated by three short films about the impacts of discrimination, created by students from the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film, and Television (AGRFT UL).

Raising awareness that we all have the right to be treated equally regardless of our personal circumstances, is a crucial tool in the fight against discrimination. This is also recognised by the European Union which co-funded the project. Since December 2022, the Advocate and their partners, AGRFT UL, the Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia, and the Prizma Foundation carried out research, held two conferences, provided training, created a theatre play, and produced short films, while informing the public about protection against discrimination in both printed and online media.

The activities were focused on raising awareness among various audiences that discrimination persists in Slovenia. "When I go to the bank to deposit cash, they refuse to accept it because of my appearance and surname. Then, my wife who is Slovenian, brings the money and they accept it," said the musician Sunny al Saleh who has lived in Slovenia since he was eight, during a roundtable at the project conference in November 2023. "A lot depends on individuals. Protection against discrimination can be provided for in legal acts, but if a person doesn't choose to take a stance against it, it's all in vain," said the actress Metka Pavšič, who lives with vision impairment.

Representatives from five municipalities across the country discussed their experiences with vulnerable groups at a roundtable during the conference. They concluded that the elderly are the most discriminated group in Slovenia. The event also featured a theatrical performance titled *What About Little Red Riding Hood?*, created by AGRFT UL students as part of the project. In order to ensure equal treatment and opportunities, it is often necessary to empathize with others. It is important to ask oneself how we would feel if someone treated us in a certain way solely because of our personal circumstances. The play achieved exactly this—it presented cases in which the Advocate identified discrimination and legal aspects of protection against discrimination by using artistic language and an appeal to emotions.

Candid testimonies about experiences with discrimination and the theatre play as an innovative way to raise awareness about discrimination received wide media coverage, which was one of the goals of both the conference and the project.

## Popular Training on Discrimination

From the project’s inception, the Advocate started developing a training programme on discrimination for civil servants working at local, regional, and national level. It was created by experts from various fields on the basis of previously identified needs in the public sector. The programme is based on the latest guidelines for adult education and has been tailored for civil servants. Participants first completed the prescribed learning activities in the Advocate's online classroom independently, and then attended live group workshops at various locations across Slovenia to consolidate their theoretical knowledge with a deeper review of selected discrimination cases, under the mentorship of the Advocate's staff.

More than 200 civil servants who interact daily with the public, including the most vulnerable groups, at administrative units, municipalities, social work centres, employment agencies, and other institutions participated. The training was very well received. Participants praised the accessibility of the content and the way the information was presented, in the form of short webinars, texts and quizzes followed by practical sessions.

"Between April and September 2024, we conducted workshops for equality promoters in various locations across the country, attracting participants from all regions. Even those who initially joined the training with reservations later reported that they had learned a lot. Positive feedback about the training quickly circulated, prompting the Maribor branch of the Employment Service to request the training for all their staff, and thus an unexpected good practice was born," said project leader Mateja Zobarič Trplan at the second project conference.

At this conference, held in September 2024 as the final event of the two-year project, participants from various Slovenian organisations and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from Malta shared their experiences in promoting awareness, integrating diverse groups into human rights initiatives, and advocating for equal opportunities. Human rights experts attending the conference agreed that effective outreach to different target groups, especially vulnerable ones, is one of the most common challenges in in the field of human rights.

## The Good Story Continues

The Advocate will build on what has been achieved in this project. Due to the high demand, they will continue to offer training on protection against discrimination. The Advocate is also establishing a network of institutions that will promote equal treatment and equal opportunities, and ensure exchange of good practices in protection against discrimination.

In addition, the Advocate will further raise awareness about discrimination with the help of three short films depicting artistic interpretations of three prominent discrimination cases. The films, [Goodbye](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRmvyaBQ8x0&t=121s), [Echo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5gSBEQOwpU&t=20s) and [Trust Zone](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pL1oFThAt2E&t=175s), were created by AGRFT UL students as part of the project, and can be utilised as didactical tool to start a conversation on discrimination, are available with English subtitles on the Advocate's YouTube channel.