

## Summary

This Master's Thesis deals with the sociological phenomenon called affirmative action, which has appeared in different forms in many countries during the second half of 20th century. This topic, as rather complex and overlapping fields of more social sciences, is being widely discussed in the society. In some countries, application of affirmative action brings controversy and even division in the communities.

This thesis aims to find the substance of affirmative action and compare it with the principles of equality before law. These topics are discussed in their sociological, psychological and legislative dimensions. The analysis stems from examples of particular causes and recent key judicial decisions in the United States of America, the European Union and India, illustrating legal aspects of affirmative action in different regions. Their discussion tries to point out the different dimensions of affirmative action, including the motivations for implementing it in the society and the following public reflections. Author's main concern is targeted to the relation between different aspects of affirmative action and the main elements of the idea of equality before law. Difference between social engineering approaches and good intention of legislator may be very subtle and politically dependent.

In the conclusions, the affirmative action is characterized as a complex notion which is very difficult to describe. It depends on the political opinions of each and every individual when it comes to rating the affirmative action on the grounds of permissibility or suitability. The affirmative action is beyond all doubt one of the options for dealing with inequality in society. However, side effects related to the affirmative action can be in particular way so significant, that it is hard to conclude if it is really worth implementing it.