



**UniSAFE**  
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

# Persona Stories

**Facilitating change:  
addressing gender-based  
violence in co-creation  
activities through fictional  
characters**



# Persona Stories

## Facilitating change: addressing gender-based violence in co-creation activities through fictional characters

Developed and compiled by **Yellow Window**

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

Find out more: <https://unisafe-gbv.eu>

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**UniSAFE Consortium Partners:**



## How to use this document?

This document introduces a cast of stories, or fictional characters, that represent diverse individuals who have different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives related to gender-based violence in research and higher education. These stories serve as a dynamic tool to **enrich co-creation** and **participatory activities, training sessions**, to **facilitate discussions, empathy**, and a **better understanding of the challenges** faced in addressing gender-based violence.

This guide is meant for a variety of professionals to help them review and develop policies and build skills and knowledge: those acting as change facilitators, practitioners, managers in charge of policy development as well as trainers and lecturers.

This document presents **two distinct versions** of each story's narrative to cater for varying workshop needs and concepts. The first is a **short version (Annex 1)**, while the second offers an **extended version (Annex 2)** of each story. This dual-format approach ensures that facilitators can choose the most fitting version to enhance engagement and understanding in their specific workshop context. The last section of this document (**Annex 3**) outlines additional stories used in the context of UniSAFE and GenderSAFE.

Each story in this collection is based on true facts. However, some details, such as names, were adjusted. Facilitators are encouraged to highlight that the stories are not made up. This helps to understand how diverse transgressive behaviour can be.

To facilitate initial selection and overview, a brief one-paragraph summary of each story is provided at the beginning of the document (Section: Summary of stories and supporting guidelines) in addition to supporting notes for the facilitator/trainer.

Below is a table that lists the name of each story, the page numbers for both the short and extended versions, and the specific Ps that each story addresses.

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# Story overview table

| Story                                       | Page for short story | Page for extended story | Ps addressed  |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Charlie<br>(Exchange undergraduate student) | 11                   | 18                      | Prevention, Protection, Provision of Services, Partnerships |
| Alicia<br>(PhD student)                     | 11                   | 19                      | Protection, Prosecution, and Policy                         |
| Jaap<br>(Undergraduate student)             | 12                   | 20                      | Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of Services  |
| Marko<br>(Professor)                        | 12                   | 21                      | Policies  |
| Patricia<br>(Assistant Professor)           | 13                   | 22                      | Prevention, Prosecution, Policies                           |
| Dragan<br>(Post-doc researcher)             | 13                   | 23                      | Prevention, Protection, Policy                              |

# Story overview table

| Story                                | Page for short story | Page for extended story | Ps addressed   |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Fatima<br>(Cleaning staff)           | 14                   | 24                      | Protection, Provision of Services, Policies                          |
| Katerina<br>(Administrative staff)   | 14                   | 25                      | Prevention, Prosecution, Provision of Services                       |
| Alex<br>(Vice-rector)                | 15                   | 26                      | Prevention, Protection Prosecution, Policies                         |
| Amélie<br>(Temporary research staff) | 15                   | 27                      | Prevention, Prosecution, Provision of Services                       |
| Egle<br>(Lecturer)                   | 16                   | 28                      | Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of Services, Policies |

# Summary of stories and supporting guidelines

## Charlie (Exchange undergraduate student)

Charlie is a non-binary philosophy student, studying abroad. Charlie struggles with mental health issues and experiences insults on campus. Charlie experiences a distressing incident when a drunk student harasses them. They seek help but discover that the helpline for harassment is unavailable, leaving them feeling helpless and alone. The following day, attempting to report the incident, Charlie faces bureaucratic obstacles and language barriers that further exacerbate their distress. This narrative sheds light on the challenges and difficulties faced by individuals dealing with harassment and discrimination while navigating systems that should offer support and protection.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

This story provides an opportunity to explore the experiences of marginalised individuals within the institutional context and explore the challenges they face when seeking support. Participants can discuss the importance of Prevention, Protection, Provision of Services, and Partnerships. The facilitator can guide participants in critically examining existing support structures and procedures within the university, highlighting the gaps and areas for improvement. Discussions can revolve around the accessibility of helplines and reporting mechanisms, language barriers, and the need for clear communication and guidance for harassment victims. Participants can look for ways to improve any intersectional aspects of the accessibility of services with partnerships. They can explore the potential consequences for the perpetrator and the measures that can be taken to protect Charlie and ensure their safety moving forward. The facilitator can probe about the responsibilities of the university in responding to such incidents, including the role of the Diversity and Inclusion office and any other support offices. Participants can also explore ways to prevent future incidents.

## Alicia (PhD student)

Alicia is a PhD student working closely with her supervisor, Simon. She faces exploitation and harassment, as Simon takes credit for her work and pressures her into inappropriate late-night meetings. A distressing incident occurs when Simon tries to physically restrain Alicia during one such meeting. Alicia reports Simon to the university's responsible unit. However, the disciplinary committee, influenced by their connections to Simon, decides not to take action against him. This leaves Alicia isolated and unsupported, culminating in her removal from the research team and loss of salary. Alicia's struggle highlights the complexities of addressing harassment in academic settings, particularly when institutional mechanisms fail to provide adequate support and deliver justice.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

This story provides an opportunity for in-depth discussions on various aspects related to Prosecution, Protection and Policy. Participants can explore the importance of implementing Policies and codes of conduct to create a safer environment. The facilitator can also engage discussions on effective measures to protect individuals like Alicia after reporting incidents, including measures such as assignment of another supervisor to ensure safety and well-being. Additionally, the facilitator can address the challenges related to conflicts of interest within committees, highlighting the importance of unbiased investigations and avoiding any form of preferential treatment based on personal relationships.

Participants can also discuss the significance of providing comprehensive support services, including legal and psychological support, to ensure that victims/survivors have access to the necessary assistance. Finally, the facilitator can highlight the importance of clear communication regarding the procedures and timelines for the resolution process for the reporting party and the (alleged) offender at different steps of the procedure and discuss the clarity of communication to the broader community, considering institutional accountability and the importance of the healing process.

### **Jaap (Undergraduate student)**

Jaap is a 23-year-old student serving as the chair within his faculty's student association. Known for his charismatic leadership, he enjoys organising social events and trips for association members. However, Jaap has been involved along with other students in a serious sexual abuse incident that had a devastating impact on a woman who is also a fellow student. When a witness reports the incident, the university responds by suspending the student association's activities and banning Jaap and the involved students from campus, allowing them to continue their studies online.

#### **Notes for the trainer/facilitator:**

This story can serve as a case study for exploring gaps in Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Provision of Services. Participants can address the institutional responsibility for activities of student associations, the availability of bystander intervention training and awareness raising and the importance of preventing such incidents. They can also explore options for incidents occurring outside working hours and outside the university premises, and ensure the availability of support services such as accessible helpdesk units, etc. In addition, they can discuss the importance of providing reporting procedures with an intersectional perspective e.g. in multiple languages to ensure accessibility for all. The facilitator can highlight the need for efficient and supportive procedures for informing and protecting the victims/survivors and explore the available services.

### **Marko (Professor)**

Marko is a Professor who recently found himself entangled in a complicated situation when he became involved with one student at his university named Diana, who was seeking a 'sugar daddy'. Rumours began to circulate among students and faculty members and the university is now faced with the challenge of addressing the situation and determining its course of action as an employer.

#### **Notes for the trainer/facilitator:**

This story provides an opportunity to discuss the complexities of addressing situations where a Professor becomes involved with a university student in a non-academic context. Participants can discuss the ethical implications, power dynamics and potential consequences of such relationships in an academic context. The facilitator can encourage discussions on Policies, Code of Conduct and Protocol to address relationships between students and faculty members. The facilitator can help the participants explore the topic of professional boundaries and the potential harm caused by blurred lines.



## Patricia (Assistant Professor)

Patricia, an Assistant Professor, makes denigrating remarks about the language skills of several men, who are students of migrant origin. These comments are inadvertently recorded and leaked on social media. Patricia's casual conversation, recorded during oral exams, leads to her suspension and a formal disciplinary investigation by the university.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

This story can serve for discussions on intersectionality and Prevention, Prosecution, and Policies. Participants can analyse whether such cases are covered in their institutional policy on gender-based violence and discuss the measures that should be in place to address issues related to discriminatory language and attitudes. Policy considerations may include training programmes on cultural inclusiveness, guidelines on appropriate conduct and language, as well as disciplinary actions to hold individuals accountable for discriminatory behaviour.

## Dragan (Post-doc researcher)

Dragan, a post-doctoral researcher, discovers inappropriate messages from a colleague to a PhD student. Initially, the student asks Dragan not to act, but as her distress escalates, he faces a moral dilemma about intervening despite the potential risks due to power dynamics and his own position as a gay person of migrant origin. Dragan's ethical dilemma is highlighted as he grapples with the decision to protect the student against misconduct by his colleague.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

The story highlights the importance of effective Prevention and Protection measures, ensuring clear Policies, comprehensive training, and support systems for victims of harassment and misconduct. Dragan's story emphasises the complexities individuals encounter when addressing such situations. The facilitator can guide participants in exploring the factors that influence Dragan's decision-making process, such as power dynamics, personal identity and fear of repercussions. The discussion can address the importance of establishing clear reporting mechanisms, providing protection for bystanders and addressing concerns related to potential retaliation.

## Fatima (Cleaning staff)

Fatima, a member of the university's cleaning staff, faces a moral dilemma after witnessing a Professor's inappropriate behaviour towards women students. Despite her concern, she chooses silence, fearing job loss and retaliation. Fatima's own struggle is highlighted as she repeatedly observes the Professor's misconduct but feels unable to report it due to her vulnerable position.

### Notes for the facilitator/trainer:

This story presents an opportunity to explore the complexities of reporting and addressing incidents of sexual misconduct from the perspective of a marginalised staff member. Participants can discuss the challenges faced by individuals like Fatima who witness inappropriate behaviour addressing the Provision of Services, Protection and Policies. Participants can explore the power dynamics and the potential impacts on the institutional culture. The facilitator can invite reflections on the need for comprehensive policies, effective reporting mechanisms and support systems from an intersectional aspect. By engaging in discussions, participants can gain insights on the barriers that prevent reporting and brainstorm on solutions. It is recommended for the facilitator to ask questions like "what if the gender of Alex was different, how would this change your perception of the story?" and other similar questions, to highlight the gender stereotypes and power dynamics that affect the story.

## **Katerina (Administrative staff)**

Katerina, a 37-year-old university administrative staff member, endures harassment from her colleagues, including undermining comments, false rumours, and exclusion. Katerina's struggle with workplace harassment and the fear of retaliation if she reports it are detailed. Her experience highlights the challenges faced by staff in addressing workplace harassment and the dilemma of risking further alienation versus enduring mistreatment.

### **Notes for the trainer/facilitator:**

Participants can discuss issues related to the organisational culture, Prevention, Provision of Services such as seeking psychological support and explore the impact of a hostile work environment on an employee's well-being and job performance. The facilitator can initiate discussions on 1) the importance of creating a safe and respectful workplace culture, where harassment and demeaning behaviour are not tolerated and 2) how to implement appropriate and proportionate disciplinary measures. Participants can examine the barriers that prevent individuals from speaking up, such as fear of retaliation or negative consequences. The facilitator can guide conversations on the role of supervisors and leaders in addressing harassment complaints and providing support to affected employees. Additionally, participants can explore the need for effective reporting mechanisms, confidential channels, and support systems within the organisation to encourage individuals like Katerina to come forward. By examining Katerina's situation, participants can gain insights into the importance of fostering a positive work environment and implementing measures to prevent and address workplace harassment and gender-based violence.

## **Alex (Vice-rector)**

Alex, a Vice Rector, directs demeaning comments towards a female member of the gender equality committee during a meeting, sparking shock and discomfort among other members. In the extended version of the story, Alex's outburst and the subsequent reaction of the committee members are detailed, highlighting the challenges faced in addressing inappropriate behaviour in hierarchical academic environments. The story underscores the impact of power imbalances on group dynamics and the difficulty to promote genuine equality and inclusiveness in settings where authority figures may undermine these values.

### **Notes for the trainer/facilitator:**

This story highlights the issue of workplace behaviour, especially in positions of authority. Participants can engage in discussions on adequate Prevention and Policies, addressing the impact of power dynamics, challenges related to enforcement, the role of leadership and the ethical obligations of academic leaders to uphold respectful and inclusive environments. The facilitator can probe into reporting mechanisms (Prosecution and Protection) and Prevention measures on a higher management level. Participants can analyse the response of other committee members who were present during the incident. This presents an opportunity to discuss the responsibility of bystanders in intervening or addressing inappropriate behaviour. The facilitator can also lead discussions on impartial investigations and avoiding conflicts of interest within committees responsible for handling such cases. It is recommended for the facilitator to ask questions like "what if the gender of Alex was different, how could this story change?" and other similar questions, to highlight the gender stereotypes and power dynamics that affect the story.

## Amélie (Temporary research staff)

Amélie, a temporary research staff member, experiences sexual harassment by a prominent Professor, involving unwelcome physical contact and remarks, while attending an international conference. In the longer version of the story, the narrative delves into the escalating harassment Amélie faces and her internal conflict between professional aspirations and personal safety.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

This story highlights the challenges faced by temporary staff professionals working in academia. Participants can explore the vulnerabilities and dilemmas that temporary research staff might encounter, especially when subjected to harassment by influential figures within their working environment, which might be outside the office in an international setting. The facilitator can guide discussions on the importance of Protection measures and Provision of Services for covering external events and field trips such as international conferences. They can also investigate the coverage of their reporting mechanisms to include all types of employees as well as contractors and discuss the institutional responsibility to ensure robust reporting mechanisms in view of Prevention and Prosecution measures. An intersectional approach can be highlighted to resolve challenges faced by members in similar situations.

## Egle (Lecturer)

Egle, a young lecturer, encounters discrimination and harassment, both from students and a senior Professor, challenging her authority and expertise. In the longer version of the story, Egle's struggles with demeaning student behaviour and a Professor's dismissive and sexist attitude are detailed. The narrative sheds light on the challenges young women academics face in being treated with professional respect and recognition in a university setting, emphasising the impact of age and gender discrimination in academia.

### Notes for the trainer/facilitator:

Egle's story highlights several aspects regarding gender harassment and discrimination within an institutional environment. Participants can explore topics related to Prevention, Protection, Provision of Services, Prosecution as well as Policies with an intersectional understanding of how multiple identities intersect (gender, nationality, race, age, etc.) to shape one's experience in academic environments. Participants can discuss their institution's existing policies and reporting mechanisms to address gender harassment and discrimination. The facilitator can lead discussions on the effectiveness of current policies and whether the institution provides clear paths for reporting incidents without risk of retaliation. Additionally, participants can analyse the existing Code of Conduct, if any, to identify any gaps or shortcomings and propose improvements to ensure it provides clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour and consequences of violations. Finally, this story provides an opportunity to explore the challenges of holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Participants can discuss the existing mechanisms for investigating and prosecuting cases of harassment and examine whether they effectively deliver justice. The facilitator can also invite reflections on ensuring fair and unbiased investigations to protect the rights of both the victims/survivors and the accused.



# **ANNEX 1**



## **SHORT STORIES**



**Charlie**  
**(Exchange undergraduate student)**

**Name:** Charlie  
**Age:** 22  
**Gender:** Non-binary  
**Position:** Exchange Undergraduate Student

### Short Story

Charlie is a German undergraduate student in philosophy, currently doing an Erasmus year in Belgium. Charlie has been struggling with mental health issues for years. Earlier this year, they came out as non-binary, but this revelation has not made life any easier. Charlie no longer feels safe in and around campus due to several instances of other students insulting them.

One evening, as Charlie returns to their dormitory, a drunk student harasses them. The student hisses that Charlie was arousing him before pushing them away, calling them a "joke," and laughing as he disappeared. Charlie remains frozen for a moment, distressed and feeling helpless, then runs to their bedroom and spends a sleepless night in distress, not knowing what to do.



**Alicia**  
**(PhD candidate)**

**Name:** Alicia  
**Age:** 28  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** PhD Candidate

### Short Story

Alicia, a PhD student in Mechanical Engineering, has been facing exploitation and harassment from her supervisor, Simon. He takes credit for her work and pressures her into attending late-night meetings, where he asks personal questions and once tried to physically stop her from leaving. When Alicia reports him for harassment, the disciplinary committee, composed of Simon's long-time friends, decides to merely monitor his behaviour without any concrete action. In the meantime, Simon removes Alicia from the research team, leaving her without a salary. Alicia, left without formal support mechanisms at the university, seeks a meeting with the Dean for a resolution.



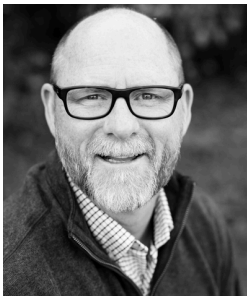
**Jaap**  
**(Undergraduate student)**

**Name:** Jaap  
**Age:** 21  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Undergraduate student

### Short Story

Jaap, a 21-year-old student and chair of his faculty's student association, is known for organising social events and trips. During a skiing trip, Jaap and his friends, under the influence of alcohol and drugs, pressured a fellow student to drink excessively. When she lost consciousness, Jaap and two friends sexually abused her. The incident was concealed until a witness reported it to the university. In response, the university suspended the student association's activities and banned Jaap and the involved students from campus, though they were allowed to continue their studies online.

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**Marko**  
**(Professor)**

**Name:** Marko  
**Age:** 62  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Professor

### Short Story

Marko is a Professor who engaged in a relationship with Diana, a young woman student who has been looking for a sugar daddy through a TV show. Marko, unaware that Diana was a student at his university, responded to Diana and started a relationship with her. Rumours about their involvement soon spread among students and faculty, eventually reaching the university administration. The administration struggled with the situation, wondering whether the institution is anyhow involved or whether this is an issue entirely located in the private sphere, as about a relationship between two consenting adults.



**Patricia**  
**(Assistant Professor)**

**Name:** Patricia  
**Age:** 49  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Assistant Professor

### Short Story

Patricia, an experienced Assistant Professor, was recorded making denigrating remarks about the language skills several men who are students from a migrant background during a casual conversation with a colleague after oral exams. Because the oral exams were recorded on video for evaluation purposes, so was this conversation, as both had forgotten about the video. Next, somebody anonymously uploaded the recording to social media, causing widespread harm. The university administration responded by suspending Patricia and her colleague, and launching a formal disciplinary investigation into the incident.



**Dragan**  
**(Post-doc researcher)**

**Name:** Dragan  
**Age:** 30  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Post-doct researcher

### Short Story

Dragan, a post-doctoral researcher, becomes aware of inappropriate messages sent by his colleague to a PhD student, with Dragan included in the e-mails. Initially, when Dragan reaches out to the student, she requests no action. However, the situation worsens and the student, now feeling threatened, contacts Dragan in a state of despair. He faces a moral dilemma about intervening despite the potential risks for himself, due to power dynamics and his own position as a gay person of migrant origin.



**Fatima**  
**(Cleaning staff)**

**Name:** Fatima  
**Age:** 42  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Cleaning staff

### Short Story

Fatima, a 42-year-old university cleaning staff member, is concerned when she repeatedly witnesses a Professor behaving inappropriately with several women students. She observes him deliberately touching a student inappropriately and encounters similar incidents over the following weeks. Fatima, filled with shock and worry, remains silent, fearing that reporting the incidents could jeopardise her job and lead to retaliation from influential university figures.



**Katerina**  
**(Administrative staff)**

**Name:** Katerina  
**Age:** 37  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Administrative staff

### Short Story

Katerina, a 37-year-old administrative staff member at a university, faces ongoing harassment from colleagues in the financial department. It starts with undermining comments and jokes about her gender in a male-dominated environment, leading to false rumours and exclusion in meetings and social events. Her contributions are ignored, and she is mockingly referred to as the "office watchdog". Katerina feels isolated and unwelcome but hesitates to report the harassment, fearing retaliation and further alienation.





**Alex**  
**(Vice-Rector)**

**Name:** Alex  
**Age:** 47  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Vice-Rector

### Short Story

Alex, a 47-year-old Vice Rector at a prestigious university, lost control during a gender equality committee meeting. He directed demeaning comments towards a woman committee member who questioned the lack of progress on initiatives. Alex's behaviour, questioning her contributions and suggesting she focuses on more "suitable" tasks, shocks the committee, leaving a gloomy atmosphere. His remarks not only humiliated the committee member but also left the others who were present torn between confronting him and keeping silent due to his influential position.



**Amélie**  
**(Temporary  
research staff)**

**Name:** Amélie  
**Age:** 52  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Temporary research staff

### Short Story

Amélie, attending an international conference to engage with academics and expand her network, faces sexual harassment by a well-known Professor. His behaviour, starting with sexist jokes and comments about her appearance, escalates throughout the evening, involving alcohol, invading her personal space, and making suggestive remarks. Distressed, Amélie seeks refuge with a group of women colleagues but is cornered by the Professor in a secluded place. She manages to escape but feels violated and considers skipping the conference, fearing repercussions from confronting a senior academic. A woman who is a senior faculty member offers support, accompanying her to the remaining sessions and events.



**Egle**  
**(Lecturer)**

**Name:** Egle  
**Age:** 33  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Lecturer

### Short Story

Egle, a 33-years old lecturer at a university, faces harassment and discrimination from students and a senior Professor. Her students demean her age and qualifications, undermining her authority. The situation worsens when a Professor dismisses her ideas in meetings, interrupts her, and makes sexist remarks about her age and gender. When Egle proposes a new research project, the Professor belittles her efforts, leaving her feeling discouraged, undervalued, and disrespected in her professional community.



# **ANNEX 2**

# **EXTENDED STORIES**



**Charlie**  
**(Exchange undergraduate student)**

**Name:** Charlie

**Age:** 22

**Gender:** Non-binary

**Status/Position:** Exchange Undergraduate Student

### Extended story

Charlie, an undergraduate exchange student in philosophy, has been struggling with mental health issues for years. Earlier this year, they came out as non-binary, but this revelation has not made life any easier. Charlie no longer feels safe in and around campus due to several instances of other students insulting them. Although currently experiencing a semester abroad as an exchange student, Charlie still faces challenges in engaging with other students.

One evening, as Charlie returned to their dormitory, a drunk student harassed them. The student hissed that Charlie was arousing him before pushing them away, calling them a "joke". The experience was utterly distressing for Charlie whose first reaction was to run to their room and lock themselves up.

Charlie then remembered, from a poster in the dormitory's kitchen, that the university has a helpline for cases of harassment. Charlie decided to call the helpline but discovered that it was only available during office working hours. Feeling helpless and unable to call the police, Charlie spent the night alone in distress, lacking support.

The following day, Charlie consulted the Diversity and Inclusion office to report the incident. However, they were informed that they needed to report it either with the university's ombudsperson or the Student Support Service, both located on the main campus, three kilometres away.

The online reporting form appeared only available in French which Charlie was not familiar with.

Charlie then went to the Support Service to report the incident and requested relocation to another dormitory. However, the officer on duty was not fluent in English, making the process of explaining what happened very difficult. The officer informed Charlie that the dorm relocation process would take time as approval was needed from her supervisor, and explained that she did not consider the incident severe enough to set in motion an emergency procedure.

Charlie felt shocked and confused as they lacked clear information about the next steps and wondered about the consequences for the perpetrator and their own safety in the coming days.



**Alicia**  
**(PhD candidate)**

**Name:** Alicia  
**Age:** 28  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** PhD Candidate

### Extended story

Alicia, a PhD student in Mechanical Engineering, has been increasingly pressured by her supervisor, Simon. Over two years, Simon, a prominent figure in academia, consistently takes credit for Alicia's contributions to speeches and scientific articles without recognition. This exploitation severely affects Alicia's mental health.

In the past six months, their interactions have escalated. Simon demands late-evening meetings in his office, often delving into personal questions that make Alicia uncomfortable. During one such meeting, where Simon is drunk, he attempts to physically restrain Alicia when she expresses her discomfort and tries to leave. Another professor present during the incident ignores the incident.

Following this, Alicia reports Simon to the university's unit for gender-based violence. However, during the inquiry by the disciplinary committee, Simon denies the allegations, attributing them to Alicia's mental health issues.

The committee, comprising Simon's long-time friends who are wary of risking his research funding, opts not to file a complaint but instead to monitor his behaviour for six months.

Despite her report, Alicia is left in the dark about the committee's decision while facing isolation and rumours within the university community. Simon exacerbates the situation by excluding her from the research team, cutting off her salary. With no formal support structures like an ombudsperson at the university, Alicia is forced to request a meeting with the Dean. The Dean, aiming for a swift resolution, suggests an informal mediation between Alicia and Simon.



**Jaap**  
**(Undergraduate student)**

**Name:** Jaap  
**Age:** 21  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Undergraduate student

### Extended story

Jaap, a charismatic 21-year-old student, chairs his faculty's student association. He enjoys organising social events and memorable trips for members. During a skiing trip arranged by the student association, things took an unpleasant turn.

Jaap and his close friends heavily indulged in drinking and drug use, fostering a reckless atmosphere. Their behaviour culminated in targeting a woman student, coercing her into consuming dangerous amounts of alcohol. When she became unconscious, Jaap and two of his friends exploited her vulnerable state, and sexually abused her.

The abuse remained hidden for months. Eventually, a witness reported the incident to a university authority. Reacting swiftly, the university suspended all activities of the student association. Jaap and the two other students involved were banned from the university premises. Despite the campus ban, they were permitted to continue their courses online, reflecting the university's attempts to strike a balance between disciplinary action and academic continuity for the involved students.



**Mark**  
**(Professor)**

**Name:** Mark  
**Age:** 62  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Professor

### Extended story

Marko, a distinguished professor, had been single for a considerable time. Diana, one of the students at his university, tried to improve her financial situation by seeking a sugar daddy, appearing on a TV show where she openly expressed this. Unaware that Diana was a student at his university, driven by curiosity and a desire for companionship, Marko responded to Diana's call and started a relationship with her.

As time passed, rumours began to circulate among students and faculty members about Marko's involvement with Diana. The situation caught the attention of the university administration, leaving them in an uncomfortable position. They were unsure how to address the matter, particularly because Marko was unaware of Diana's status as a student at the same university when he first started a relationship with her. The university hesitated between respecting the privacy of its staff members and ensuring a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment for all students. They wondered whether they should intervene in Marko's personal life, and if so, how. After all, this could be considered a relationship between two consenting adults.



**Patricia**  
**(Assistant Professor)**

**Name:** Patricia  
**Age:** 49  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Assistant Professor

### Extended story

Patricia, a well-respected Assistant Professor, found herself in a compromising situation following a series of oral exams. While conversing with a colleague in the examination room, Patricia shared her opinions about the language abilities of several men, who are students of migrant origin. Her condescending comments about these students' linguistic skills were captured without her realising. The oral exams were being video recorded for evaluation purposes, and this recording inadvertently included Patricia's derogatory conversation.

The situation escalated when someone within the university community uploaded the video to social media. The content, which included Patricia's inappropriate remarks, spread rapidly online. This incident drew the attention of the university administration, which acted promptly. Patricia and her colleague were immediately suspended. The university launched a formal disciplinary procedure to investigate the incident, demonstrating its commitment to addressing such issues decisively.





**Dragan**  
**(Post-doc researcher)**

**Name:** Dragan  
**Age:** 30  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Post-doc researcher

### Extended story

Dragan, a committed post-doctoral researcher at the university, faces a challenging ethical dilemma. His concern is raised when he inadvertently becomes aware of inappropriate messages sent by a colleague to a young PhD student. These messages, to which Dragan is copied, clearly cross professional boundaries. Disturbed by the content, he reaches out to the student to check on her well-being and offer support. She expresses gratitude for his concern but requests him not to take any action at that moment.

However, two weeks later, the situation escalates. The student, now feeling stalked and threatened, contacts Dragan again. This time, she is in a state of panic. Although she does not explicitly ask Dragan to intervene, her obvious distress propels him towards considering action. Dragan faces a complex dilemma. Being a post-doc, he is acutely aware of the power dynamics within the university. The colleague in question holds a significant position, and Dragan himself, as a gay person of migrant origin, is concerned about the repercussions and potential retaliation he could face when exposing his colleague's behaviour.

Despite the risks and the circumstantial nature of the evidence, Dragan feels it is his duty to protect the student. He realises that taking a stand in this situation demands not only courage but a strong commitment to ethical principles. His decision to intervene, despite the potential personal and professional risks, underscores the importance of standing up for what is right, especially in environments where power imbalances can lead to exploitation.



**Fatima**  
**(Cleaning staff)**

**Name:** Fatima  
**Age:** 42  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Cleaning staff

### Extended story

Fatima, 42, works diligently as part of the cleaning crew at the university, ensuring the cleanliness and presentability of halls and classrooms. Her routine, however, is disrupted by a worrying series of events. One day, while cleaning a lecture hall, she observes a Professor entering with a group of students. Suddenly, from where she stands, she can see the Professor approach a young woman student and inappropriately place his hand on her.

Over the next few weeks, Fatima pays closer attention and witnesses similar inappropriate interactions between the same Professor and various women students. Each incident leaves Fatima feeling a potent mix of shock, anger, and deep concern for the students involved.

Despite her growing unease, she is paralysed by the fear of potential repercussions if she were to report these incidents. Fatima is acutely aware of her vulnerable position within the university and the power imbalance between herself and the professor. She fears that speaking up might put her job at risk. Consequently, Fatima chooses to remain silent, carrying the burden of her knowledge and the internal conflict it creates.



**Katerina**  
**(Administrative staff)**

**Name:** Katerina  
**Age:** 37  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Administrative staff

### Extended story

Katerina, a 37-year-old dedicated administrative staff member at a university is integral to the smooth functioning of the financial department. However, her positive work environment begins to deteriorate due to harassment from her colleagues. Initially, the harassment manifests as subtle remarks and jokes that belittle her role, attributing less importance to her contributions because of her gender. These comments leave Katerina feeling undervalued and unwelcome, but she attempts to ignore them.

Over time, the situation worsens. Her colleagues start spreading false rumours about how Katerina supposedly gains professional opportunities, often doing so behind her back. In team meetings, her contributions and suggestions are either interrupted or outright ignored. When she voices concerns over administrative processes, her colleagues derisively label her the "office watchdog."

Katerina's sense of alienation intensifies when she finds her desk tampered with, her files and documents rearranged without her consent.

She also notices her exclusion from informal gatherings and social events, further cementing her outsider status within her own workplace.

Despite these challenges, Katerina feels trapped in her situation. Reporting the incidents to her supervisor seems fraught with risks. She fears that doing so might provoke further retaliation from her colleagues and label her as a troublemaker, potentially making her work life more unbearable. This situation leaves Katerina in a troubling position, torn between enduring the harassment and the potential consequences of speaking out.



**Alex**  
**(Vice-Rector)**

**Name:** Alex  
**Age:** 47  
**Gender:** Man  
**Position:** Vice-Rector

### Summary

Alex, a 47-year-old Vice-Rector at a prestigious university, has built a distinguished career in academia. In his role, he wields significant power and influence, one aspect of which involves overseeing various committees, including the university's gender equality committee. This committee is tasked with promoting gender equality and fostering an inclusive environment within the institution.

During a routine meeting of this committee, a situation arises that puts Alex's leadership under scrutiny. A woman committee member, expressing her concerns about the slow implementation of proposed equality initiatives, triggers an unexpected reaction from Alex. He loses his temper, unleashing inappropriate and demeaning comments towards her. He questions her presence on the committee, dismissively implying that her contributions are irrelevant and suggesting that she should concentrate on tasks more "suitable" for her.

This outburst leaves a profound impact on the meeting's atmosphere. The other committee members are shocked into an uneasy silence, witnessing the humiliation and belittlement of their colleague. The woman, dedicated to promoting gender equality, is visibly hurt by Alex's remarks, feeling undermined in front of her peers.

The incident casts a shadow over the meeting, with other members uncertain about how to react. Some are visibly uncomfortable, while others - although upset - choose not to confront Alex, likely due to his position of authority. This reaction reflects the complexities of challenging inappropriate behaviour in hierarchical settings and the often-difficult balance between speaking out against injustice and navigating institutional power dynamics.



**Amélie**  
**(Temporary research staff)**

**Name:** Amélie  
**Age:** 52  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Temporary research staff

### Extended story

Taking part in an international conference, Amélie, a researcher on a fixed-term contract, is eager to connect with fellow academics. However, her initial excitement for knowledge exchange and networking becomes overshadowed by the unwelcome attention of a colleague, a renowned Professor in his field. The harassment starts subtly with comments about Amélie's appearance but gradually intensifies as alcohol becomes involved.

As the evening progresses, the Professor's behaviour becomes more disturbing. He begins to invade her personal space in front of other colleagues, getting too close, touching her arm inappropriately and following her persistently around the reception, despite her attempts to distance herself. His suggestive remarks leave Amélie feeling deeply uneasy and humiliated.

Seeking safety, Amélie joins a group of women colleagues, hoping to avoid further encounters. However, her harasser is relentless, cornering her in a dimly lit area away from the main crowd.

This confrontation heightens her distress, but she manages to get away from him and quickly leaves to find solace in her hotel room. There, she grapples with the humiliation and anxiousness she feels, torn between the fear of confronting a senior academic and the importance of the conference for her career.

The next day, Amélie contemplates skipping the conference but is reluctant to let this incident undermine her professional opportunities. She confides in a woman senior faculty member who offers her support. This colleague agrees to accompany Amélie during the sessions and networking events, providing a sense of safety and solidarity in a challenging environment.



**Egle**  
**(Lecturer)**

**Name:** Egle  
**Age:** 33  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Position:** Lecturer

### Extended story

Egle, a 33-year-old lecturer, was initially enthusiastic about her new role at the university. With her qualifications and passion, she was eager to make a significant impact on her students. However, this enthusiasm was quickly overshadowed by the discrimination and harassment she faced.

From the outset, Egle noticed a distinct difference in how some students treated her due to her youth. They made belittling comments about her age, questioned her qualifications, and challenged her authority in the classroom with taunts and demeaning jokes. Despite her efforts to maintain professionalism and foster a supportive educational environment, she felt increasingly alienated.

The situation escalated with the behaviour of a senior Professor in her department. In meetings, he would regularly interrupt Egle, dismiss her ideas, and even take credit for her contributions. His remarks were often sexist, doubting Egle's capabilities based on her age and gender.

This pattern of behaviour came to a head during a departmental meeting where Egle presented a new research project she had been working on. As she began, the Professor interrupted her with condescending remarks, questioning the validity of her research and implying that her age and potential family planning were hindrances.

These experiences left Egle feeling utterly discouraged. She started to realise that these were not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of harassment. It contributed significantly to her feeling undervalued and disrespected within the university community, casting a shadow over her professional life, well-being and aspirations.



# **ANNEX 3**

## **ADDITIONAL STORIES USED IN THE CONTEXT OF UNISAFE AND GENDERSAFE**

The next four sample stories were developed in the context of UniSAFE and GenderSAFE for use during capacity-building sessions with staff and students at universities. These stories can be used during ice-breaking sessions or exercises in participatory and co-creation sessions.

### Sample story 1

Rashi is a master's student. She is sociable and open to new friends; she likes to work with other students and is always ready to get involved in extracurricular activities. While she has had a good experience so far, last month she had a particularly disturbing situation with a classmate when she repeatedly received unwanted intimate messages. She is not sure if it was a cultural misunderstanding, but she feels increasingly desperate and vulnerable as the news is now spreading on social media. She opened up to a few of her classmates but was even more confused by their reactions. Now she realises that she has lost her confidence, which is negatively affecting her work.

### Sample story 2

Kate has been working at a university as an Associate Professor and researcher for five years. She has many years of experience in fieldwork abroad. Since she has moved her research agenda to her country of origin for family reasons, she has been experiencing what she considers to be sexual harassment by a colleague during their regular travels to a farm outside of the city. She reported the situation to her department head and has been temporarily relieved of fieldwork, which negatively affects her research work and publication prospects. Although less frequent, the unwanted suggestions and remarks have continued ever since.

### Sample story 3

The department recently hired a renowned Professor who has built a reputation for being tough and honest, claiming to push students to excel. He often selects one or two students to present exercises in front of the class. Observations show that he can be very encouraging and eager to help students learn from their mistakes. However, it has become apparent that not all students receive the same level of encouragement. The Professor is notably tougher on younger women, especially exchange students. He often interrogates these students at length in front of the whole class and appears intolerant of any mistakes they make. On the latest occasion, a student left the room in tears after the Professor questioned her abilities and suggested she should consider changing her field of study.

### Sample story 4

Timmy has been studying at university for about six months, during which the first couple of months were filled with social events and activities mostly organised by more senior students. One fellow student, Olivia, began dating one of these senior students but ended the relationship after a few months. Olivia, who is normally very outgoing and social, has become more withdrawn and frequently skips classes following the break-up.

One day after class, Olivia confides to Timmy that her ex-partner was very controlling during their relationship and continues to harass her daily after the break-up. He sends her endless texts, keeps calling, and threatens to release sexual images of her to classmates if she starts seeing someone new. Olivia expresses fear about what he might do if she reports him and shares that she feels guilty for hurting him. She believes that the situation will improve once he moves on and that she just needs to keep a low profile to avoid upsetting him further.



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