



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

**Deliverable No. 5.2**

## **Institutional data collection and monitoring methodology**

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## Partners



## Summary

This deliverable presents the development, structure and piloting of the GenderSAFE Institutional Assessment Tool, designed to support higher education and research institutions in evaluating their capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence. Grounded in the UniSAFE 7P framework and adapted from the CASPER impact driver model, the tool enables institutions to reflect on their progress, identify gaps, and benchmark their efforts across key impact areas. The report outlines the conceptual foundations of the tool, details its structure and use, and summarises the results of a piloting phase involving multiple institutions. Feedback from pilot users confirmed the tool's clarity, comprehensiveness, and potential to foster institutional learning, while also highlighting areas for improvement. Based on these findings, the deliverable offers key recommendations for enhancing the tool and supporting its future integration into institutional practices for tackling gender-based violence.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DEI	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resources
IDs	Impact Drivers
RFOs	Research Funding Organisations
RPOs	Research Performing Organisations
WP	Work Package

## The GenderSAFE project

**The EU-funded GenderSAFE project promotes zero-tolerance for gender-based violence in the European Research Area and supports research and higher education institutions in establishing safe, inclusive and respectful environments by setting up comprehensive policies.**

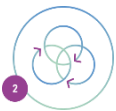
Gender-based violence is a persistent problem in higher education and research institutions across the European Research Area, with severe consequences at the individual, institutional and societal levels. Research from Horizon 2020 project UniSAFE shows that gender-based violence in this context is widespread but remains underreported, suggesting the permissiveness of violence in organisational cultures<sup>1</sup>.

In recent years, policy attention to gender-based violence in higher education and research has grown at the EU level, as well as at the level of responsible national authorities and research performing organisations. Despite advances in policy adoption, institutions are however failing in implementation, and very little is in place to monitor and evaluate existing policies. There is also a lack of understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence and how to proceed when something happens.

Building on the insights and operational tools developed within UniSAFE, from 2024 to 2027 the GenderSAFE project aims to:



**Strengthen zero-tolerance policies:** aiming to create a unified policy approach in the EU by incorporating the latest theoretical insights, focusing on power dynamics, intersectionality, mobility, and precarity.



**Support higher education and research institutions in improving and implementing existing policies:** gathering stakeholders from various contexts to co-design and share zero-tolerance policies on gender-based violence, in line with the EU baseline code of conduct, fostering mutual learning and support.



**Build institutional capacities:** training dedicated staff and a pool of trainers to help organisations develop and implement effective policies against gender-based violence.



**Monitor policies at national and institutional levels:** developing tools to gather and monitor comprehensive data on how zero-tolerance policies are adopted and implemented across the EU, creating a valuable resource for future efforts.



**Raise awareness and advocate:** advocating for decision and policy-makers to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence and engaging stakeholders to take up our outputs.

<sup>1</sup> UniSAFE consortium. (2024). UniSAFE Policy Brief 2: Addressing gender-based violence in higher education and research through institutional change. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10605043>

## 1. Introduction

Gender-based violence remains a deeply rooted problem within the European research and higher education sector. Institutions are increasingly expected to develop robust frameworks for the prevention, identification and response to gender-based violence, not only as a matter of compliance, but also as a reflection of their responsibility to foster inclusive and respectful environments. To support institutions in this direction, the [UniSAFE project](#) developed a comprehensive [Toolkit](#) aimed at guiding research performing organisations (RPOs) in designing and implementing policies on gender-based violence. The Toolkit offers a range of resources including: useful facts and figures, legal and policy framework on gender-based violence at national and international levels, theoretical and practical framework for the 7P theory; resources and capacity-building materials, inspiring practices and more.

In addition, under Task 6.3 and Deliverable 6.2, UniSAFE laid the groundwork for an institutional (self-)assessment methodology. This earlier work was grounded in a multi-level analysis (macro, meso, micro) of empirical data gathered through the UniSAFE survey and was informed by a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings from earlier UniSAFE work packages. This (self-)assessment tool was envisioned as a mechanism to support institutions in critically assessing their progress toward effectively addressing gender-based violence.

Building on this foundation, the GenderSAFE project has taken this work further. Under WP5, and in particular Task 5.3, the full-fledged **Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool** was developed and is presented in this deliverable (D5.2). The tool is modelled similarly to [the institutional assessment tool of the CASPER project](#), featuring a set of Impact Drivers (IDs), each broken down into indicators and assessed across six levels of institutional development, from starting point to full institutionalisation. The tool enables organisations to assess their current policies, practices and support systems in relation to gender-based violence and identify areas where further work is needed to build a coherent, sustainable policy framework. Importantly, the tool is designed to promote self-assessment, but also awareness-raising, institutional learning, and structured reflection.

This deliverable presents the resulting Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool in its conceptual, structural and practical dimensions. The next section introduces the model and the tool, explaining their conceptual foundations, structure, and use. It provides an overview of the Impact Drivers and indicators, the six-stage system, and the reporting functions of the digital platform in which the assessment tool is housed. The third section describes the development process of the tool, including the rationale for the model, its iterative construction, and how it was informed by previous work in UniSAFE and the CASPER assessment tool. Section four outlines the pilot phase conducted with selected institutions, followed by a report on the feedback received and the key recommendations for improvement in sections five and six. The final section offers concluding reflections and suggestions for the future uptake and development of the tool. Supporting materials and the feedback template used during the pilot phase are included in the Annex.



## 2. The assessment model and tool

### 2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE IMPACT DRIVER MODEL

The development of the Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool builds on earlier conceptual, empirical and methodological work carried out under both the UniSAFE and GenderSAFE projects. In particular, Task 6.3 and Deliverable 6.2 of UniSAFE (Strid et al., 2023) provided the initial foundation. The framework developed as part of Task 6.3 was grounded in a multi-level analysis (macro, meso, micro) of empirical data and informed by a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings from earlier UniSAFE work packages. The resulting assessment framework offered a first model for institutional reflection on gender-based violence responses, paving the way for a more operational tool.

The GenderSAFE project, and specifically Task 5.3, operationalised the idea into a fully developed tool that enables institutions to assess their current situation, identify gaps, and take informed steps toward improvement. The overarching objective of Task 5.3 was to create a methodology for institutional-level monitoring of gender-based violence policies, one that goes beyond the presence of policies to assess the institutional capacity for sustainable implementation. This was done in close alignment with recommendations from UniSAFE, the zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence in research and higher education institutions (European Commission, 2024), and the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion.

The development of the tool was modelled closely on the CASPER assessment tool (Mergaert et al., 2022), which was created to support the capacity for implementing gender equality plans in research and academic institutions. Like CASPER, the GenderSAFE tool has the same rationale: in order to ensure the effective development and implementation of a comprehensive policy framework on gender-based violence, certain institutional drivers must be actively strengthened. The current model reflects both theoretical underpinnings (see e.g., Mergaert and Wuiame, 2013; African Development Bank Group, 2011; Taylor, 2010) and the practical knowledge gained from working directly with institutions during the implementation of gender-based violence policies in UniSAFE and GenderSAFE. These frameworks conceptualise institutional transformation as a dynamic and iterative process, where capacity is built progressively across multiple interdependent dimensions. In line with this, the GenderSAFE assessment tool seeks to capture the depth and breadth of institutional responses to gender-based violence, while recognising that no single pathway fits all contexts. Furthermore, it integrates a structural understanding of institutional change and an intersectional perspective, drawing on insights from victims-survivors, stakeholders and underrepresented groups consulted during the GenderSAFE project. The zero-tolerance approach, centring around visibility, shared responsibility, institutional trust, comprehensive action and adequate resources, was a key reference point in the construction of the model and the selection of its impact drivers.

The formulation of the model has been developed through an iterative process. The rubrics describing each level of institutional development were revised and refined multiple times to ensure two critical forms of consistency:

1. **Vertical consistency**—so that similar levels of advancement are comparable across all Impact Drivers and indicators, and
2. **Horizontal consistency**—so that each indicator reflects a gradual, logical progression of institutional maturity across the six stages.



In line with participatory principles, these refinements were also informed by input received from members of the GenderSAFE Community of Practice and subsequently piloted across eleven institutions of varying size, geography and maturity in gender-based violence policy implementation, as explained in the next section. The resulting tool provides institutions with a structured pathway to assess their gender-based violence response framework, monitor progress toward sustainable institutional change, and align their efforts with both EU expectations and sectoral best practice.

## 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL

The Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool is based on a model structured around a set of impact drivers: thematic areas that represent the critical components necessary to embed a comprehensive policy to gender-based violence. In total, the tool comprises seven impact drivers, each of which includes 1–7 indicators designed to measure specific aspects of institutional readiness, commitment, implementation, and progress.

Each indicator captures a distinct yet interrelated element of institutional development: for example, the existence and clarity of policies, availability of trained personnel, or inclusion of intersectional perspectives and more. These indicators enable a nuanced assessment of how gender-based violence is approached across policy, practice, infrastructure, and organisational culture. Table 1 below presents the seven impact drivers of the model and their corresponding indicators.

*Table 1: Impact drivers and their indicators for institutional gender-based violence policy assessment*

Impact Drivers		Indicators
<b>Institutional framework</b>	1.1	Institutional framework for addressing GBV
	1.2	Sustainability / shielding the system from reversibility
<b>Concepts coverage and knowledge of the forms of GBV and their intersections</b>	2.1	Coverage and definitions of the forms of GBV
	2.2	Intersectionality
<b>Victim-centred approach for addressing GBV</b>	3.1	Victim-centred approach for addressing gender-based violence
<b>Available competencies, capacity-building initiatives, and support material</b>	4.1	Knowledge and internal expertise on GBV
	4.2	Capacity-building initiatives on addressing GBV
	4.3	Availability and accessibility of support materials for GBV related work
<b>Leadership commitment</b>	5.1	Leadership commitment to addressing gender-based violence
<b>Transparent communication about institutional policies and measures</b>	6.1	Internal transparency about what the institution is doing to address gender-based violence (policies, data on prevalence, measures, knowledge, and support structures)
	6.2	External transparency about what the institution does to address gender-based violence
<b>Coverage of the different Ps</b>	7.1	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Prevalence)

Impact Drivers		Indicators
	7.2	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Prevention)
	7.3	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Protection)
	7.4	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Prosecution)
	7.5	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Provision of services)
	7.6	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Partnerships)
	7.7	Comprehensiveness and use of the 7P model (Policy)

To assess progress, the model adopts a six-stage maturity framework, inspired by the institutional development stages used in the model assessing GEP capacity for research and higher education institutions (Mergaert et al, 2022), developed under the CASPER project. These stages range from the **starting point** (Level 0), where little or no action is in place, to **full institutionalisation** (Level 5), where structures, policies and practices are embedded, continuously improved, and broadly owned across the organisation. The stages allow institutions to self-assess where they currently stand, while also identifying actionable steps for moving forward. They acknowledge that progress is not linear and that institutions may be at different stages across different Impact Drivers. Figure 1 displays the 6 stages of institutional development for gender-based violence.

Each indicator is assessed using a **rubric** that outlines what performance at each of the six levels looks like. These rubrics serve as both diagnostic and developmental tools: they help institutions understand their current status, and they offer concrete descriptions of what progress entails. The rubrics are not rigid checklists; rather, they are qualitative reference points that guide structured reflection, dialogue, and strategic planning. Each rubric is based on insights gained from the UniSAFE and GenderSAFE experience and from lessons drawn from pilot institutions and stakeholder exchanges conducted under both UniSAFE and GenderSAFE.

Table 2 below shows an example of an impact driver as it appears in the model. In this case, Impact Driver 1 (Institutional framework) is shown along with its two indicators and associated rubrics corresponding to the six stages of institutionalisation.

Figure 1: Stages of institutional development

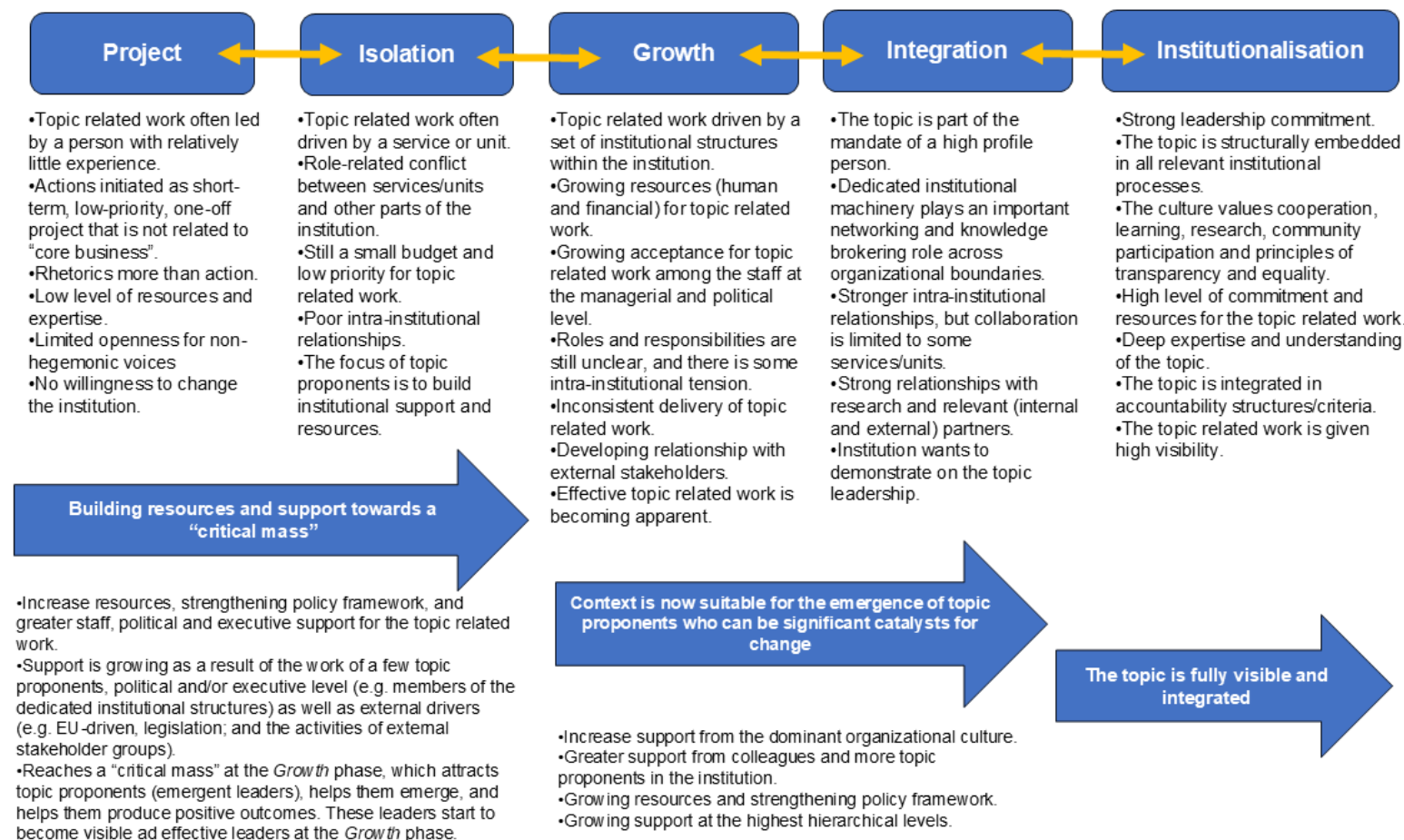


Table 2: Impact driver 1 and its indicators

Impact Driver 1	Indicator 1.1: Institutional framework for addressing gender-based violence					
	Starting point	Project	Inception	Growth	Integration	Institutionalisation
Institutional framework	Policies that explicitly address GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, and other necessary measures for institutional change are not in place	Policies addressing GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, or other necessary measures for institutional change are planned, in their own right or as part of another institutional priority	Policies on GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, or other necessary measures for institutional change are under development or recently adopted, but in a scattered way and without clear vision	Policies on GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on addressing GBV, a budget frame, and other necessary measures for institutional change are in place with resources and responsibilities allocated	There is a coherent and functioning framework in place with policies, management roles, allocated responsibilities and resources	Next to a coherent and functioning framework, there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation of GBV policies and measures informing institutional programmes/policies and processes
	Indicator 1.2: Sustainability / shielding the system from reversibility					
	Starting point	Project	Inception	Growth	Integration	Institutionalisation
	There are no initiatives, activities, resources or coordination to address GBV	There are one-off, ad hoc activities or initiatives, or ad hoc investigations into reported cases	There is awareness of the need to conduct activities in a more systematic way, to make them less fragile, and there are plans to make initiatives and activities more stable	The institution is working towards organising its policies and activities in a structured and coherent way, with allocated resources and personnel, but with uncertainty about their continued availability over time	GBV policies and measures are linked to, embedded in and protected by strategic objectives and/or visions, the definition of roles and responsibilities, the allocation of longer-term budget lines and/or quality assurance mechanisms and/or audit processes, and increasingly supported across the institutional bodies	Existing activities are embedded, developed and adapted to institutional needs, protected against reversibility and included in an institutional monitoring and evaluation framework, with a long-term budget frame

## 2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

The Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool is made available to users through a user-friendly online platform using the software Brilliant Assessments™. Each user/team can access the platform independently without the need to create a profile and can complete the assessment at their own pace. The platform supports saving progress at any time, making it easier for teams to complete the assessment collaboratively, involve multiple stakeholders, or return to the tool as part of a longer internal process of reflection and planning.

To support preparatory work, users are provided with a preview file that outlines all seven IDs and their associated indicators. At the start of the assessment, users are asked to provide some basic institutional information and a contact email. The institutional information includes the name, location and type of the organisation (public/private HEI, RPO, RFO, etc.), whether there is a GEP in place (and when it was approved), whether gender-based violence is addressed in other strategic documents, and headcount of all staff and gender if available, as well as headcount of students (if relevant).

Users are then asked to review each indicator and select the level that best describes their current institutional situation. To support this process, additional information and clarifications are provided for some indicators. Moreover, it is also recommended that assessors provide a brief justification or explanation of each given rating. In this way, the tool can serve to monitor the progress that is made in the organisation towards building institutional capacity for addressing gender-based violence. Dedicated space for this justification is provided after each indicator. Additional space is reserved for any 'evidence' or proof to justify the rating. Completing it will allow assessors to gain a better insight into how the institution could sustain any claims made with regard to the capacity addressing gender-based violence, in case of an external audit.

Figures 2 and 3 provide a visual impression of the tool's first page and the assessment page for the first impact driver. While the tool is self-administered, it is designed to foster internal dialogue, reflection and a sense of ownership. It is recommended to complete it in a small working group (such as members of a gender equality committee, HR department or diversity office) or as part of a broader participatory process that brings together staff, students, leadership and survivor support services. On average, institutions may require 2–3 hours to complete the assessment, particularly when it involves consultation and discussion among different stakeholders.

Once the assessment is completed, the platform generates a customised report based on the user's input that visualises the institution's current stage of development across all impact drivers and provides recommendations for further progress. The report includes:

- A **spider graph** that provides an at-a-glance overview of institutional performance across the different impact drivers and the six stages of institutionalisation.
- A **detailed narrative** for each impact driver, presenting:
  - The level of institutionalisation, calculated as the average score assigned to each of its indicators (shown as a progress bar)
  - Recommended actions to reach the next level (described in an accompanying text).

The total score of each impact driver is calculated as the average score of the scores allocated to each respective indicator(s).

**Figure 2: Screenshot from online platform - Introduction data**

Introduction data

Are you completing this assessment for the whole organisation or for an organisational unit (such as faculty, centre etc. without a legal subjectivity)?

For the whole organisation ▼

Note: Depending on the answer provided above, please answer the following questions for the entity that is being assessed.

Name of your organisation/institution

Where is your organisation/institution located? (Country)

France ▼

**Figure 3: Screenshot from online platform - impact driver 1**

Please select the rubric that is more applicable for the indicator "Institutional framework for addressing gender-based violence":

- ☐ Policies that explicitly address GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, and other necessary measures for institutional change are not in place
- ☐ Policies addressing GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, or other necessary measures for institutional change are planned, in their own right or as part of another institutional priority
- ☐ Policies on GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, or other necessary measures for institutional change are under development or recently adopted, but in a scattered way and without clear vision
- ☐ Policies on GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on addressing GBV, a budget frame, and other necessary measures for institutional change are in place with resources and responsibilities allocated
- ☐ There is a coherent and functioning framework in place with policies, management roles, allocated responsibilities and resources
- ☐ Next to a coherent and functioning framework, there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation of GBV policies and measures informing institutional programmes/policies and processes

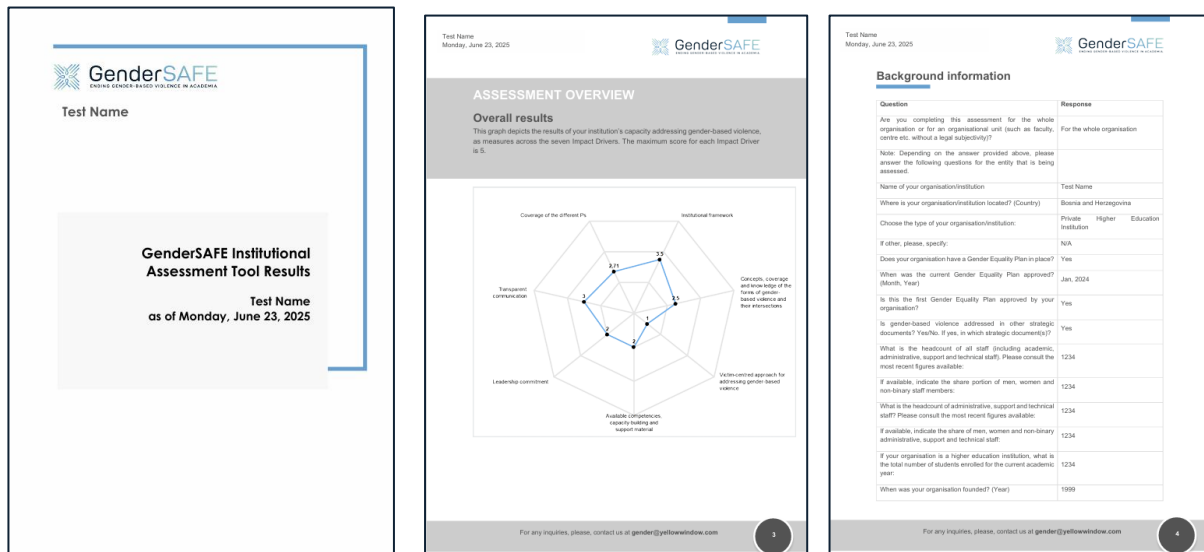
Justify / explain the assessment chosen (for your internal use and future reference)

Provide references for evidence/proof (for your internal use and future reference)

The report is exported as a .pdf and shared via email. It can be used internally as a discussion tool, progress tracker or starting point for deeper strategic development. Institutions are encouraged to revisit the tool periodically (e.g. annually) to monitor their progress over time. Figure 4 provides a visual impression of the first pages of the generated report.



Figure 4: Screenshots from a sample generated report



## 2.4 BENCHMARKING

While the current version of the tool focuses on internal self-assessment and institutional learning, the design allows for future benchmarking capabilities. If a sufficiently large number of institutions completes the assessment, anonymised and aggregated data can be used to offer benchmarking insights, allowing organisations to compare their progress against a peer group (e.g. by size, country, type of institution, or stage of gender-based violence policy implementation). This functionality will enhance mutual learning and allow institutions to better position themselves within broader sectoral efforts toward zero tolerance of gender-based violence across Europe.

## 3. The piloting of the model and tool

### 3.1 TESTING PROCESS

To validate the Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool, a piloting phase was conducted with institutions from different EU countries. Answering a call among the members of the GenderSAFE Community of Practice, 16 organisations agreed to test the tool, of which 11 provided their feedback by the deadline for this deliverable. Participants were asked to provide structured feedback on the clarity, usability and relevance of the tool (both in .pdf format and through the online platform) and its accompanying guidelines. Feedback was collected through a written form as well as direct comments in the [pdf preview file](#) to the testers. In terms of timing, the testers' package was sent out on 27 June 2025 and feedback was requested by 8 August 2025.

The pilot test of the tool has been performed by seven higher education institutions (Charles University, Czech Republic; Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus; Hochschule Ruhr West, Germany; Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom; University of Deusto, Spain; University of Rzeszow, Poland; University of Zurich; Switzerland), two Research Funding Organisations (RFOs)



(Swiss National Science Foundation, Switzerland; Vinnova, Sweden) and two research organisations not providing higher education (CNRS, France; Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Germany).

These piloting Institutions reflect diversity in terms of geographic location, size, institutional structure (higher education institution vs. research institute vs. research funding organisation), and level of advancement in gender equality and gender-based violence-related work. All participating institutions were suitable candidates for piloting the tool, being actively engaged in GenderSAFE activities and developing or refining their institutional gender-based violence policies.

The piloting process followed a structured approach. Participating institutions received a pre-public version of the tool in its online format, along with a supporting guidance note and a standardised feedback template (see Appendix 1) to capture their reflections. The process consisted of the following steps:

1. **Initial familiarisation:** The teams were asked to review (1) the guidance note and (2) the preview version of the tool to familiarise themselves with the impact drivers, indicators, and six-stage rubric structure.
2. **Internal reflection and scoring:** Teams, usually composed of two to four change agents (e.g. members of gender equality committees, HR officers, DEI leads), were invited to independently reflect on their institution's position before coming together for a facilitated session. Some participants discussed their views and reached a consensus score for each indicator. Others individually pre-assessed each impact driver and met together to finalise the scoring.
3. **Completion of the online tool:** Institutions completed the full assessment using the online platform. The estimated time for completion ranged between 2 to 3 hours, depending on how many stakeholders were involved in the internal discussions.
4. **Structured feedback submission:** After completing the tool, each institution submitted a structured feedback form, reflecting on their experience using the platform, the clarity of the rubrics, the accuracy of the developmental stages, and providing suggestions for improvement. Institutions also shared their views on the tool's added value for self-reflection and planning, as well as any difficulties encountered.

### 3.2 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

The piloting institutions first delivered feedback on the **user-friendliness, clarity and completeness of the guidelines** that accompanied the online tool and its preview in .pdf format. Overall, the guidelines and the tool preview were generally deemed clear, self-explanatory and easy to navigate. A few participants suggested improving the file's formatting for ease of use, especially in printed form. Some also requested enhanced colour-coding and a more visible "back" button to improve navigation on the online platform. One participant highlighted the necessity of the preview file, particularly for newcomers. Another noted that further elaboration on the practical modalities of using the tool would be beneficial. This may include outlining how many individuals are ideally involved in the assessment process, from which institutional areas they should be recruited and an estimated timeframe for completing the tool. One tester suggested that preparatory work may facilitate the self-assessment, including the encouragement for assessors to review the "Zero-tolerance code of conduct: Counteracting gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in the EU research and innovation system" (European Commission, 2024) to help place the tool in context. It was also suggested that compiling all relevant documents, such as internal policies, statistical data on staff,

and other institutional documents, before starting the self-assessment would facilitate completion. Locating the relevant documents may be time-consuming and require contacting personnel responsible.

As for the team's **experience of applying the tool** (level of complexity; degree of required knowledge about the organisation; time to complete; etc.), testers were generally positive about the tool and most found it well-structured with clear explanations provided for each indicator. Participants appreciated the inclusion of clarifying notes in the last column of the preview file, which helped to determine the score. Most teams noted the need for a high-level of institutional knowledge to complete the tool effectively, highlighting the critical role of choosing the appropriate staff roles for conducting the assessment. The time required to complete the tool varied from 1 to 1.5 hours to 3.5 hours, depending on internal dynamics and institutional familiarity with gender-based violence related structures. It also transpires that the tool may feel discouraging for institutions without a dedicated gender-based violence policy and here the motivational aspect of the tool should be prominently highlighted as indicating a pathway forward.

While the tool has been principally designed for RPOs, further guidance will be needed for RFOs to clearly differentiate between internal policies governing the internal operation of the RFO and external policies governing applicants and their staff members.

Asked for any **unclearities, doubts or other issues related to the interpretation of the impact drivers, indicators and rubrics**, as well as the clarifications provided in the last column of the preview file, participants found them overall clear and easy to understand while we again note the need for a certain degree of expertise in addressing gender-based violence to navigate the tool. Three participants requested more examples to support interpretation, particularly when deciding between adjacent levels, highlighting the need for participatory approach involving multiple institutional actors to decide on borderline situations. One tester noted certain terms, such as "intersectionality," may feel overly academic and less connected to day-to-day operational realities. The same tester also emphasised the need for realistic assessment, which again underscores the importance of participatory and co-creative approach to the assessment involving different functions. An RPO tester from a large, diverse educational institution noted that the institution's size made it difficult to determine whether certain responses should be provided at the university or faculty level. They also observed that, in a context where faculties have high autonomy and some rectorate-led activities are not mandatory, implementation can vary across faculties, making the assessment process more complex.

When asked about the **usefulness of the tool in assessing the sustainability and impact of addressing gender-based violence**, the assessing teams mostly deemed it very useful, especially in terms of impact. It was acknowledged that the tool fosters self-reflection, highlighting key areas that need to be further addressed and strengthened. For institutions new to the topic, the tool was seen as a valuable framework for identifying priority areas for action, even though for smaller institutions it might be more realistic to start with targeted measures than having a broader framework. One tester stated that their ability to perform the assessment was affected by the resistance of the institution to develop a policy on gender-based violence. It was repeated here that the profile of participants and their institutional knowledge about policies but also leadership style are key.

Regarding the question whether **an external evaluator** could adequately assess an organisation with this tool, or whether it is only/best to be used for self-assessment, most participants agree that an external evaluation cannot provide accurate evaluation due to the lack of deep institutional understanding and the lack of policies/procedures available online. For such an extensive review, adequate resources, time and interviews are required.

Feedback from one tester acknowledged the conceptual clarity and usability of the tool, while also noting areas where **further clarification for users** could be beneficial. In particular, they suggested making the tool's dual role, primarily as a self-assessment instrument but also with potential for comparative analysis across institutions, more explicit in accompanying communication and guidance. They also highlighted the importance of clear information on how institutional data will be curated and used, given that some content, while not personal data, may still be sensitive or subject to internal restrictions. This underscores the need for transparent informed consent procedures, clear communication on data ownership, and guidance for users on managing information that may require internal authorisation before sharing.

Some teams reflected on the potential use of the tool at the departmental level, suggesting that this could reveal internal variations, highlight good practices within specific units and generate evidence for institutional learning. Others proposed that the tool could be translated into other languages to support its use by a wider range of institutions across different national contexts. All participants agreed that they would recommend the tool to others.

Taken together, these suggestions underline the relevance of refining both the technical usability and conceptual clarity of the tool, as well as reinforcing its value as an institutional learning and reflection resource. By taking these insights into account, the tool can better support institutions at various stages of progress, across different national and organisational contexts.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

This deliverable presents the GenderSAFE Institutional Gender-based Violence Policy Assessment Tool in its current form, capturing the development and refinement process to date, the insights gained from piloting, and the constructive feedback received. The tool is now well-positioned for further fine-tuning and enhancement ahead of its launch. The work undertaken so far provides a strong, evidence-based foundation for a self-assessment approach that will support institutions in strengthening and embedding their responses to gender-based violence.

The feedback received confirms the tool's potential to support institutional learning and structured reflection around institutional gender-based violence policies and measures. In particular, piloting institutions appreciated the comprehensive and clear structure of the tool, the clarity of the indicators and rubrics, and its grounding in the 7P model. Participants acknowledged the tool's usefulness in assessing institutional maturity and identifying gaps. However, the piloting process also highlighted several key considerations. While most teams found the tool user-friendly, they also noted that meaningful completion requires deep understanding of institutional structures, policies, and dynamics. The piloting also drew attention to possible technical improvements and content suggestions. Participants called for better navigation of the online platform, clarification of some rubrics and terminology and more examples to support scoring. Two respondents emphasised the need for adaptations for RFOs' context, and three others expressed interest in using the tool not only at institutional level but also at department or unit level to generate evidence of good practices. Based on the piloting, several recommendations can be formulated:

- **Clarify purpose** – Define whether the tool is for self-assessment, comparative assessment, or both, and explain related data use, visibility, and benchmarking.
- **Add guidance** – Include more explanations and examples to support consistent scoring across contexts.

- **Streamline indicators** – Simplify complex or overlapping indicators, especially in Impact Driver 7.
- **Improve accessibility** – Translate into more languages and adapt for RFOs.

In conclusion, the GenderSAFE Institutional Assessment Tool presents a valuable means of strengthening institutional capacity to address gender-based violence. Piloting has confirmed its relevance and ease of use, while also pointing to clear opportunities for refinement. The next stage will focus on implementing these improvements to enhance the tool's robustness, accessibility and impact in driving institutional change.

## Appendix – Template for feedback on the use of the institutional gender-based violence policy assessment tool

### Supporting guidance for the completion of the GenderSAFE Institutional Assessment Tool

#### Steps to follow:

1. **Form a small team**

Identify **2–3 colleagues** (e.g. people involved in institutional policy design on gender-based violence and implementation, change agents, gender equality/DEI officers, ombudspersons) from your institution to complete the assessment together.

2. **Review the tool preview**

It is recommended that each team member reads through the **preview file** ([available here](#)) and reflects individually on how your institution might score across the **6 institutionalisation stages**. Read the last column for more details for each indicator.

3. **Preparation for the joint assessment session**

Before holding the joint session, we advise you to fill the first page of the assessment as it requires some administrative information. **Access the online tool [here](#). Upon completion of the first page, you can “save progress” (top right corner) and access the tool again using the link sent to the email you added.**

4. **Hold a joint assessment session**

Meet as a team to agree on a **consolidated assessment**. Plan for a session of around **2.5 to 3 hours**.

► Please note any **issues, unclear concepts, or questions** that arise during this session. These will be important for your feedback.

**Access the online assessment tool [here](#), or through the link you received in your email (if you completed step 3 already).**

*Note that all questions are mandatory. If any question doesn't apply to you, fill it with Not Applicable or N/A.*

5. **Submit your feedback**

After completing the tool, fill out the **feedback form** (template in the Annex), reflecting on:

- Ease/difficulty of using the tool
- Any unclear items or concepts
- Time needed and team process
- Suggestions for improvement

6. **Send us your feedback report by 8 August** (or earlier if possible):

Send your file to [panagiota.polykarpou@yellowwindow.com](mailto:panagiota.polykarpou@yellowwindow.com) and ccied [\[lut.mergaert@yellowwindow.com\]](mailto:lut.mergaert@yellowwindow.com).




Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this testing phase. Your insights and feedback will greatly enhance the development of the assessment tool.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at [panagiota.polykarpou@yellowwindow.com](mailto:panagiota.polykarpou@yellowwindow.com).

## FEEDBACK FORM

1. **Organisation name:**
2. **Number of persons who took part in the self-assessment using the tool, their position in the organisation and role in the core team:**
3. **Date on which the self-assessment was done:**
4. **The guidelines provide information on the suggested approach for doing the self-assessment. Please briefly describe how you proceeded as regards preparation, consultation (if any), discussions, decisions, ... - either individually or in group:**
5. **Please comment on the user-friendliness, clarity (is it self-explanatory?), completeness of the guidelines for the use of the tool:**
6. **Please provide your overall impression of the (self-)assessment tool and comment on your experience of applying it (ease/difficulty; level of complexity; degree of required knowledge about the organisation; time it took to complete it; ...):**
7. **Please comment on any unclarities, doubts or other issues you had related to the interpretation of the Impact Drivers and indicators, as well as the clarifications provided in the last column [here](#) / under each instruction (see highlighted below).**

≡ Institutional framework
22%
Save Progress 

Please select the rubric that is more applicable for the indicator "Institutional framework for addressing gender-based violence":

An institutional framework goes beyond a single action or measure addressing gender-based violence. This indicator refers to the growing robustness and embeddedness of the institutional approach.

☐ Policies that explicitly address GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, and other necessary measures for institutional change are not in place

☐ Policies addressing GBV, responsible management roles, expertise on GBV, a budget frame, or other necessary measures for institutional change are planned, in their own right or as part of another institutional priority

8. **Please comment on any unclarities, doubts or other issues related to the interpretation of the rubrics in the assessment model (please provide the respective indicators' numbers).**
9. **Please comment on how useful, adequate, relevant, ... you find the tool to assess the sustainability and impact of addressing gender-based violence:**
10. **Please comment on whether you think an external evaluator could adequately assess an organisation with this tool, or whether it is only/best to be used for self-assessment:**
11. **Do you have suggestions for improvements to the tool, guidelines, process, or otherwise?**
12. **Would you recommend this tool to others? Why (not)?**
13. **Any other comments?**

**Date of completing this feedback report:**



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