



# NEXUS Toolkit

**Resources, tools and capacity  
building materials for **intersectional  
and intersectoral inclusivity**  
in HE and R&I institutions**



# About this toolkit

**This toolkit is designed to support Higher Education (HE) and Research and Innovation (R&I) organisations in advancing their Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in intersectional and intersectoral directions.**

**It gathers the resources, tools and capacity building materials developed in the NEXUS Project and includes input for designing innovative actions, monitoring and evaluating their implementation, integrating the gender+ dimension in research, and countering gender-based violence (GBV) in academia.**

**The NEXUS toolkit is compiled by the Smart Venice team, with contributions from NEXUS partners.**

# About the NEXUS Project

**NEXUS (2023-2025) is a Horizon Europe project that co-designs, implements, monitors and evaluates innovative and targeted actions aimed at bridging inclusivity gaps in nine research organisations and their respective research and innovation ecosystems, with the aim of fostering institutional change through the development of inclusive Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in intersectional and intersectoral directions.**

**NEXUS actions will enhance the research excellence of participating organisations as well as effecting institutional and cultural change that is context-sensitive, realistic and sustainable. The project sets up structures to go beyond the minimum GEP requirements, as defined in the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, through a participatory, multi-stakeholder process of solution co-creation sustained by a twinning scheme and the delivery of tailored capacity building and training programmes.**

**For more information, visit the [NEXUS website](#).**



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*Note: Materials made available through the Toolkit can be found at [this Zenodo link](#), while NEXUS deliverables are available at [this Zenodo link](#). the materials linked in this Toolkit may themselves contain links to further project documentation, which may not be accessible to the public. The materials linked in this Toolkit contain further, subject-specific references for users to explore.*

*The NEXUS Project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.*

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# Good practices

Proven innovative practices within and  
outside the NEXUS consortium



# Inclusive Gender Equality Plans

Inclusive Gender Equality Plans comprise policies and actions that go beyond the minimum requirements for a Gender Equality Plan as defined in the [Horizon Europe eligibility criterion](#) and consider three core dimensions:

1

**Intersectional inclusivity** moves beyond an exclusive focus on sex and gender, as it understands gender to be mediated by other social identities and attributes (such as race, ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexual orientation, and disability) which overlap and interact in complex systems of privilege and disadvantage

2

**Intersectoral inclusivity** recognises the relationship between sectors and/or parts of R&I ecosystems in acting to tackle inequalities: without intersectoral inclusivity, actions are unlikely to make an impact, particularly if different sectors (universities and other RPOs, RFOs, public authorities, non-governmental organisations, professional associations, private companies and the publishing sector) operate in silos

3

**Geographical inclusivity** is grounded in the nuanced regional, national, and local disparities that exist in the European Research Area

# Good practice examples

D2.1 identifies **10 examples of promising practices**, providing a description of the practice, outlining the inequalities addressed, domains covered and external stakeholders involved, and offering a summary of the practice evaluation

## Name of the practice: “Speak Out”

**Practice owner:** All universities and institutes of technology in the country (19 HEIs in total)

**Partner proposing:** TU Dublin

**Country implemented:** Ireland

Practice description: Speak Out is an online and anonymous reporting platform for incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour/control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape. The practice helps to find relevant supports and highlight formal reporting procedures, should the reporter/survivor wish to use them. It is led by the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) and funded by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. A pilot study was conducted in the first instance with seven universities through focus groups and from that it was expanded to the 19 HEIs involved.

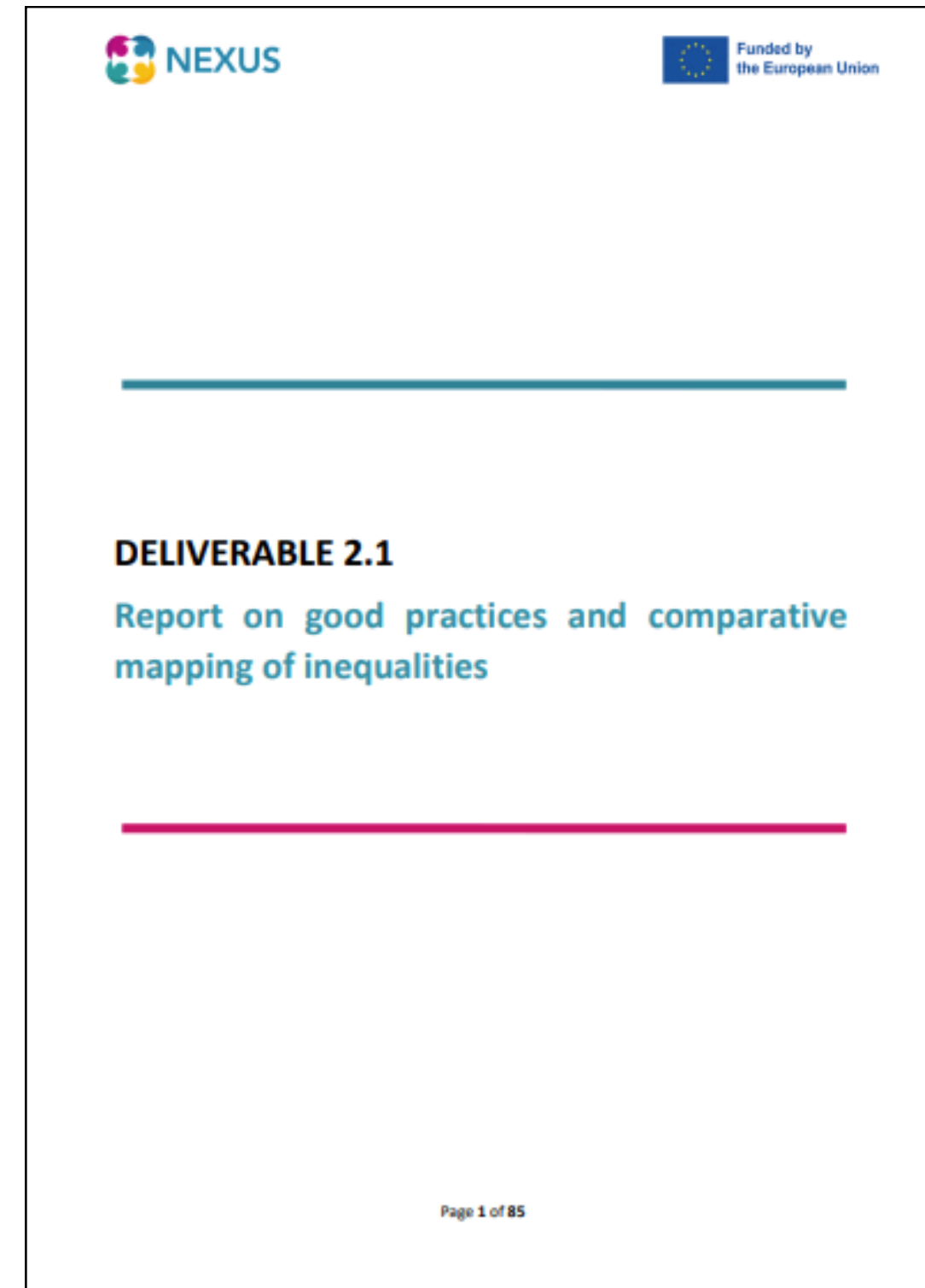
*Example of a good practice from D2.1*



## D2.1: Report on good practices and comparative mapping of inequalities

- Identifies and assesses inclusivity gaps in the GEPs of each of the 9 implementing partner organisations
- Presents 10 promising practices identified by using the latest EIGE GEAR Toolkit
- Provides a method for assessing data collection practices in HE and R&I organisations

Access the [report](#)!



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# Co-design of inclusive actions

## Methods and tools



# What is co-design?

- A **collaborative and participatory** research approach in which individuals combine their **knowledge, skills, and resources** (Zamenopoulos and Alexiou, 2018)
- Based on the belief that everyone possesses **creativity and expertise** in their own experiences
- Involves multiple **stakeholders** working together to devise **creative solutions** to shared, **complex challenges** (Godet, 2000)
- Involves understanding, interpreting, and addressing present challenges to create a **better future** through conceptual development and the design of spaces, products, services, or policies (Zamenopoulos and Alexiou, 2018)



# The benefits of co-design

## **Collaboration**

It equips various stakeholders with tools to collaborate effectively towards a shared goal

## **Diversity**

It allows for the inclusion of a diverse range of actors, knowledge, hierarchical levels, and sectors in the design process

## **Empowerment**

Direct participation of different stakeholders enables them to take ownership of their environment, particularly those who might not typically be consulted in other circumstances

## **Networks**

Collaborating with diverse actors can foster enduring synergies, leading to structural change through sustained connections and collaborations

## **Creativity**

Collective solutions generated by diverse actors tend to be more imaginative than those proposed by individuals working in isolation

See the [ACT project Community of Practice Co-creation Toolkit](#) and the [CO-CREATE project Co-Design Best Practice Report](#)



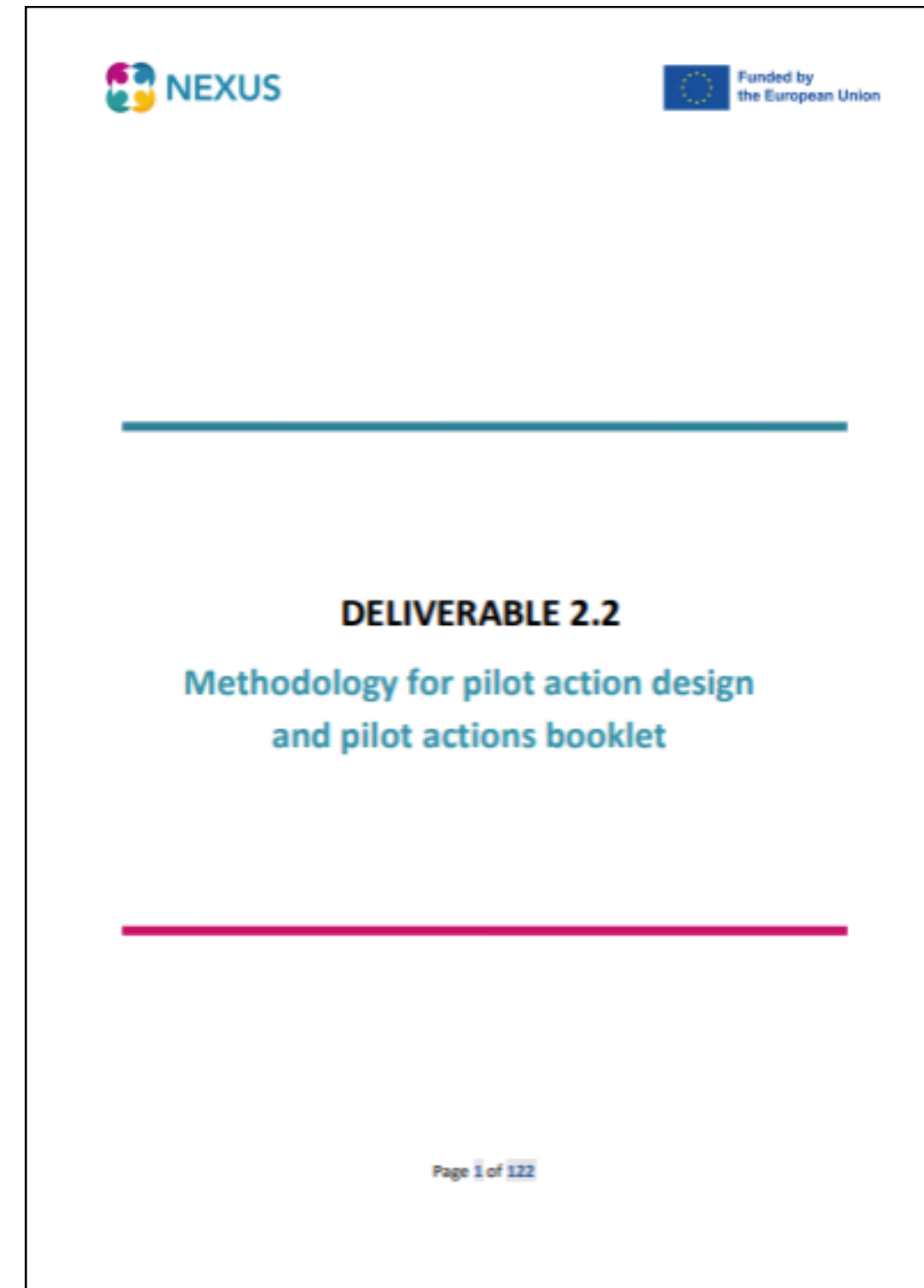
# Risks of co-design and their mitigations

- **Unclear objectives:** when the objectives of a co-design process are not clearly defined or communicated to all participants, it can lead to confusion, divergent interpretations, and ultimately, ineffective outcomes
  - establish **clear and measurable objectives** from the outset, ensuring alignment among all stakeholders and providing a roadmap for the co-design process
- **Going beyond feasibility:** in the enthusiasm of collaboration, there is a risk of generating ideas or solutions that are technically or economically unfeasible
  - balance ideation with **feasibility assessments** to ensure that proposed designs can be realistically implemented within constraints such as budget, time, and available resources
- **Raising expectations and leaving them unmet:** co-design processes have the potential to generate high expectations among stakeholders regarding the outcomes and impact of the project. However, if these expectations are not managed or tempered with realistic assessments of what can be achieved, there is a risk of disappointment and disillusionment
  - set **realistic expectations** from the beginning, communicate transparently about progress and challenges, and **actively involve stakeholders** to foster ownership and understanding of the project's limitations
- **Lack of transparency and accountability:** transparency and accountability are essential for building trust and maintaining the integrity of the co-design process. Without transparency regarding decision-making processes, access to information, and accountability mechanisms, there is a risk of perceptions of favouritism, bias, or exclusion among participants
  - establish **transparent communication channels**, document decision-making processes, and hold all participants accountable for their contributions and commitments throughout the project lifecycle

## D2.2: Methodology for pilot action design and pilot actions booklet

- Provides a structured approach to carrying out workshops (*Open Labs*) with the goal of co-designing inclusive GEP actions
- Offers good practices for integrating the co-design process with meetings with the organisation's management to ensure feasibility
- Includes templates and detailed guidelines for co-design activities

Access the [methodology](#)!





# Training on the co-design of inclusive actions

- Presents co-design
- Provides a structured approach to carrying out workshops (*Open Labs*) with the goal of co-designing inclusive GEP actions, used in the NEXUS project
- Includes a group activity for identifying and co-designing an action

Access the [slides](#)!



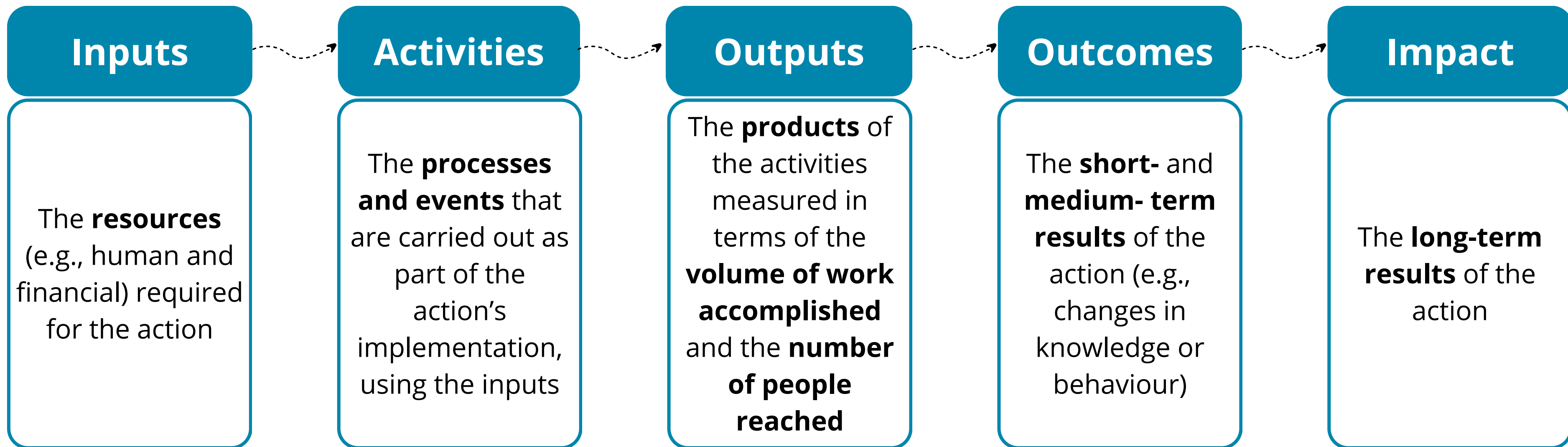
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# Monitoring & Evaluation

Methods and tools



# Monitoring and evaluation are based on the logic model



# What is monitoring?

Monitoring is a **continuous process** involving **systematic data collection** on **specified indicators**

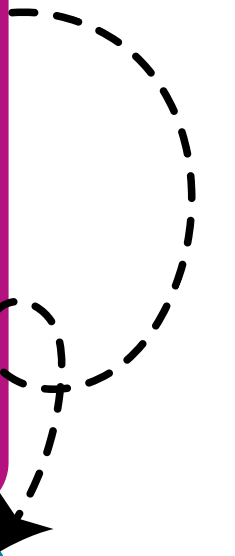
Provides information to management and key stakeholders on **implementation progress, achievement of objectives and use of allocated funds**

Offers understanding of the action's **status and progress**, enabling **corrections and improvements**

Is a means for **transparency and accountability**

Relies on **indicators**

Indicators: “quantitative or qualitative factor[s] or variable[s] of interest” that relate to the action and its results, or to the context in which it takes place, and are “a simple, verifiable, and reliable means” to measure performance (OECD, 2023)



# What is evaluation?

Evaluation assesses the **design, implementation, results** and **significance** of an action at **specific points in time**

A **formative evaluation** takes place **during implementation**, with the goal of improving the delivery of the action. It can inform a **redesign process**, whereby an action is adjusted and fine-tuned to better achieve its objectives

A **summative evaluation** takes place **upon the completion of an action**, to determine the degree to which it achieved its **objectives**

Evaluations should be **in-depth, systematic** and **objective**

# What is the difference between monitoring and evaluation?

**Monitoring** focuses on the **implementation level**, while **evaluation** targets also reflect the **strategic level** (considering, for instance, the alignment between impact and the targets set out in the design stage)

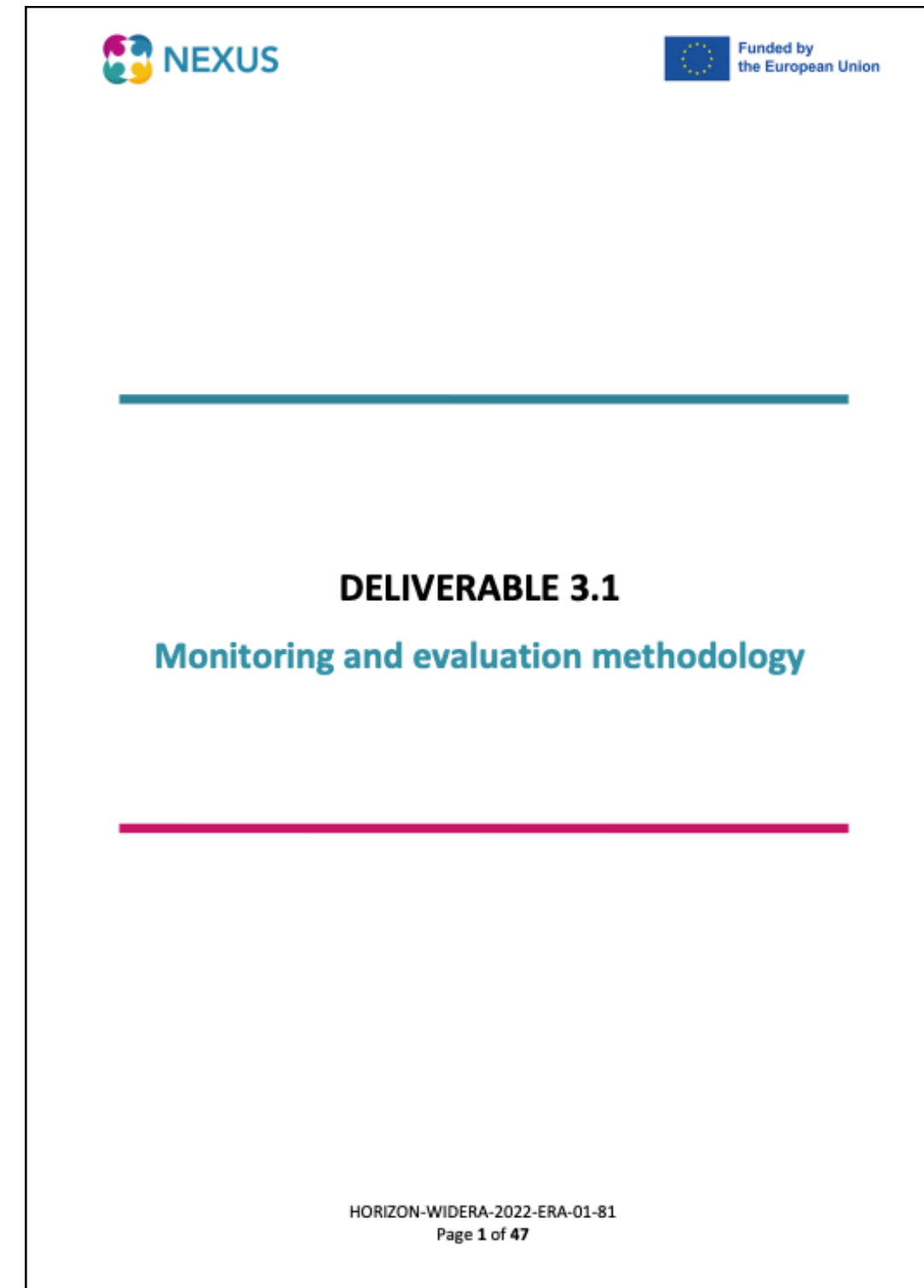
**The two levels are connected:** a good monitoring system supports good evaluations, as it contributes quality data on implementation



## D3.1: Monitoring & Evaluation methodology

- Provides a methodological background focused on the programme theory
- Provides tools for ensuring alignment between design, monitoring and evaluation
- Provides support for defining monitoring indicators
- Contains the NEXUS methodology and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation
- Contains templates for developing a Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and structuring evaluations

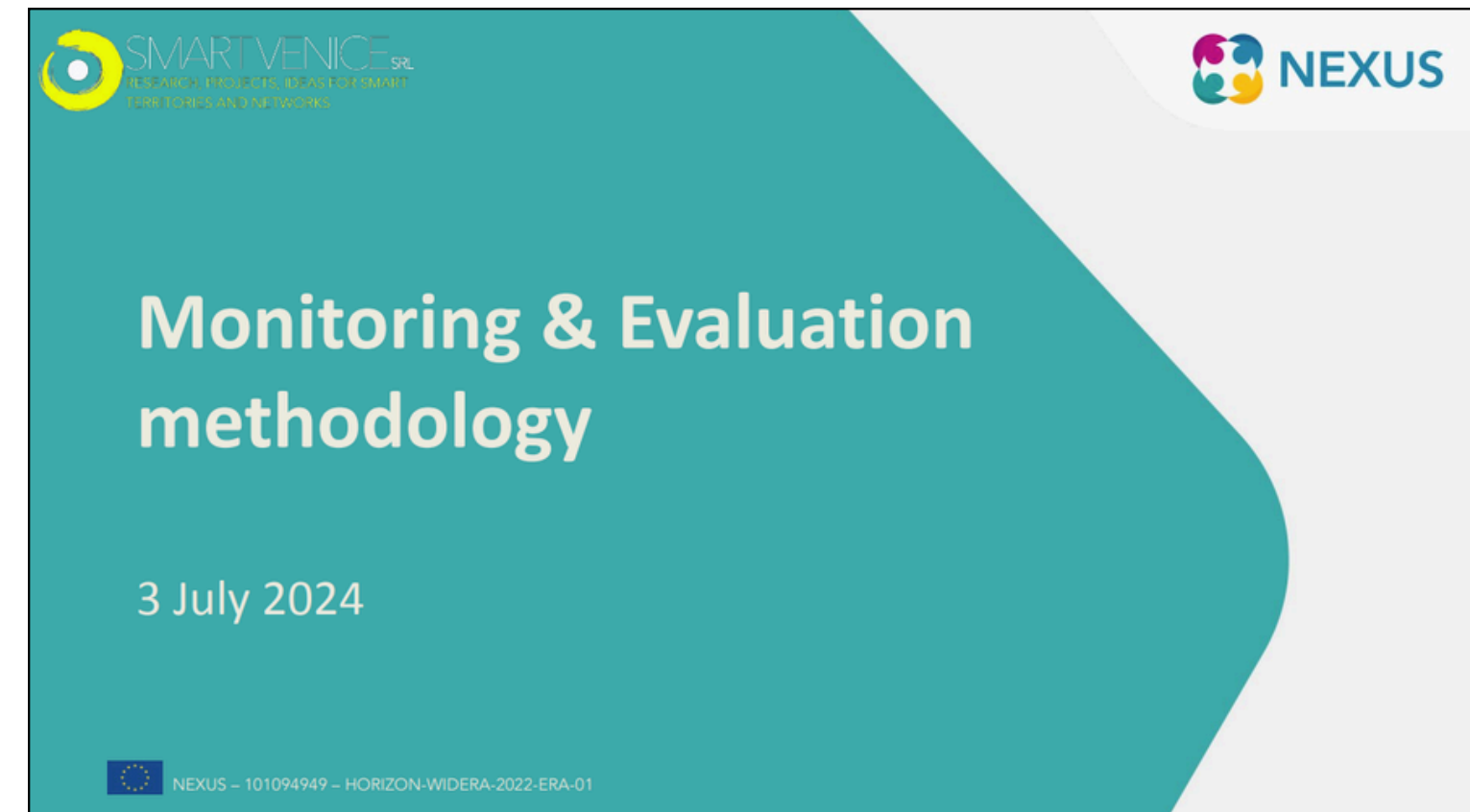
Access the [methodology](#)!



# Training on Monitoring and Evaluation

- Set of slides presenting:
  - How to craft an effective Monitoring & Evaluation Plan
  - How to conduct Evaluation & Redesign workshops
  - How to carry out formative evaluation activities
  - How to prepare for summative evaluation activities

Access the [slides](#)!



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# Intersectional and intersectoral inclusiveness

Training materials



# Training Part 1: Intersectional inclusiveness

- Set of slides presenting:
  - Why integrate an intersectional perspective in structural change processes?
  - Good and promising practices
  - How to concretely integrate the intersectional approach in a GEP



Access the [agenda](#), [preparatory videos](#) and [slides](#)!



# Training Part 2: Intersectoral inclusiveness

- Set of slides presenting:
  - Intersectoral inclusiveness in R&I ecosystems
  - Good and promising practices and related challenges
  - Engaging with external allies

Access the [slides](#)!



# Training Part 3: Overcoming resistances

- Set of slides presenting:
  - Resistances and conflict management styles
  - Co-creating strategies for addressing and overcoming resistances
  - Facilitation principles, tools and planning

Access the [slides](#)!





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# Gender+ dimension in research

Concepts and training materials



# Key topics regarding gender+ equality in R&I

- **Stereotypes** based on gender and other characteristics can lead to unconscious biases; in R&I this and other factors contribute to both **horizontal segregation** (gendered patterns in study choices, sectors and occupations) and **vertical segregation** (underrepresentation of women and other groups in senior roles)
- In biomedical research, ignoring the sex and gender dimensions has led to **biased findings**; similarly, in AI research, AI models often continue to **perpetuate biases**
- Research questions, methodology, data collection, and project dissemination and impact can all benefit from a **gender-sensitive lens**



# Training on Gender(+) in the Content and Methods of Scientific Research

- Set of slides presenting:
  - Key concepts and issues at stake regarding gender+ equality in R&I
  - Examples and tools to integrate a gender+ perspective in the content and methods of scientific research
  - Requirements and resources on gender equality in Horizon Europe



Access the [agenda](#) and [slides](#)!



# Countering gender-based violence in academia

Concepts and training materials

# What is gender-based violence?

- “Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity”
- “Gender-based violence can be sexual, physical, verbal, psychological (emotional), or socio-economic and it can take many forms, from verbal violence and hate speech on the Internet, to rape or murder”
- “It can be perpetrated by anyone: a current or former spouse/partner, a family member, a colleague from work, schoolmates, friends, an unknown person, or people who act on behalf of cultural, religious, state, or intra-state institutions. Gender-based violence, as with any type of violence, is an issue involving relations of power”

Source - [Council of Europe](#)

# The UniSAFE Survey

- Over **42 000 responses** collected across **46 RPOs** in **15 countries**, from January to May 2022
- Nearly **2 in 3** respondents reported experiencing gender-based violence (higher rates among LGBT+ respondents, those with a disability or chronic illness, and those belonging to an ethnic minority)
- Almost **1 in 3** respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment

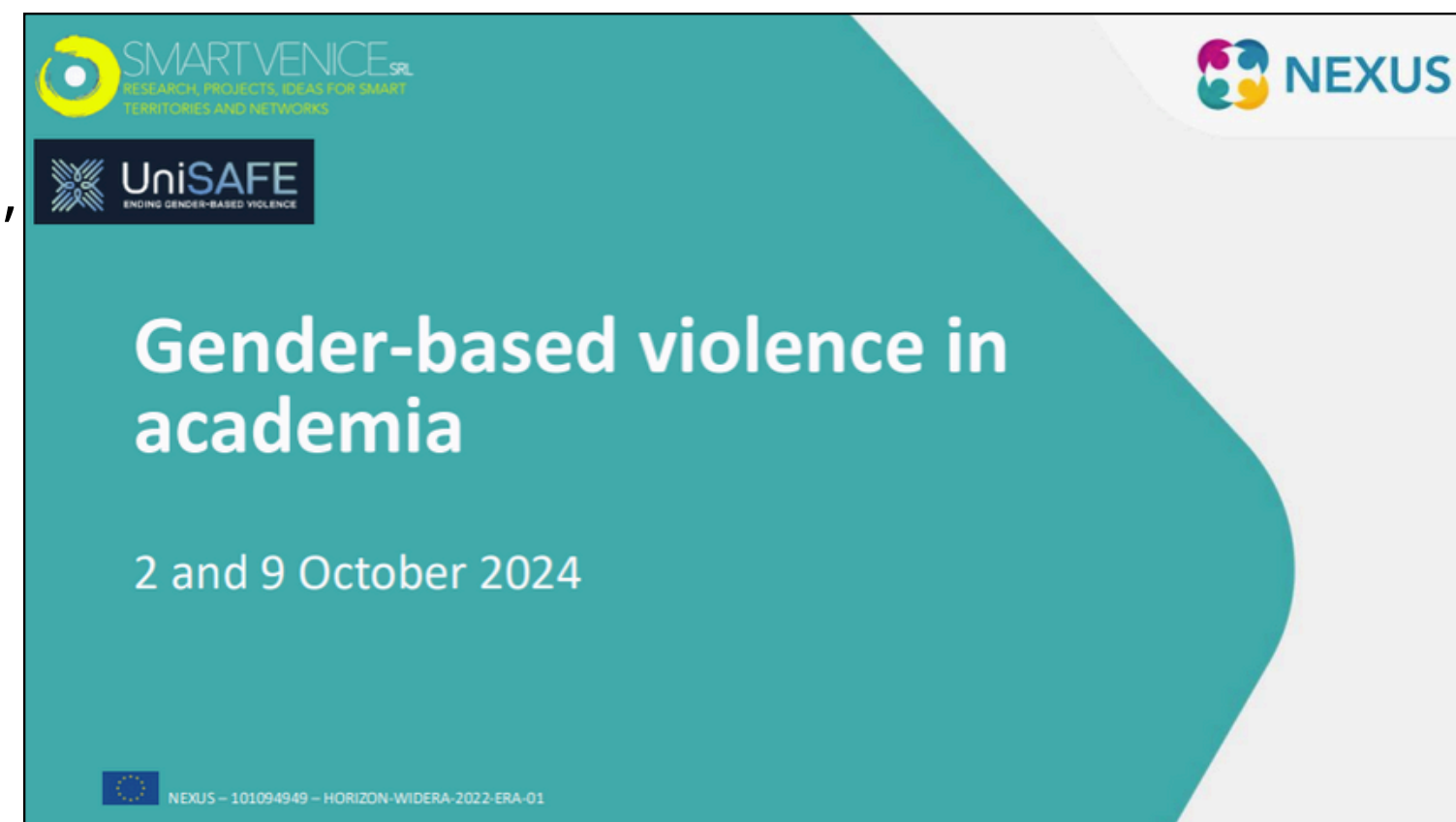
*Source:* Lipinsky, A., Schredl, C., Baumann, H., Humbert, A. L., Tanwar, J., Bondestam, F., Freund, F., Lomazzi, V. (2022). UniSAFE Survey – Gender-based violence and institutional responses. GESIS, Cologne.

<https://doi.org/10.7802/2475>



# Training on GBV in academia

- Training in 2 sessions on understanding gender-based violence through definitions, data and figures, introducing the UniSAFE 7P conceptual framework, and developing an action plan to address GBV in academia
- Additional UniSAFE resources and capacity building materials, including the exercises used in this training, can be found [here](#)



Access the [slides](#)!

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# Extra resources

Online resources from NEXUS and other projects



# Webinar: The impact of anti-gender discourses and politics on academic and research organisations

- Session slides from the Sister Projects Webinar held by NEXUS on 10 February 2025 with 3 guest speakers, about:
  - The presence of anti-gender actors in Europe based on findings from ongoing Horizon Europe projects
  - How anti-gender discourses are infiltrating the policies of HEIs, RPOs and RFOs
  - Strategies and actions to support institutional change for inclusive gender equality in a regressive political climate





GE webinar series - Webinar 4

**The impact of anti-gender discourses and politics on academic and research organizations**

10 February 2025, 11:00 – 12:30 CET

Offered by: 

With:   

 Funded by the European Union

Access the [slides](#)!

Home » Courses » Advancing inclusive Gender Equality Plans in Research Organizations: Knowledge for intersectional and intersectoral approaches

COURSE

## Advancing Inclusive Gender Equality Plans in Research Organizations

Knowledge and Tools for Intersectional and Intersectoral Approaches

Powered by  NEXUS

### What you'll learn

1. How to integrate **intersectional and intersectoral approaches** into research and structural change processes.
2. How to incorporate a **sex and gender dimension** with an intersectional approach into research and teaching.
3. How to address **gender-based violence in academia**.

### Who should enroll?

This course is ideal for: Administration and management staff of research-performing organizations; Academic staff across all fields; Researchers; Doctoral candidates and students in higher education institutions.

### Course format

The course is self-directed, allowing you to start now and progress at your own rhythm. Extra materials, reference lists and optional self-assessments are also included. Upon completing the course and the final quiz, you will obtain a certificate of attendance. Participation is upon registration and free of charge.

**FREE**  
**SELF-PACED**  
**EXTRA**  
**RESOURCES**

# The NEXUS E-learning Course

This innovative course gathers the knowledge and tools developed throughout the NEXUS project. With a focus on intersectional and intersectoral approaches, this course will equip you to foster a more equitable environment in your institution.

Register [here](#)!

# Extra resources



[UniSAFE Toolkit on Ending Gender-Based Violence in Research and Academia](#)

[EIGE Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR tool](#)

[DG RTD Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans](#)

# Tool for evaluating trainings

- To evaluate trainings, NEXUS recommends using an Exit Survey
- You can find an example of an exit survey used in one of the trainings [here](#)
- Please feel free to replicate the structure of the survey for any trainings you carry out, remembering to adapt the questions (e.g., references to the training's specific learning objectives) based on the training you deliver

# References

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