

# How to?

# Designing learning spaces inclusively and illuminating gender diversity

Elli Scambor, Heidi Gaube, Živa Humer, Rowan Stein, Valentina Pettinger,  
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# Why are we making this brochure?

Gender equality is a major challenge for society, and this also applies to the field of adult education. Gender sensitivity is important for adult education trainers and stakeholders because it helps create an inclusive learning environment and helps recognize and respect all learners, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and other social markers that profoundly shape learning processes.

Recently, feminist and queer actors have been increasingly present in the media. Voices of trans-exclusive radical feminism (TERF)<sup>1</sup> have spoken out clearly and taken a stand against TIN (Trans, Inter and Non-binary) people, so many people are unsure how to react in the face of these developments. Adult education is a field in which hegemonic logics and neoliberal capitalist relations are embedded, which privileges certain people and excludes others. Because we live in a society that is familiar with discrimination, we have internalized discriminatory ways of communicating, thinking and behaving<sup>2</sup>. If we (want to) become aware of these processes, if these powerful patterns can become visible and if limiting gender norms are made an issue and exclusion is criticized, then we are moving on a path towards gender diversity. This path can be bumpy and unsettling. People who work in adult education have become unsure of how to design their offers and act in training courses in a way that everyone can participate – regardless of gender (or other diversity characteristics).

Adult education should offer learning spaces that are open for everyone to learn together and produce knowledge. But how can adult education be established as an inclusive, anti-discrimination and emancipatory learning field that recognizes gender diversity? This is one of the central questions that we explore in this brochure.

This booklet also represents our view of feminism as an inclusive and intersectional movement, based on gender diversity and gender equality enabling inclusion and solidarity among us, regardless of gender and gender identity. In the beginning of the booklet, we provide some contextual information about LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, +other identity and social markers not captured by the stated concepts) studies and policies, followed by concepts for self-reflection and critical thinking. Further, we discuss different strategies to cope with anti-feminism as well as a variety of competences for implementation of gender equality in adult education. In the final part of the booklet, we offer tips and recommendations on how to involve gender perspectives based on diversity and equality in adult education.

<sup>1</sup> Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminism (TERF for short) is the term for feminism that excludes trans people, whose representatives refuse to recognize trans women as women. In addition, trans men\* and nonbinary people are accused of betraying feminism. See also <https://queer-lexikon.net/2020/04/29/terf>

<sup>2</sup> Debus, Katharina (2020). Dealing with problematic terms in learning about discrimination. [www.dissens.de/fileadmin/Interventionen/redakteure/Debus\\_-\\_Umgang\\_mit\\_problematischen\\_Begriffen\\_im\\_Lernen\\_zu\\_Diskriminierung.pdf](http://www.dissens.de/fileadmin/Interventionen/redakteure/Debus_-_Umgang_mit_problematischen_Begriffen_im_Lernen_zu_Diskriminierung.pdf)





# 1. Let's start with policies and studies

## Policies

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) continuously and systematically examines the views of LGBTIQ people in relation to fundamental rights since 2012<sup>3</sup>. FRA study on LGBTIQ in 2019 emphasizes the need for policy responses to ensure that the fundamental rights of LGBTIQ individuals are protected<sup>4</sup>. The first LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 was adopted in 2020 by the European Commission, based on the findings of the 2019 FRA LGBTI survey, in which it was revealed from a comparison between the 2012 and 2019 surveys that general discrimination on the grounds of sex characteristics, gender identity or expression, and sexual orientation had increased.

Despite progress in legal recognition and protection of LGBTIQ rights in some EU countries, significant disparities still exist across Europe.<sup>6</sup> The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 is the first-ever LGBTIQ equality strategy with the aim to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals by integrating LGBTIQ equality in all policy areas and lifting the voices of LGBTIQ. It sets out a series of measures to step up action and address discrimination more effectively by 2025. The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 complements the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025<sup>7</sup>, which emphasizes an inclusive society where individuals of all genders have equal rights, opportunities, and representation across various aspects of life.

<sup>3</sup> There have been three surveys starting in 2012, then in 2019 and the latest one in 2023.

<sup>4</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2020): Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Accessible at: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbti-equality-strategy-2020-2025\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbti-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en)

<sup>6</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020): A long way to go for an LGBTI equality. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2024): LGBTIQ equality at the crossroads. Progress and Challenges. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Accessible at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2024-lgbti-equality\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbti-equality_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2020): A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Accessible at: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)



Another relevant document is the Yogyakarta Principles<sup>8</sup> (2006), which provide a solid foundation based on international human rights standards for protecting the rights of LGBTIQ individuals as well as a guide for policy makers.

In 2017, the Yogyakarta Principles were supplemented and expanded with the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YP+10) to include new grounds of gender expression and sex characteristics as well as state obligations related to areas such as torture, asylum, privacy, health, and the protection of human rights defenders.<sup>9</sup>

### Studies

The results of the third FRA survey in 2023 show that LGBTIQ people still experience violence and discrimination in education, at the workplace, in everyday life as well as while accessing health care and social services and while looking for housing. Among LGBTIQ people, the most affected are trans and intersex people. The proportion of those who felt discriminated in at least one area<sup>10</sup> of life in 12 months preceding the survey decreased from 42% in 2019 to 36% in 2023. The highest proportion of respondents who felt discriminated against was among trans (61% in 2019 and 54% in 2023) and intersex respondents (62% in 2019 and 61% in 2023).<sup>11</sup>

High levels of violence and harassment were found in the 2023 survey in all countries. Moreover, there has been an increase, compared with the results of the survey in 2019. In 2019, 11% of respondents said that they experienced physical and/or sexual attacks for being LGBTIQ in the last five years, compared to 14% in 2023. Trans women (29%), trans men (23%) and intersex respondents (32%) experienced higher rates of attacks in comparison with other LGBTIQ respondents<sup>12</sup>.

8 The Yogyakarta Principles. Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity, 2007. Accessible at: <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

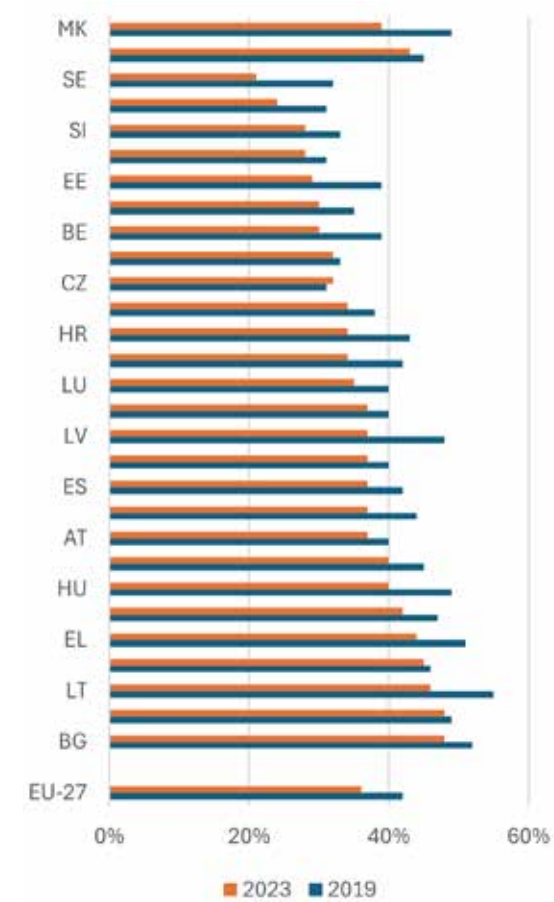
9 The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YP+10). Additional principles and state obligations on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics to complement The Yogyakarta Principles, 2017. Accessible at: <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

10 Eight areas include looking for a job, at work, looking for housing, by healthcare or social services, by school/university personnel, at cafe, bar, nightclub, or when showing an ID or any official document. IN: European Commission (2020): A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Accessible at: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

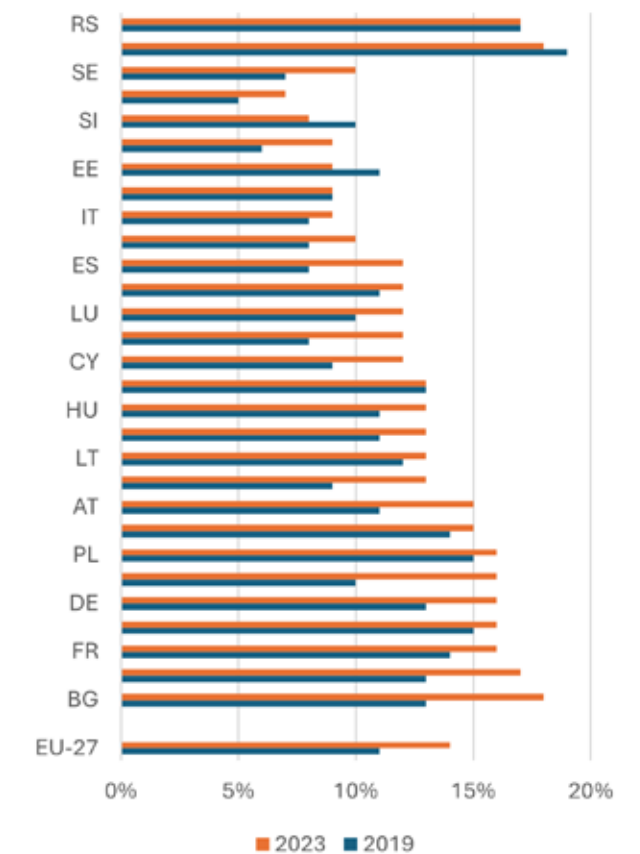
11 European Commission (2020): A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Accessible at: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

12 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2024): LGBTIQ equality at the crossroads. Progress and Challenges. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Accessible at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtqi-equality\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtqi-equality_en.pdf)

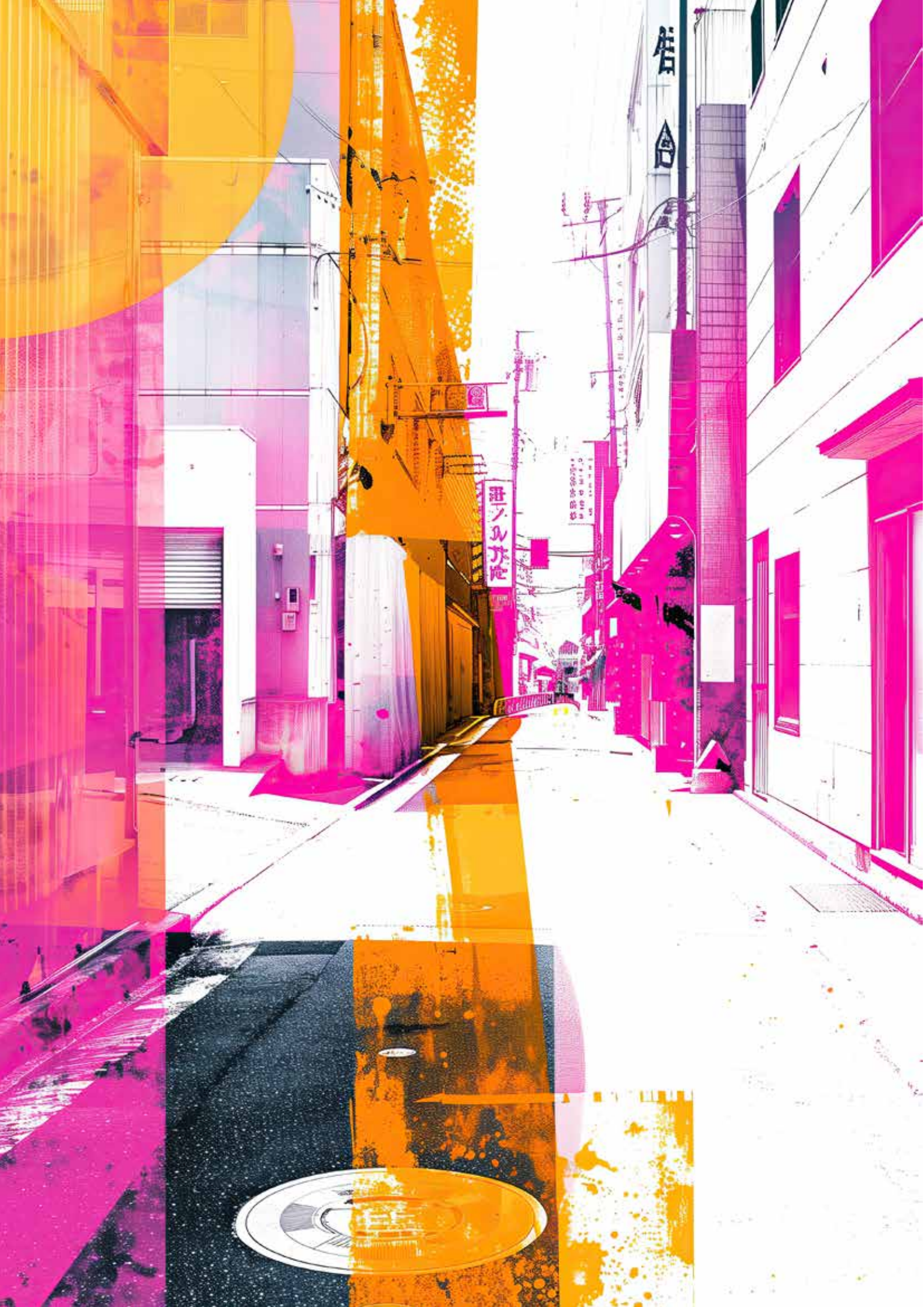
Discrimination against because of being LGBTIQ in at least one area of life in the year before the survey, by country, 2019 and 2023 (%)



Experiencing a physical and/or sexual attack for being LGBTI, in the 5 years before 2019 and 2023 survey, by country (%)







## 2. Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces – between protection and empowerment

Anti-discriminatory educational work oscillates back and forth between moments of being protective and being courageous. What do “safe” learning spaces look like? And how to create spaces in which (potentially) unpleasant topics are discussed and learning can take place in the context of precisely this “uncertainty”?

In the context of diversity, anti-discrimination and social justice education concepts in adult education, emphasis is placed on group rules that structure interactions in group settings in order to co-create spaces that are as free of discrimination as possible. The participatory development and implementation should enable all group members to have a learning environment that is characterized by mutual respect and sensitivity. The focus is on learning about power inequalities and it is usually either about dealing with one’s own privileges (e.g. in a critical whiteness training) or about working on one’s own marginalized position with the aim of self-empowerment, e.g. in anti-racist empowerment training. These positions vary greatly, depending on the subject area and the individual and may also address the intersectional reality of lives, i.e. individuals may hold privilege in one area of life (e.g. color of skin), but face disadvantage in another (e.g. intersex).

One concept/notion of more inclusive learning spaces is referred to as safe space. At the same time, the term is a message to all group members who are not comfortable with sharing their experiences and thoughts on sensitive and controversial topics with others (cf. Arao & Clemens, 2013<sup>13</sup>). Safe Spaces are, among other things, retreats for (potentially) marginalized people, as free as possible from discriminatory statements, characterized by an approachable and attentive atmosphere, a culture of care.

13 Brian Arao & Kristi Clemens (2013). The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections From Social Justice Educators.



The origin of the term Safe Space is still unclear (cf. Ali, 2017), but it represents an established and widespread concept that is an integral part of many of the educational concepts mentioned above.

Practical experience has made it clear that safe spaces are often de facto not risk-free spaces, and that those affected are not protected from discriminatory actions by participants in privileged positions (cf. Ali, 2017<sup>15</sup>). Structural inequalities that permeate society cannot be eclipsed in a training or class. According to Arao and Clemens (2013), security and comfort are also often equated: this leads to people in privileged positions invoking the safety of the space in situations where they are confronted with their privileges and may also have painful learning experiences, and close themselves off from learning opportunities. Among other things, these experiences have contributed to the fact that the Safe Space concept has been further developed in the direction of Brave Spaces (cf. Arao & Clemens (2013).

Brave Space is a concept that is more focused on supporting members of a group setting to reflect on potentially shameful topics (e.g. one's own privilege), but this can also cause hurt. It requires a high degree of willingness to engage and can enable participants to deal with taboo topics in a transparent way. In the context of anti-racism work, there was also a call to create 'courageous spaces', given that addressing issues of whiteness, racism, privilege, and oppression is challenging, especially for privileged groups (see, e.g. the resources for engaging with whiteness by The Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere in Los Angeles<sup>16</sup>).

Adult education spaces are brave spaces insofar as trainers are aware of the different positions of the participants (also having in mind invisible and unknown ones) and are aware that these are associated with different vulnerabilities. It also requires trainers to be "brave" and aware of their own social location in relation to the learners. The protection of a safe space cannot be guaranteed in adult education. This changes the behavior of the participants and opens learning opportunities to question one's own position and get to know new perspectives. Brave spaces focus on learning experiences in mixed groups and must be designed by trainers in a way that the participants can also deal with unpleasant content and touching experiences, and also such that learning from each other in diversity is possible. Among other things, the aim is for people to develop an awareness of their own position and its association with privileges, to reflect on their own actions on the basis of this knowledge and to develop alternative courses of action (less dominant behaviour). Thus, Brave Spaces serve more to courageously engage in confrontation with the goal of changing together while learning together.

Arao and Clemens (2013) have defined five indicators for this purpose<sup>17</sup>:

- 'Agree to disagree & controversy with civility' – different opinions are accepted, different positions are debated in a dignified manner;
- 'Owning intentions and impacts' – the intention to act is separated from its effect, cases in which the well-being of others is affected are discussed;
- 'Challenge by choice' – members decide for themselves when they enter and leave a discussion and reflect on these decisions;
- 'Respect' – members show respect for others and reflect on what active respect looks like;
- 'No attacks' – Members do not harm each other and are open to criticism instead of judging it as attacks.

The two concepts pursue different goals: on the one hand, protection and security and on the other, the need to question one's own certainties in order to be able to enter a process of change. Both concepts have in common a critical analysis of hegemonic structures in society, which results in people being positioned differently and having different experiences.

	Safe Space	Brave Space
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe space for those affected by discrimination</li> <li>• Space for exchange about one's own experiences and empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling learning experiences along privileges</li> <li>• Enable self-reflection and questioning one's own positioning</li> </ul>
Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As homogeneous and voluntary as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heterogeneous composition, voluntary and non-voluntary</li> </ul>
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-organized spaces</li> <li>• Rooms provided e.g. by institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces opened and held by instructors</li> </ul>
Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed setting with a limiting invitation policy</li> <li>• Group rules, code of conduct and (un)desirable behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High structuring by instructors</li> <li>• Agreed rules of conduct that enable respectful interaction with each other</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> Diana Ali (2017). Safe Space and Brave Space. Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals. In: NASPA Policy and Practice Series, No 2, Oct. 2017

<sup>16</sup> [www.awarela.org](http://www.awarela.org)

<sup>17</sup> Brian Arao & Kristi Clemens (2013). The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections From Social Justice Educators.





### 3. „Calling in“ and „Calling out“ – what are they?

“To call someone out” means to point out discriminatory behavior to a person – usually publicly. The concept of ‘calling in’ also means pointing people out discriminatory behavior, but with additional goals in terms of solidarity and cohesion.”<sup>18</sup>

In adult education - as in other areas - discrimination occurs. Learning together means pointing them out. But how can this be done in an appreciative and at the same time solidary way? How can educational spaces be created in which learning is not at the expense of others, in which there is no fear of saying something wrong, but rather where agreement and empathy replace hurting other learners? In the following, some critical aspects of ‘calling out’ are addressed, because in fact individuals are held responsible for discriminating behavior which makes it difficult to focus on/understand underlying and broader power mechanisms

1. Punishment and shaming with the intention of establishing just conditions.<sup>19</sup>
2. Competition (or performing activism) means competing against each other in an effort to be better than others in creating just conditions.
3. Binary thought patterns create relations of difference (the right and the wrong) and keep individuals in a state of fear of doing something wrong.<sup>20</sup>
4. Hegemonic power structures remain stable when we address individual guilt. In an effort to combat oppression, we produce precisely those oppressive actions and structures through individual school assignments.

One person tells of an experience and starts “then this woman came ...”, but is interrupted by another person with “Wrong! That means a person read as female, because we don’t even know how she identifies herself!” The person telling the story then falls silent.

<sup>18</sup> Krämer, Conni\* (2016). Solidary criticism. In: Discrimination-Critical Teaching Thought-Provoking Impulses from Gender Studies, pp.27-32.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, Maisha Z. (2016), in Krämer, 2016: „6 Signs Your Call-Out Isn’t Actually About Accountability“, Online: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/05/call-out-accountability/> [23.7.2024]

<sup>20</sup> Okun, Tema Jon (2010), in Krämer 2016: The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching About Race and Racism to People Who Don’t Want to Know. Greensboro: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. [https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Okun\\_uncg\\_0154D\\_10299.pdf](https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Okun_uncg_0154D_10299.pdf) [23.7.2024]



On the basis of these findings, Krämer (2016) provides food for thought for 'calling in'<sup>21</sup>, meaning approaches that are geared towards "moving each other and ourselves in solidarity to act responsibly and thus creating more discrimination-critical and inclusive spaces in which we can work together against power structures." (Krämer, 2016: 29)

How can criticism be expressed without reproducing hegemonic structures that divide groups and play people off against each other?

1. Empathy and patience are essential, as it is about knowing our imperfection and therefore the need to allow ourselves to make mistakes.<sup>22</sup>
2. Intentions can be well-intentioned and still have discriminatory effects. Of course, the effects of a discriminatory act are independent of good or bad intentions. Nevertheless, discriminatory actions due to a person's ignorance opens the learning space for reflection and behavioral change.<sup>23</sup>
3. People who want to change their actions should be supported in this change. Instead of a public 'shaming', it should be about helping each other to become better together.

One person shares an experience and starts "then this man came ..." after she finishes telling the story, someone else asks, "Can we be sure it is a man? Have you ever read the term male?" the person telling the story seems thoughtful "hmm, I've never heard that before, what does that mean?"

**"If I don't locate myself in the binary of good/evil, I also give myself other chances to learn and to think less shamefully and thus self-critically about my actions and thus continue to grow." (Krämer, 2016: 31).**

We live in a society in which hegemonic structures are predominant. This makes it important to break away from hegemonic logics in the fight against power structures and to support each other by means of criticism based on solidarity.

The facilitator starts the seminar: "We are used to being competitive and thinking in a discriminatory way, including me. Today, however, we want to try to grow together. To this end, I would like to ask you to support each other and not judge each other, this includes empathy and taking responsibility for your own actions and their effect, even if we mean well."

21 The concept of Calling In was first coined by Loan Tran, a U.S. activist who has then worked with the Black reproductive justice activist Loretta Ross who promoted the term through her TED Talk. Online trainings are available throughout the year with Loretta Ross for those who want to dive deeper and learn about the feminist and antiracist theoretical underpinnings of this practical human rights work. [www.lorettaross.com](http://www.lorettaross.com)

22 Trần, Ngoc Loan (2013) in Krämer, 2016: „Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable“, Online: <http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/12/calling-less-disposable-way-holding-accountable/> [23.07.2024]

23 Ferguson, Sian (2015), in Krämer, 2016: „Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How“, Online: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in/> [23.7.2024]





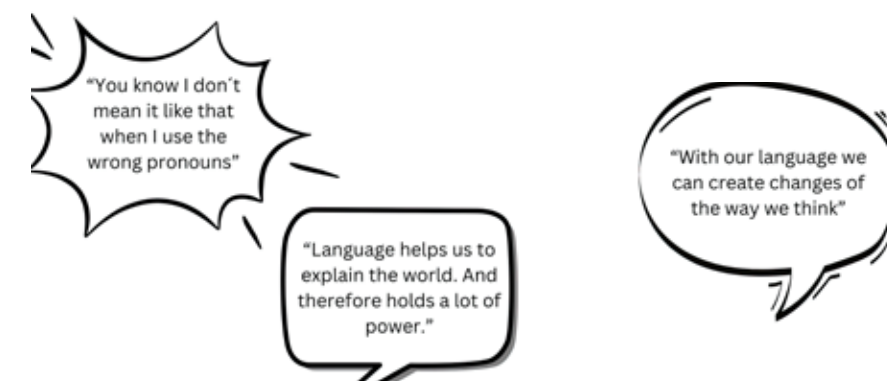


## 4. Gender-inclusive & gender-neutral language & how to use pronouns?

Before we start, a small riddle: who is the surgeon?

**"A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he's about to go under the knife, the surgeon says, "I can't operate—that boy is my son!"**

- If you guessed that the surgeon is the boy's gay, second father, you get a point for enlightenment. But did you also guess that the surgeon could be the boy's mother? If not you're part of a surprising majority.<sup>24</sup>
- Texts are often dominated by the male aspect/voice, e.g. because the masculine default is used when meaning "everybody".
- Gender identity is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man) nor is it static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time.
- Other gender markers are in the pronouns (he/she, his/her, they/them) and certain nouns (chairman/chairwoman, waiter/waitress).



24 Rich Barlow (2004): A Riddle Reveals Depth of Gender Bias: Boston University



## Facts to get started

- Sometimes, it makes sense to mention the gender of a person e.g. female doctor/ non-binary doctor, to make marginalized groups visible (genderism).<sup>25</sup> Question yourself as to where you make gender visible and whether it is relevant.
- Self-definition has to be prioritized.
- Avoid defining one group as normal and another one (automatically) as abnormal.

## How to use pronouns?

Pronouns determine how we refer to one another in the third person. When we talk about people, we often use the gender binary pronouns "she/ her" or "he/him". There are also various gender-neutral pronouns, including the most commonly used "they/ them." Others may request that you avoid referring to them with pronouns altogether, and rather simply use their name.

Language is constantly changing. Different languages have different approaches. Here, you can find a list of diverse English, Slovenian<sup>28</sup> and German pronouns.

### Guidelines for using the right names and pronouns:

Introduce yourself with your name and pronouns. You can ask people what name and pronouns they use. If you do not know which pronouns a person uses, you can use their name and listen to how they speak about themselves. In the right moment, you can ask what pronouns they prefer, and add "if they are comfortable sharing them".

- Making mistakes: Correct yourself, apologize and move on! Mistakes are unpleasant, but they happen. When you realize that you have misgendered a person, you can apologize and correct yourself. Try your best to not shift unwanted attention to the person through your apology.
- Please do not get offended when corrected! Using people's right names and pronouns should be natural.
- Be confidential! If you know the old/dead name of a person or an old pronoun be confidential. Otherwise, you could accidentally out the person.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Lann Hornscheidt & Ja'n Sammla (2021) – Wie schreibe ich divers? Wie spreche ich gendergerecht? Ein Praxis-Handbuch zu Gender und Sprache

<sup>26</sup> Goethe Universität (2021): Quick Guide – Gender inclusive language guidelines

<sup>27</sup> TransFocus: Strategies for Gender Inclusive Language

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.yumpu.com/xx/document/read/66004597/nebinarni-zin> - pages 13 to 18

<sup>29</sup> Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien (2019) - trans. inter\*. nicht-binär. Lehr- und Lernräume an Hochschulen geschlechterreflektiert gestalten

### A Gender diversity exercise:<sup>30</sup>

Write a short story about your daily life.

- Write about yourself in the third person
- Only use gender neutral pronouns e.g. they/them or other preferred gender-neutral pronouns.



### Tips for emails

- Continue using gender-inclusive greetings and writing techniques in emails until you know the person's pronouns.
- Instead of "Dear Sir or Madam", you can write "Dear team" or "Dear colleagues".
- Instead of "Dear Mrs Simpson", you can address people with just their full names, e.g. "Dear Marge Simpson".
- Or you can choose neutral greetings that fit your own formal style like "Good morning" or "To whom it may concern"
- In your email signature, you can add pronouns such as "(he/him)", "(she/her)" or "(they/them)" next to your name. Or you can add a statement such as "My pronouns are...". This helps everyone refer to each other in a respectful way (London School of Economics and Political science)<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> TransFocus: Strategies for Gender Inclusive Language

<sup>31</sup> Source: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/about/Gender-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines#:~:text=Add%20your%20pronouns%20to%20your,other%20in%20a%20respectful%20way>





## 5. The glossary game

In this part we provide you with definitions to some of the used terms, that may not be known to all our readers. Language changes, so maybe some of the definitions may be out of date, by the time you get this brochure. Nonetheless it should help you understand the topic a bit better.





## Glossary<sup>32</sup>

**Caring Masculinities:** variants of masculinities that integrate values from feminist care ethics such as attention, support, empathy. Care includes self-care as well as care for other people, environment and gender equality. Rejection of violence and male dominance are aspects of this concept.

**Cisgender:** A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender:** Social attributes, opportunities and power relations associated with being female, male or queer and to the relationships between people with different gender identities as well as to the relations between people of the same identities.

**Gender Bias:** Making decisions or systems that are designed based on gender that result in favoring one gender over the other which often times play out in contexts that are favoring men\* and/or boys\* over other gender identities.

**Gender Binary:** The distinction between feminine and masculine where these are regarded as the only two versions of how one might be gendered.

**Gender Equality:** Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders.

**Gender Expression:** People's manifestation of their gender identity, and the one that is perceived by others.

**Gender Identity:** Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

**Gender Norms:** Standards and expectations to which women\* and men\* generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.

**Hegemonic Masculinity:** Cultural norm that continuously connects men\* to power and economic achievements.

**Heteronormativity:** Assumption of every person's heterosexuality as well as a sex binary and thereof resulting hierarchies and attributions.

**Intersectionality:** Analytical tool for understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination. (EIGE) This concept originates from and was developed by black feminists in the USA which focused on how race, gender and class overlap as forms of discrimination and oppression.

**Intersex:** people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Used as an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases these traits are visible at birth while in others, they are not apparent until puberty.

**LGBTQIA+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Agender/Asexual/Aromantic, + (open end, since new identities and terms are possible) ; often used as a marker for diversity and for example spaces or events for people outside the binary or heterosexuality.

**Misogyny:** The contempt for systematic dislike of women\*. Practices that degrade women\* are misogynistic. Patriarchal cultures are misogynistic in that they constrain women\* because they regard them as lesser beings than men\*.

**Non-Binary:** Having a gender identity (= feeling of being a particular gender) that is not simply male or female.

**Patriarchy:** Social system of masculine domination over other genders.

**Queer:** All individuals who fall outside of the gender and sexuality 'norms'.

**Sex:** Classification of Humans in categories assigned at birth based on biological and physiological characteristics such as genitals, hormones or chromosomes.

**Toxic Masculinity:** Ideas about the way that men\* should behave that are seen as harmful.

**Trans\*/Transgender:** Person who has a gender identity different to the sex assigned at birth and who wishes to portray gender identity in a different way to the gender assigned at birth.

32 Sources:

(CD) Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/>

(EIGE) European Institute for Gender Equality: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus>

(EU) Scambor, E., Wojnicka, K. Bergmann, N. (Hg.) (2013). The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European strategies & insights [AutorInnen: S. Belghiti-Mahut, N. Bergmann, M. Gärtner, J. Hearn, Ø. G. Holter, M. Hrženjak, R. Puchert, C. Scambor, E. Scambor, H. Schuck, V. Seidler, A. White & K. Wojnicka]. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f6f90d59-ac4f-442f-be9b-32c3bd36eaf1/language-en>



# GLOSSARY: Find the Pairs!

For all those looking for a challenge: Grab a Pen and connect the Terms to their definition, the Solution is on the bottom.

- Caring Masculinities 01
- Cisgender 02
- Gender 03
- Gender Bias 04
- Gender Binary 05
- Gender Equality 06
- Gender Expression 07
- Gender Identity 08
- Gender Norms 09
- Hegemonic Masculinity 10
- Heteronormativity 11
- Intersectionality 12
- Intersex 13
- LGBTQIA+ 14
- Misogyny 15
- Non-Binary 16
- Patriarchy 17
- Queer 18
- Sex 19
- Toxic Masculinity 20
- Trans\*/Transgender 21

**F** The distinction between feminine and masculine where these are regarded as the only two versions of how one might be gendered. (OD)

**M** Cultural norm that continuously connects men\* to power and economic achievements. (EIGE)

**A** All individuals who fall outside of the gender and sexuality 'norms'. (EIGE)

**T** Social system of masculine domination over other genders (EIGE)

**H** Having a gender identity (= feeling of being a particular gender) that is not simply male or female. (CD)

**J** Social attributes, opportunities and power relations associated with being female, male or queer and to the relationships between people with different gender identities as well as to the relations between people of the same identities. (EIGE)

**U** A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth. (MIF)

**K** People's manifestation of their gender identity, and the one that is perceived by others. (EIGE)

**N** Making decisions or systems that are designed based on gender that result in favoring one gender over the other which often times play out in contexts that are favoring men\* and/or boys\* over other gender identities

**S** Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all genders. (EIGE)

**I** Assumption of every person's heterosexuality as well as a sex binary and thereof resulting hierarchies and attributions. (EIGE)

**B** Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination. (EIGE) This concept originates from and was developed by black feminists in the USA which focused on how race, gender and class overlap as forms of discrimination and oppression.

**G** variants of masculinities that integrate values from feminist care ethics such as attention, support, empathy. Care includes self-care as well as care for other people, environment and gender equality. Rejection of violence and male dominance are aspects of this concept (RoM)

**E** often used as a marker for diversity and for example spaces or events for people outside the binary or heterosexuality. The letters mean: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Agender/Asexual/Aromantic, + (open end, since new identities and terms are possible)

**P** Classification of Humans in categories assigned at birth based on biological and physiological characteristics such as genitals, hormones or chromosomes. (EIGE)

**R** people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Used as an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases these traits are visible at birth while in others, they are not apparent until puberty. (UN)

**L** The contempt for systematic dislike of women\*. Practices that degrade women\*. Patriarchal cultures are so that they constrain women\* because they regard them as lesser beings than men\*. (OD)

**O** Standards and expectations to which women\* and men\* generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time. (EIGE)

**V** Ideas about the way that men\* should behave that are seen as harmful. (CD)

**D** Person who has a gender identity different to the sex assigned at birth and who wishes to portray gender identity in a different way to the gender assigned at birth. (EIGE)

**C** Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms. (EIGE)

Solution: 1G, 2U, 3J, 4N, 5F, 6S, 7K, 8C, 9O, 10M, 11I, 12B, 13R, 14E, 15L, 16H, 17T, 18A, 19P, 20V, 21D







- Projection: anti-feminists advocate rigid roles (male-female), but accuse those who advocate freedom and diversity of coercion and re-education.
- Sexism as a problem of „other men“ linked to assertion of „own“ superiority (racism combined with sexism).
- Equal rights rhetoric: The own anti-feminist goals are often hidden in seemingly good concerns (e.g. „protection of women“).

## Care about yourself and about others

Advocating for equality is often energy-sapping. If you joyously hike against the mainstream, headwinds can be felt: you are committed to equality in a society that is characterized by inequality. Agents for gender equality refuse to take their assigned place and therefore feel social pressure. Not only do they often experience discrimination, but they also deal with inequality. Thus, they do double the emotional work: it can be exhausting to talk about what is exhausting. In addition, those who raise issues are quickly made into a problem themselves (“annoying feminist killjoys”<sup>35</sup>). Many people feel exhausted in their commitment to equal treatment and withdraw. In terms of sustainable political engagement, self-care is central.

**Be generous to yourself!**

Pressure to justify, feelings of shame and guilt are already sufficiently conveyed to people in their commitment to equality. Therefore, be generous and benevolent towards yourself! Being generous does not mean submitting without resistance, but allowing yourself to take breaks and make mistakes - and to allow others to do so as well.

**Choose your battles!**

Besides, not every battle needs to be fought, nor can it be. Use your resources where you consider it to be worthwhile!

**Find allies!**

Again and again, sexism, misogyny and antifeminism are denied or relativized (“Actually, he’s a nice guy.”). This is hurtful because it also involves personal areas such as one’s gender identity, bodily integrity, and life choices. Find allies with whom you share political positions and feelings!

Since attacks often happen personally and individually, it helps to keep in mind that you are not alone. Think of friends or people you know who support equality! Or recall a situation in which you stood up for equality together with others - a situation that you experienced as empowering!

**Be an ally to others whenever you can!**

If the attacks happen in the presence of others, e.g. at a meeting, establish alliances – either ad hoc by eye contact or by developing a joint strategy in advance .

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed, Sara. Feministisch leben! Manifest für Spaßverderberinnen. Unrast Verlag 2017.

## Provide Brave Spaces

Brave spaces should primarily strengthen discussions about topics that are usually not talked about, such as racism. Brave Spaces are intended to create a culture in which dissent and criticism are possible and thus set learning processes in motion. Brave Spaces are characterized by the following rules (see chapter 2 in this brochure)<sup>36</sup>:

- Different opinions are accepted.
- There is open discussion when the emotional well-being of others is affected.
- Members decide for themselves when to enter and leave a discussion.
- Members show respect for others.
- Members commit to not harming each other.

## Choose a strategy: withdraw, enter into discussion, set boundaries<sup>37</sup>

### Withdraw

One important strategy is to avoid a negative situation. Whether or not you get involved in an argument depends not least on your own state of mind on the day and the specific situation.

If someone expresses themselves aggressively, the best strategy may be to avoid the attack and let the attacking person run into the void. In doing so, you make use of a well-known technique of self-defense, in that you do not counter the attacker’s force with counterforce (in this case, arguments), but use it for yourself (in this case, your effective and elegant exit). One possibility is to avoid people with excuses or situations. If that doesn’t work, for example in meetings, a deliberate change of topic is a good idea.

“I’d like to be sexually harassed sometime, too.”

Look your counterpart in the eye (or just above it), breathe calmly, count to three internally and leave.

<sup>36</sup> Arao, Brian/Clemens, Kristi. From Safe Space to Brave Space. A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice. In: The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators. Sterling, VA: Stylus 2013, S. 135–50.  
<sup>37</sup> Strategies described in „Let’s shut down antifeminism! The verbal self-defence guide for feminists.“



Leave a destructive situation as long as you still feel good and strong. You can show your opposition in body language. An effective body language tool is eye contact.

At a meeting, a colleague makes a comment about the appearance of a colleague who is not present. "Who has another meeting topic?"

„We will not convince each other. Our positions are clear. We don't have to go around in circles any longer“.

## Enter into discussion

This seems to be the most obvious and goal-oriented strategy in advocating for equality. You have studied the topic for a long time, read studies, developed arguments, and know the most important facts and figures. Nevertheless, you find yourself again and again in seemingly futile and tedious battles of words.

In these cases, a discussion is not very productive. Choose a different strategy!

Attention, if your counterpart ...

- refuses to listen to you seriously and responds to your arguments,
- patronizes you and explains the world to you (paternalism and mansplaining),
- makes themselves intangible by polemics, irony or jokes,
- attacks you personally (e.g. calls you aggressive or reproaches you for your way of life),
- puts things in your mouth that you have not said,
- distracts from the topic by bringing up extreme or irrelevant cases,
- simplifies in an inappropriate way, distorting your arguments.

Perhaps you have not checked the most important rule for a discussion, namely: are the conditions for a discussion met? Is your counterpart willing to listen to you and deal with your arguments? If this is not the case, then discussing is not a meaningful and purposeful means, even if it may correspond to your own inclination.

If the conditions for a discussion are met, here are a few tips, some of which we will look at in a little more detail in a moment:

- Set the framework ("If you have enough time for the topic, ...")!
- Consider your objective: what or whom do I want to reach?
- Be persistent! Scatter small seeds that can sprout later!
- Perceive topic jumping and demand that different topics are discussed individually!
- Do not go into everything!
- Do not justify yourself on personal criticism or attacks! This suggests that these attacks deserve a serious response.
- Move past personal attacks! Keep calm and set limits!
- Do not treat everyone the same! Address different people differently - some are more open to your arguments than others.
- Look for allies and try to form alliances!
- Take out speed and stay calm!
- Consciously shape the relationship level (also agree once in a while, let them finish, show understanding)!
- Use your body language consciously (make eye contact, sit up straight, be present)!
- Do not forget the appreciation - towards others and yourself.

## Ask questions

People who argue for gender equality in conversations are usually in a more difficult position than people who argue against it. Statements such as "We are all already equal!" are phrases intended to be invalidated by the counterpart in terms of argument. But stop! Consider that such fast expressions lack a well-founded basis. Therefore, ask questions and listen. Asking questions is an effective strategy to move from phrases to conversation. By asking questions, you establish a connection. Of course, this is only true if you mean the questions, if you are interested in the answers. If you are asking questions to convert the other person, don't. Have the situation explained to you in more detail if you encounter resistance from the other person. In this way, you show that you take the other person's situation seriously. This increases the chance that you can relate to your counterpart and possibly have an interesting discussion as a result. And don't forget that by doing so, you can significantly influence the course of the conversation. Try it: Ask questions and mean it.

"I do so much anyway."

"So what gender-sensitive projects are your department doing right now?"



## Active listening

Dialogues are characterized by people listening to each other. This means engaging with the other person and not immediately raising walls of defensiveness - as necessary as these may sometimes be in dealing with excuses against equality. However, if you are genuinely interested in a conversation and this willingness also exists on the part of your counterpart, active listening can perhaps bring more understanding for each other's situation.

Active listening opens dialogue spaces to the other person in several ways. For example, through open and approaching body posture and by sending signs of attention ("Aha"). At the same time, it is important to actually listen and not immediately think about what you might counter, because this will cause you to lose attention. Refrain from judgments and put yourself in the other person's situation - then you can better understand their point of view. Your reaction is then likely to be different and a joint dialogue becomes possible - provided that the other person is also willing to do this.

„These women are all the same!“  
„That's what I'm interested in. What do you mean by that?“

## Do not treat everyone the same: Where can you fish in the pond?

If you are sitting at the table with different people, some of whom argue against equality, try to focus on people who are open to arguments. You won't be able to reach everyone, so focus on individuals and stay in the conversation. Make eye contact. Think about how you can engage the individual more: address them directly. Ask them questions. This will lead to a more relaxed conversation and reveal multiple perspectives as well as possible conclusions.

## Form alliances

Network with other people, groups and institutions and stand together against antifeminism. Try to allow different views and attitudes and still form alliances. As different as your positions may otherwise be, this will enable you to speak with a common voice against antifeminism and not be played off against each other. It may well be that people remain silent in discussions about equality but show nonverbal agreement. Include these people in the discussion.

At a meeting, someone tells a sexist joke. All eyes turn to the only woman present.

Make eye contact with individual colleagues and address them directly: "What do you think?"

## Keep calm

Especially in intensive situations, many people tend to react impulsively and immediately. This is usually not helpful. Make sure you choose your words well so that you can continue to treat each other with respect. Staying calm and listening is often difficult when you are confronted with prejudices and generalizations. This makes it even more important not to let yourself be driven by your counterpart. Try to stay with yourself. Lean back and show that you are not letting yourself get flustered. Slow down the pace. Look at your conversation partner and start speaking slowly and calmly.

## Arguing

An argument consists not only of an assertion, but also of reasoning supported by concrete examples or scientific evidence. It is important to distinguish arguments from beliefs. Arguing against beliefs or opinions is futile. Instead of working away at it, change the strategy!<sup>38</sup>

- Check whether the statements of your counterpart are supported by reliable sources.
- Differentiate between generalizations.
- Point out contradictions and exaggerations.
- Ask your counterpart to be more specific in his criticism (ask questions).
- Give concrete examples yourself.
- Use strong images that will be remembered.
- Ask about the consequences of political demands ("Where will we end up if ....?").

<sup>38</sup> Find more strategies in the brochure „Gender raus!“ Zwölf Richtigstellungen zu Antifeminismus und Gender-Kritik. Verf. v. Franziska Schutzbach. Hg. v. der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung u. der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Berlin 2018. [https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/gender\\_raus\\_epdf\\_2.pdf](https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/gender_raus_epdf_2.pdf)



## Humor or being a feminist killjoy

Humor is a difficult strategy for dealing with anti-feminism, especially since it often takes the form of irony or jokes to protect oneself from criticism. "I was only joking," they say, and "You can't take a joke. Laughter is less a reaction to something funny or a question of humor than the agreement of a group. Those who laugh do not need arguments to assure their position. Laughter often follows social expectations. Laughter is often extended to those who do not conform to the prevailing rules and those who advocate the implementation of these rules (e.g. gender mainstreaming). To laugh along is to belong, to agree, and therefore not laughing along is a rejection of agreement. The feminist killjoy is a character developed by Sara Ahmed.<sup>39</sup>

Feminist killjoys refuse to be told to laugh along and always be happy, pointing out the hidden negative feelings associated with existing discrimination. Deliberate "humorlessness" as a strategy critical of domination triggers irritation and can also be fun. At the same time, humor is also a helpful strategy for dealing with anti-feminist attacks. This is because humor creates distance and thus opens up new perspectives and possibilities for action. Humor can also be a way of expressing negative feelings in connection with antifeminism.

A colleague tells a sexist joke.

Do not laugh along! Show that you do not agree with sexism! You are therefore not a humorless person. Because who laughs at jokes and who doesn't is often a question of power and not a question of humor.

<sup>39</sup> Ahmed, Sara (2023). *The Feminist Killjoy Handbook*. Penguin Books UK.







## 7. Gender equality in adult education – necessary competencies

Implementation of Gender Equality in Adult Education requires different competencies.

### Strategic Competence

- Systemic thinking
- Understanding of social, economic and political consequences of exclusion of individuals or groups for the general public
- Keep up to date on learner's characteristics in your specific setting and related current data (e.g. the FRA surveys)

### Social Competence

- Knowledge of how to deal with social dynamics
- Providing clear framework conditions and rules to avoid discrimination and setting an example
- Including different opinions in the group
- Acting as a role model regarding gender-specific behavior and deconstructing gender stereotypes
- Empathy



### **Methodological Competence**

- Use of methods that contribute to equality.
- Recognizing (possible) discrimination, making it visible, addressing it and avoiding it.
- Reflecting on methods from an equality perspective and identifying marginalizing factors.
- Selecting methods that promote participation and involvement.
- Conscious use of language and images from a gender-reflective and equality-orientated perspective. Use methods that contribute to equality.
- Revise your learning materials (do they also reflect voices of LGBTIQ+ folks?).

### **Personal competence**

- Ability for (self-)reflection.
- Tolerance towards yourself and others.
- Ability to change perspective.
- Looking for and recognizing the reason behind problematic behavior.
- Being able to deal with ambivalence.
- Sensitivity and awareness of one's own (perhaps privileged) position.

### **Technical Competence**

Knowledge of various theories and approaches to power structures, intersexuality, gender, LGBTIQ+, dealing with ambivalences, dealing with resistance.

Knowledge of the causes and effects of heteronormativity, binary gender systems, gender stereotypes.

## **Small tips for a big task**

The consistent pursuit of a gender perspectives in adult education means designing programs, measures and activities in a way that promotes equality-oriented access and participation opportunities for all genders, sexes, and sexualities in their complicated and intersectional realities of race, ability, religion, class and many more characteristics that make a "real", colorful, complex life.

### **Adult education shows how**

As an educational organization, we set an example of what is not yet the general trend and we are an inspiring leader to all our learners and collaborators. Employees and experts in adult education set good examples as role models. They must be aware and trained about the fact that there are not only two genders.

The topic of gender equality should accompany our daily work. Look at it in teams and make it an issue as a cross-section, introduce the topic in networks, create awareness among cooperation partners and stakeholders.

Prescribed policies on how to act as an organization and what every employee must follow as a minimum anchor the issue at a structural level and make it clear that equality orientation is a non-negotiable value. Ensure that all employees understand and embrace your vision and your gender equality standards.

Collaboration with communities working on gender equality and transgender issues creates win-win situations for these communities and adult education. Inviting non-binary persons as experts and engaging different genders as experts strengthens diversity in the own field of activity.

### **Creating fair framework conditions for all**

Set clear signals to address non-binary people, women and men. All genders are made visible in all programmes, activities and publications, both internally and externally. This is done through language, images, examples and content.

### **No one is to blame, everyone is responsible**

Gender stereotypes are explained and addressed as a structural and not as an individual problem. Nobody is personally to blame for attributions and discrimination based on gender. But every single person can do something about it in their own field of action.

Address ways to achieve gender equality in society and make different approaches to diversity visible and discussable. Reformulate difficult terms and explain complex topics adequately for the target group. Initiate a process of changing and broadening perspectives regarding a non-binary approach.



### How to practice solidarity-based criticism

Mistakes happen and they are an opportunity to learn. But set signals that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. As stated above, clear and transparent organizational policies are necessary guideposts.

Try to address topics and discuss on an equal footing. Practice face-saving criticism (don't assume intent or malice) and Calling In techniques on the front stage and back stage of your organization. If necessary, have a short clarification - do not be tolerant of intolerance or ignorance.

Sometimes, it is useful to suggest a change of perspective whereas other times, you need to take a personal stand ("I don't see it that way").

Try to separate intention from effect (something can be well-intentioned and still have a discriminatory effect).

An "awareness team" that intervenes and "de-escalates" the situations of discrimination can be appointed as a structure towards equality.

## 8. Partners

**nowa** is a social profit organization in Graz (Austria) offering education offers for women\* and for people of all genders. With national, regional and international projects, we aim to act for gender equality and equal participation (e.g. in working life, digitalization etc.) of all people. <http://www.nowa.at>

The **Peace Institute** (<http://www.mirovni-institut.si/en>) in Ljubljana (Slovenia) has been developing interdisciplinary research, educational and advocacy activities for 30 years as an ally for vulnerable groups, acting against discrimination together with them. One of the main focuses is gender and gender equality.

**VMG** (Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen) is a non-profit, NGO, founded in 1996 and based in Austria. VMG has profound experience in Critical Men and Masculinity Research and education (Focus on Caring Masculinities; [www.genderforschung.at](http://www.genderforschung.at)) as well as gender sensitive boys work from an intersectional perspective ([www.bur-schenarbeit.at](http://www.bur-schenarbeit.at)), men's counselling and victim-safety oriented work with perpetrators.

More information:

<https://www.nowa.at/projekte/internationale-projekte/femqueer-erasmus/>

<https://www.vmg-steiermark.at/de/forschung/projekt/femqueer>

<https://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/projects/femqueer-common-strategies-for-gender-equality/>



# How to?

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