



**GenderSAFE**  
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ACADEMIA

# Participatory techniques for policy development on gender-based violence

## In-person training

### Title of the training

**Participatory techniques for policy development on gender-based violence**

### Learning objectives

The main objective of this training is to support participants in using participatory techniques for the design, review and improvement of institutional policies addressing gender-based violence.

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- understand how participatory techniques can support policy development and implementation on gender-based violence
- identify when to use tools such as journey maps, persona stories and Lotus Blossom exercises
- use persona stories to explore how institutional policies and procedures may affect different people
- apply journey mapping to identify institutional touchpoints, gaps, challenges and opportunities
- use the Lotus Blossom technique to explore problems and develop possible actions or interventions
- reflect on how participatory methods can strengthen stakeholder engagement in policy-making

### Description for the promotion of the training

This hands-on training introduces participatory techniques that can support the development, review and implementation of institutional policies on gender-based violence in higher education and research organisations.

Participants will explore how tools such as journey maps, persona stories and the Lotus Blossom technique can be used to open structured discussions, identify gaps in institutional responses and support the co-creation of more effective policies. The training focuses on practical application and gives participants the opportunity to test the tools through group exercises.

The session is particularly useful for institutions that want to strengthen stakeholder engagement, improve policy design processes and ensure that policies respond to the needs and experiences of different members of the institutional community.

### Who is it for?

This training is designed for people involved in developing, reviewing or implementing policies and procedures on gender-based violence in higher education and research settings.

It may be relevant for:

- gender equality officers, equality and diversity officers and Gender Equality Plan teams
- human resources staff, legal officers, ombudspersons and institutional support actors
- student support services, safeguarding actors and complaints office staff
- managers, heads of units and institutional change agents
- trainers and facilitators working on gender equality, safe working environments or gender-based violence
- researchers, students or staff representatives involved in policy development or institutional change

### Format and duration

**Format:** in-person training  
**Duration:** 3 hours, including a break  
**Language:** English  
**Suggested number of participants:** 20–35  
**Suggested methods:** short presentations, group work, persona-based exercises, journey mapping, Lotus Blossom and plenary reflection



## Structure of the training:

Programme	Approach	Duration	Observations
<b>Welcome and icebreaker</b>	The trainers welcome participants, introduce the objectives and present the agenda. Participants briefly introduce themselves and share expectations. The icebreaker invites participants to answer: “How are you feeling today?” using one word, for example through Mentimeter.	10 min	This opening helps create a participatory atmosphere from the beginning. It also gives the trainers a quick sense of the group’s mood and expectations.
<b>Why participatory techniques for gender-based violence policy work?</b>	The trainers introduce the available materials, including case stories, persona stories and the guide on participatory techniques. They explain why participatory methods are useful for policy design, policy review and implementation on gender-based violence. The trainers also link the approach to the 7P framework.	20 min	This section clarifies that participatory techniques help make policies more grounded, inclusive and realistic. They support institutions in identifying gaps, testing procedures and involving different stakeholders in a structured way.
<b>Exercise 1: Journey map with persona stories</b>	The trainers explain how persona stories can be used with journey mapping. Each group receives one persona. Starting with a bystander persona, groups map the experience of witnessing an incident of gender-based violence and navigating the institutional response. They identify touchpoints, steps, emotions, challenges, gaps and possible actions.	5 min introduction + 40 min group work + 15 min plenary feedback	Printed journey map templates can be used. Groups can work at separate tables and turn their chairs towards the screen when plenary instructions are given. The plenary feedback focuses on how the journey map and persona helped identify institutional gaps and opportunities for improvement.
<b>Break</b>		30 min	Participants are encouraged to stand up, stretch and take a break.
<b>Exercise 2: Lotus Blossom with persona stories</b>	The trainers introduce the Lotus Blossom technique and explain how it can be used with persona stories to explore challenges and possible actions. Each group works with the same persona used in the first exercise. A central problem or challenge faced by the persona is placed in the centre of the Lotus Blossom. Challenges identified in the first exercise can be placed in the surrounding boxes and groups then develop ideas for solutions or interventions.	5 min introduction + 35 min group work + 15 min plenary feedback	Printed Lotus Blossom templates can be used. The plenary focuses on how the technique helped break down the persona’s experience, what insights were gained and how this method can support institutional policy design and implementation.
<b>Other participatory techniques</b>	The trainers briefly introduce additional participatory techniques from the guide, such as stakeholder mapping, SWOT analysis, cause diagrams, World Café or other tools relevant to policy development.	20 min	This section helps participants understand that the tools can be selected depending on the objective, the audience, the stage of the

			policy process and the level of stakeholder engagement needed.
<b>Wrap-up, reflection and evaluation</b>	The trainers invite participants to reflect on key takeaways, possible applications in their institutions and remaining questions. The session closes with the evaluation questionnaire.	15 min	The closing helps participants move from the exercises to practical use. Suggested prompts: Which technique could you use in your institution? With whom? For what policy question? What support would you need?

## Facilitation guidance

### Framing the training

This training is not only about learning individual tools. It is about understanding how participatory methods can support better policy-making on gender-based violence. Trainers can stress that policies are more effective when they are tested against real institutional journeys, different user perspectives and the experiences of those who may interact with the policy in practice.

### Working with persona stories

Persona stories are fictional characters that represent different people in higher education and research settings. They help participants explore how a policy, procedure or support system may affect people with different roles, needs, vulnerabilities and levels of power.

When introducing personas, trainers can explain that they are not stereotypes or real individuals. They are tools for discussion. They help participants move beyond abstract policy language and think through the lived experience of navigating an institutional response to gender-based violence.

### Exercise 1: Journey map

The journey map helps participants follow the sequence of a person's experience over time. It can include:

- what happens before, during and after an incident
- when the person notices something is wrong

- where they seek advice or support
- which institutional actors or services they encounter
- where they feel supported, confused, unsafe or blocked
- which gaps appear in the institutional response
- which actions could improve the process

For a bystander persona, the journey map may explore what the person witnesses, how they assess the situation, what prevents or enables intervention and what support they need afterwards.

### Exercise 2: Lotus Blossom

The Lotus Blossom technique helps participants move from one central challenge to a wider set of related challenges and possible solutions. It is useful when a group needs to generate many ideas in a structured way.

In this training, the central challenge can come from the journey map exercise. For example, the persona may not know where to report, may fear retaliation, may not trust the institution or may be unsure whether they are allowed to intervene. Groups then explore related challenges and identify possible actions or interventions.

### Selecting the right technique

Trainers can remind participants that the choice of method depends on the purpose. For example:

- journey maps are useful for understanding a process over time
- personas are useful for checking how a policy may affect different people
- Lotus Blossom is useful for expanding from a problem to possible actions
- stakeholder mapping is useful for identifying who needs to be involved
- World Café is useful for collecting ideas and experiences from several groups
- SWOT analysis is useful for assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

## Closing reflection

At the end, participants can be invited to identify one concrete context where they could use a participatory technique. This may be a policy revision, the design of a reporting procedure, stakeholder consultation, training development or the testing of a support pathway.

## Materials needed

- PowerPoint presentation
- printed persona stories
- printed journey map templates
- printed Lotus Blossom templates
- pens, markers and post-it notes
- projector and screen
- Mentimeter or another polling tool
- room with 5–6 group tables
- evaluation questionnaire
- optional: Miro templates for online or hybrid adaptation

## Resources

- UniSAFE. *Facilitating change: addressing gender-based violence in co-creation activities through fictional characters*. Available at: <https://unisafe-toolkit.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Persona-Stories-FINAL-5Aug2024.pdf>
- UniSAFE. *Facilitating change: A guide to using case stories in co-creation activities for addressing gender-based violence*.
- GenderSAFE materials on participatory techniques for testing policy frameworks.
- GenderSAFE Model Policy Framework.
- UniSAFE Toolkit: <https://unisafe-toolkit.eu/>
- Mentimeter: <https://www.menti.com/alrpsrjhkat9>
- Miro template 1: [https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLXEZm80=?share\\_link\\_id=380052191107](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLXEZm80=?share_link_id=380052191107)
- Miro template 2: [https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLXJ9w0s=?share\\_link\\_id=81582546301](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLXJ9w0s=?share_link_id=81582546301)

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