



GenderSAFE
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ACADEMIA

Strategic framing for testing the Model Policy Framework

Online workshop

Title of the workshop

Strategic framing for testing the Model Policy Framework

Learning objectives

The main objectives of this workshop are to:

- build participants' capacity to use strategic framing when advocating for institutional responses to gender-based violence in higher education and research
- support participants in aligning messages on gender-based violence with institutional values, priorities and concerns
- provide practical tools for crafting messages for different stakeholder groups, including stakeholders who may be hesitant or resistant
- support participants in anticipating possible resistance and preparing realistic responses
- help participants integrate strategic framing into policy development, negotiation and implementation processes

Description for the promotion of the workshop

This workshop introduces strategic framing as a practical approach for strengthening institutional policy work on gender-based violence in higher education and research organisations.

Institutional change is rarely achieved through good arguments alone. Change agents often need to work with limited power, limited resources, competing priorities and different forms of resistance. Strategic framing helps them connect policy goals to the concerns, values and responsibilities of different stakeholders, such as senior management, faculties, human resources, legal offices, staff councils, student representatives and support services.

The workshop combines a short conceptual introduction with two hands-on exercises. In the first exercise, participants identify the priorities and concerns of a selected stakeholder group and develop tailored messages that may help bring that group on board. In the second exercise, participants anticipate possible reactions to these messages and refine their arguments or responses.

By the end of the workshop, participants will have practised how to frame gender-based violence policy work in ways that are realistic, persuasive and grounded in institutional context.

Who is it for?

The workshop is designed for people involved in developing, adapting, implementing or advocating for institutional policies and measures to address gender-based violence in higher education and research.

It may be relevant for:

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

Preparation

Before the workshop, participants can be invited to:

- reflect on one institutional policy issue related to gender-based violence that they are trying to advance
- identify one stakeholder group whose support is needed
- think about possible concerns, objections or forms of resistance that may arise
- review relevant institutional policies, procedures or approval mechanisms
- optionally complete a short pre-workshop questionnaire to help trainers assign participants to groups and select stakeholder groups for the exercises

Format: Online workshop, adaptable to in-person or hybrid delivery

Duration: 2.5 hours, including a break

Language: English

Suggested number of participants: 10–25

Suggested tools: Zoom or similar online platform, Miro or another collaborative board, breakout rooms, word cloud or polling tool and exit questionnaire

Structure of the workshop:

MIRO board: https://miro.com/app/board/uXiVHRSp8o=?share_link_id=200395325773

Programme	Approach	Duration	Observations
Welcome, ground rules and objectives	The facilitator welcomes participants, introduces the workshop objectives and presents the agenda. Ground rules are agreed, including confidentiality, respectful listening, short and focused contributions, active engagement and respect for timing.	5 min	The opening sets a focused and respectful tone. Since participants may discuss difficult institutional dynamics, it is useful to remind them not to share identifiable personal or institutional information unless appropriate.
Icebreaker: one-word check-in	Participants are invited to describe, in one word, their experience of trying to implement a safe and inclusive academic environment or advance institutional policy work on gender-based violence. The answers can be collected through a word cloud tool or in the chat.	5 min	This helps facilitators take the temperature of the group and makes visible the range of experiences in the room. It can also help introduce the emotional and strategic dimensions of policy work.
Introductory presentation: what is strategic framing?	The trainer introduces strategic framing and explains why it matters for institutional change. The presentation can cover change agents, gatekeepers, institutional priorities, entry points, windows of opportunity, alliances and the need to balance ambition with sustainability.	20 min	The presentation should make clear that strategic framing is not about weakening the policy goal. It is about finding the right angle, language and route to make change possible in a specific institutional context.
Exercise 1: identifying shared values and crafting messages	Participants work in small groups. Each group is assigned or selects one stakeholder group, such as senior management, senate or general council, faculty or deans, HR or EDI office, legal or complaints office, staff council, academic registry, administrative heads or middle management. Each group identifies the stakeholder's priorities, goals, concerns and likely arguments or resistant points. They then identify shared values and develop at least two tailored messages.	40 min	This exercise helps participants move from a general message to a stakeholder-specific message. The trainer can remind participants to keep messages realistic, institutionally relevant and clear. Participants can also check whether their message might sound too accusatory, too abstract or too weak.

Break		15 min	The break also gives trainers time to check whether groups need support before the second exercise.
Exercise 2: refining messages and anticipating reactions	Groups review another group's work or return to their own message from a different angle. They read the stakeholder profile, priorities, resistant points, shared values and messages. They then identify plausible reactions from the stakeholder and develop possible responses, counterarguments or reframing ideas.	30 min	This exercise helps participants prepare for the next layer of strategic work: not only crafting a message, but anticipating how it may be received. Participants are encouraged to keep responses realistic, persuasive and grounded in institutional values.
Sharing in plenary	Rapporteurs briefly present the main messages and refinements developed by their groups. The facilitator invites reflection on how strategic framing can be used in institutional policy work and negotiation processes.	20 min	Suggested reflection questions include: What did you find challenging? How will you prepare further after this workshop? How can you prepare for the emotional aspects of negotiations? What helped you think differently about a resistant stakeholder?
Closing and evaluation	The facilitator summarises the main learning points, invites participants to share one insight or idea that stood out and shares the evaluation link.	15 min	The closing can remind participants that strategic framing is a skill that improves with practice. It is also useful to stress that participants do not need to carry this work alone; alliance-building, rehearsal and peer support are part of the strategy.

Facilitation guidance

Framing the workshop for public use

This workshop can be used with participants working on the GenderSAFE Model Policy Framework or with participants working on another institutional policy, procedure or action plan related to gender-based violence. Trainers can adapt the examples, stakeholder groups and exercises to the audience.

The workshop works best when participants bring a concrete policy issue or negotiation challenge. This can include developing a reporting procedure, improving protection measures, strengthening support services, defining consent, introducing risk assessment, securing resources, clarifying roles or revising an existing code of conduct.

Explaining strategic framing

Strategic framing can be introduced as the practice of shaping a message so that it connects the desired change to the priorities, values, responsibilities and concerns of the audience. It is not about hiding the issue or diluting the goal. It is about choosing the right entry point so that the message can be heard, understood and acted upon.

The trainer can explain that different stakeholders may need different messages. For example, senior management may respond to arguments about institutional responsibility, reputation, quality and compliance. Legal offices may respond to clarity of procedure, risk management and due process. Human resources may respond to staff wellbeing, prevention and organisational culture. Student representatives may respond to safety, trust and accountability.

Key concepts to introduce

The introductory presentation can include the following concepts:

- **Change agents:** people who work to move institutional change forward, whether through formal roles or informal influence. Their mandate, authority and resources may be limited.
- **Allies:** people or groups who can support the work, help build legitimacy and share effort.
- **Gatekeepers:** people or bodies that control access to resources, decisions, approval processes or institutional opportunities.
- **Entry points:** institutional priorities, moments or concerns that can be connected to the policy goal.
- **Windows of opportunity:** moments when change becomes more possible, such as leadership changes, elections, public cases, new legal requirements, funding requirements, audits, awards or institutional reviews.
- **Sustainability:** the need to choose strategies that do not exhaust change agents and that can be carried forward by a broader group.

Supporting Exercise 1

The aim of Exercise 1 is to help participants craft messages that connect gender-based violence policy goals to stakeholder priorities and shared values.

Groups can use a template with the following boxes:

Stakeholder group	
Stakeholder’s priorities, goals or concerns	
Stakeholder’s argument(s) or resistant point(s)	
Relevant shared value(s) or elements that may resonate	
Tailored message 1	
Tailored message 2	

Suggested stakeholder groups include:

- senior management or leadership
- senate, general council or governing body
- faculty leadership or deans
- HR or EDI office
- legal office, complaints office or data protection officer
- works council, staff council or trade union representatives
- academic registry, administrative heads or middle management
- student representatives or student services

During the exercise, trainers can encourage participants to ask:

- What does this stakeholder care about?
- What are they responsible for?

- What risks or pressures do they see?
- What values do we share with them?
- What message could make the policy goal relevant to their role?
- Does the message sound realistic in our institutional context?
- Could it be perceived as accusatory, too soft or too abstract?

Supporting Exercise 2

The aim of Exercise 2 is to help participants anticipate how the stakeholder may react and prepare responses.

Groups can use a second template with the following boxes:

Stakeholder's plausible reaction(s) to the message	Our possible response to this reaction
1.	
2.	
3.	

Participants can be invited to first read the previous message and check whether they understand what is at stake. They can then identify likely objections, concerns or forms of resistance. Responses can include counterarguments, reframing, evidence, examples, shared values or a proposal for a next step.

Suggested guiding questions:

- How might this stakeholder react to the message?
- What concerns or objections might they raise?
- What is the fear, value or institutional pressure behind the reaction?
- How can we respond without becoming defensive?
- What evidence or example could help?
- What shared institutional goal can we return to?

- What would be a realistic next step?

Plenary discussion

The plenary should focus on learning and transfer to practice rather than reporting every detail from the group work. Rapporteurs can briefly present:

- the stakeholder group
- the shared value identified
- one tailored message
- one likely reaction
- one possible response
- one reflection on what was difficult or useful

The facilitator can then guide a short discussion on how strategic framing can be used in real institutional work.

Suggested plenary questions:

- What did you find challenging in the exercises?
- Which stakeholder was the hardest to address?
- What helped you move from a general argument to a tailored message?
- How will you prepare further before a real negotiation or policy discussion?
- How can you prepare for the emotional aspects of difficult conversations?
- What support or allies would make this work easier?

Materials needed

- PowerPoint presentation

- Miro board or other collaborative online board
- breakout rooms
- word cloud or polling tool for the icebreaker
- optional pre-workshop questionnaire
- optional examples of arguments and counterarguments

Resources

- GenderSAFE. (2025). *Baseline Policy Framework for Addressing Gender-Based Violence*. GenderSAFE. Available online via the GenderSAFE website.
- Denis, A., Madesi, V., & Wuiame, N. (2024). *Co-creation and participatory approaches towards addressing gender-based violence in research and academia*. GenderSAFE / Yellow Window. Zenodo.
- GenderSAFE. (2025). *Strategic framing to tackle resistance to change: Addressing gender-based violence in research and academia*. GenderSAFE. Available online via GenderSAFE and Zenodo.
- VicHealth. (n.d.). *Framing gender equality: Message guide*. VicHealth. Available [online](#).
- ILGA-Europe. (2017). *Framing Equality Toolkit*. ILGA-Europe and Public Interest Research Centre.

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