



UniSAFE
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Creating a safe space for discussion and dialogue in a training session on gender- based violence (online & offline)



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This document is part of a toolkit developed in the framework of the UniSAFE Project “Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe from gender-based violence”, available here: <https://unisafe-toolkit.eu/home/>

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For an effective training session, it is important to ensure that participants feel **comfortable**, **respected** and **supported** throughout the training, preventing re-traumatising and triggering of the participants.

Some practical tips for creating a safe space include:

- Create a welcoming environment ensuring that the physical or online space is respectful to open discussions.
- Use trigger warnings: be mindful of the language and content that may be triggering to some participants, and provide warnings before discussing sensitive topics.

 **Trigger warnings** alert for content that may be distressing or triggering for some individuals. Here are some examples of topics that may require a trigger warning (the list is non-exhaustive):

- Sexual assault or rape
- Sexual violence or abuse
- Self-harm or suicide
- Trauma or PTSD
- Racism or discrimination
- LGBTQ+ issues or discrimination
- Mental health issues

Different participants may have different triggers, and triggers can be unpredictable. You may consider asking participants if there are any specific topics they would like to be warned about before discussing them in training. This allows individuals to opt out or prepare themselves emotionally for the content.



Other recommendations:

- Provide resources by sharing information about support services and resources participants can access if needed.
- Remind participants to prioritise their own well-being and take breaks as needed. Encourage them to seek support if they need it. Inform participants that they may quit the training or discussion at any point without justification needed.
- Emphasise confidentiality and indicate that any personal disclosures are not required, and participants may share examples in the third person to protect their privacy.

- Foster an inclusive environment by encouraging everyone to participate and ensuring no one is excluded or silenced. Emphasise that everyone's experiences and perspectives are valuable.
- Monitor the group dynamics and adjust the training to ensure everyone feels safe and respected.
- Encourage participants to share their preferred pronouns (if via an online platform to indicate them next to their name) and offer guidelines on how to address people respectfully.

It is advised to have a plan in place in case a participant becomes distressed during the training. This could include having a private chat feature available for participants to reach out to for support, or providing information about support resources they can access.

Practical examples from the resources



We will discuss experiences of gender-based violence in the university setting in the next section. Please be aware that this content may be distressing for some participants. Feel free to step away or take a break if needed.



This training is not about personal disclosures. If you want to give examples during the training, you may want to do so in the third person (e.g. 'I heard an example...', or 'I know someone who...') to keep yourself safe.



If you feel uncomfortable during the training, you may need to step outside for a moment – that is fine. You are also to inform your facilitator with a short private message, if you find things are becoming uncomfortable for you. The facilitator could provide you with the contact details of support resources. If you need support for yourself or someone you know who has experienced violence, contact [add contact details or useful resources and links].

Resources and further reading

Council of Europe. (2018). Chapter 2: Activities to address gender and gender-based violence with children and young people. In Gender Matters! Toolkit for Educators (pp. 13-27). [Available here](#).

UNFPA. (2018). Making All Spaces Safe: Gender-based Violence and Inclusion in Humanitarian Action. United Nations Population Fund. [Available here](#).

UNFPA. (2017). Women's and Girls' Safe Spaces: A Guide to Designing, Implementing and Monitoring Safe Spaces. Humanitarian Response. [Available here](#).

International Rescue Committee. (2020). Women And Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit For Advancing Women's And Girls' Empowerment In Humanitarian Settings. [Available here](#).

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