



Awareness handout for student-organised events at Ruhr-University Bochum









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## 1. Preface

Awareness team, awareness concept, awareness work - for some years now, many events, such as parties, have been accompanied by such structures of 'conscious perception'. The aim is to make events safer and less discriminatory for all participants - through certain planning measures in advance, but also through specific contact persons on site.

For the <u>Initiative Awareness</u>, awareness means 'establishing and maintaining a considerate, responsible, and solidary interaction with one another. The aim is to create spaces that strengthen the self-determination of different communities - in a spirit of solidarity and in a partisan manner. Through awareness work, we learn to respect everyone's boundaries and to oppose discrimination and violence. And we learn how to support people who experience discrimination."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, student events at many universities are also accompanied by awareness work, and we want to establish this at Ruhr-University Bochum as well. There are already a variety of tools and structures in place at Ruhr-University Bochum to prevent discrimination and adopt a diversity-sensitive attitude. Since the <u>anti-discrimination guideline</u><sup>2</sup> of the Ruhr-University Bochum was adopted in January 2023, students have also been comprehensively protected against discrimination in a university context. In addition, <u>the handouts on gender-sensitive language</u><sup>3</sup> and <u>on dealing with sensitive content in teaching</u><sup>4</sup>, and not least the <u>Code of Freedom and Diversity at Ruhr-University Bochum</u><sup>5</sup>, contribute to a climate of conscious perception at our university. This handout is intended to complement these efforts. It was created in cooperation between the <u>Ruhr-University's Central Equal Opportunities Office</u> and the project <u>'OUR CAMPUS - a campaign against sexism at Ruhr-University Bochum'</u>. In addition, needs, ideas and feedback from the student councils and other Ruhr-University's interest groups were incorporated. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all contributors!

The aim of this handout is to support student organisers by taking awareness principles into account when planning events and thus contribute to a more inclusive and discrimination-sensitive interaction at events. The handout does not represent a general awareness concept for all student-organised events at Ruhr-University Bochum but is rather intended to provide information and to function as a tool for developing specific awareness concepts and implementing them pragmatically. The scope of this handbook is aimed at events organised by students for students. We are addressing all student organisers of events for students, whether student councils or other initiatives and groups. However, this guide certainly also contains useful tips for other types of events, non-student organisers or non-student events.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Initiative Awareness e.V. (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Anti-discrimination policy of Ruhr-University Bochum, 2023 (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Handout for gender-inclusive language, 2023 (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Handout on dealing with sensitive content in teaching, 2024 (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Code of Freedom and Diversity at RUHR-UNIVERSITY BOCHUM, 2022 (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

Since awareness work thrives on application, practice, and reflection, we invite you to engage with the contents of this handout within teams that organise student events, but also to use additional educational offers<sup>6</sup> and further literature and materials (see chapter 7) on the topic.

We wish you a lot of success in planning and organising events for students and look forward to receiving feedback on this guide at <a href="mailto:unsercampus@rub.de">unsercampus@rub.de</a>.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In the summer semester 2024 and winter semester 2024/2025, for example, we offer workshops for the Ruhr-University Bochum student councils to jointly deepen the topic of awareness at events. You can find more information on the website: UNSER CAMPUS - a campaign against sexism at Ruhr-University Bochum.

# 2. Why is awareness work needed at events?

In our society, it is not uncommon for people to experience devaluation and discrimination (at events) or to engage in discriminatory behaviour themselves. This dynamic characterises many aspects of our coexistence and can lead to various forms of disadvantage, exclusion and discrimination based on different identity characteristics or attributions.

In event contexts, we endeavour to create a space in which identity formation can be found and encounters can take place, ideally with the aim of forming a community. Student-organised events such as parties, first year trips and barbecues on campus are often places of fun and community. However, the experiences of participants vary greatly. While some experience a positive celebration or a productive conference, others may experience exclusion or verbal, physical or sexualised discrimination.

Discrimination is defined as follows in the <u>anti-discrimination directive of Ruhr-University Bochum</u>, which form the basis of our interaction on campus:

"[...] (2) Discrimination is unjustified unequal treatment of a person or a group of persons on the basis of one or more of the following characteristics or attributions:

- Sex and gender identity,
- Ethnic origin and nationality (racist, anti-Semitic or ethnicising attributions),
- Disability or chronic/long-term illness,
- sexual orientation,
- Marital status or family obligations,
- social origin or social status,
- religion or ideology,
- age,
- appearance"<sup>7</sup>

Some forms of discrimination are obvious, while others remain subtle or hidden and may not be recognised as such.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Anti-discrimination directive of the Ruhr-University Bochum, 2023:2.

The <u>Ruhr-University's anti-discrimination directive</u> also describes the levels and forms in which discrimination can manifest itself:

- "[...] (3) Discrimination can occur directly if an act or measure is related to a person or a group of persons.
- (4) Discrimination may also occur indirectly if an action or measure has an effect at a structural or institutional level, even if it appears to be neutral, in such a way that certain groups of persons are regularly disadvantaged on a ground specified in Section 3 (2).
- (5) Harassment is discrimination if the purpose or effect of unwanted behaviour related to a ground referred to in Section 3 (2) is to violate the dignity of the person concerned and to create an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or offensive environment.
- (6) Sexual harassment is discrimination where unwanted sexually explicit conduct, including unwanted sexual activities and requests for such activities, sexually explicit physical contact, comments of a sexual nature and the unwanted display or visible depiction of pornographic images, has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- (7) Violence is any physical activity through which physical coercion is exerted in order to overcome resistance that has been offered or is expected. Violence can be exercised through physical assault or in other non-verbal ways if a coercive physical reaction is triggered in the person concerned [...].
- (8) Stalking refers to the intentional and repeated following, stalking or harassment of a person in such a way that their way of life is seriously impaired or even their safety is threatened. Stalking can take many different forms [...].
- (9) Bullying is a conflict-laden communication or action between or among individuals or groups of individuals in which the person or group of persons concerned is inferior and is systematically, purposefully and continuously, i.e. in a continuous manner, hostile and harassed by one or more persons with the aim or consequence that the persons concerned are made to feel insecure and degraded and excluded from their study or work environment. Bullying can be an expression of psychological violence [...]" 8

The appendix of <u>the Ruhr-University's anti-discrimination directive</u> contains many illustrative examples of individual forms of discrimination and boundary-crossing behaviour.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Anti-discrimination directive of the Ruhr-University Bochum, 2023:2.

#### Experiences of discrimination at events

Discrimination manifests itself in a variety of ways, from overt and violent forms to more subtle but no less harmful acts known as microaggressions. Microaggressions are everyday verbal or non-verbal behaviours that intentionally or unintentionally convey racist, sexist, anti-queer and/or other discriminatory messages. Microaggressions manifest themselves in various forms, such as supposedly well-intentioned compliments that reproduce stereotypical assumptions or derogatory remarks aimed at the 'Otherness' of the person(s) concerned. A classic example is the question 'Where are you really from?', which signals to non-white persons that they are perceived as 'foreign'. Psychological studies show that supposedly harmless microaggressions have serious consequences for affected individuals and groups and impact them in a variety of ways: they affect mental health, create a hostile environment in the workplace or on campus, reduce productivity in the workplace, reduce problem-solving skills and can lead to physical health problems (Sue, 2010)<sup>9</sup>. Microaggressions also contribute to inequality in education, employment and health care and reproduce discrimination at various levels (Sue & Spanierman, 2020)<sup>10</sup>. Microaggressions and discrimination create an environment that can negatively impact attendance at events for participants.

Discriminatory incidents not only have a serious impact on those directly affected but can also affect the sense of safety of all participants. Inhibitions to address and make visible experiences of discrimination that have been experienced or observed are widespread and are fuelled by the persistent myth that those affected are partly to blame for discriminatory assaults. Victims are often interrogated about their (consumer) behaviour (and their outfit) before, during and after the crime and are advised to protect themselves better or react differently, while intoxication is often interpreted as a mitigating factor for perpetrators.



Awareness structures should ensure that all participants (can) feel safe and responsible for respectful and discrimination-sensitive coexistence based on a binding set of rules and transparent support structures.

#### Intersectionality

To effectively counteract discrimination in the context of events, it is important to understand the complex interweaving of social power structures (intersectionality). People can be privileged in some areas of life while experiencing disadvantage and/or discrimination in others. An intersectional perspective, as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasises the importance of considering multiple dimensions of identity — including ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation — concurrently to fully grasp the complexity of discrimination experiences. Crenshaw

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> 9 Sue, D. W. (2010). Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender & Sexual Orientation. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> O Sue, D. W., & Spanierman, L. (2020). Microaggressions in Everyday Life. (2nd Edition). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

argues that identifying and combating sexism and racism is impossible if we analyse forms and experiences of discrimination separately.<sup>11</sup> An intersectional understanding enables us to incorporate a diverse range of life experiences into the planning and organisation of events.

Self-reflection: Privilege-Check

**Privileges** are unearned advantages that result from different affiliations to identity categories, such as gender, gender identity, financial situation, or health. These can accumulate over time, leading many to take them for granted.



We often fail to recognise our own privileges because they do not cause us any obstacles and therefore remain inconspicuous.

The following **privilege check** is intended to illustrate that a wide variety of realities exist in our society and at Ruhr-University Bochum, and to raise awareness of experiences of discrimination.

Only those aware of circumstances beyond their own experience can plan events to maximise accessibility and enjoyment for as many people as possible. If you realise for the first time during a privilege, check the extent to which discrimination is widespread and which (de)privileges may even affect you, it can be upsetting.

Take care of yourself as best as you can, talk to others about it and contact counselling centres if necessary. Remember that constructive change can only come about if we recognise and reflect on our own position in a system of (de)privilege and derive discrimination-sensitive and inclusive behaviour and actions from this.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Crenshaw, K.W. (1991). Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stanford Law Review, 43, 1241-1299.

#### Which of the statements apply to you?



- I often find common ground with other participants at events and can talk to them about my life.
- When I share my experiences of marginalising or discriminatory situations, I can assume that I will be taken seriously.
- I feel comfortable holding hands with my partner in public.
- I often have to turn down invitations to go out because I have to look after my children.
- I am concerned about how to get to a place safely and how to get around at events.
- I have already experienced discrimination based on my origin, racialised attributions, my gender or sexual orientation and/or other identity characteristics.
- If necessary, I can call the police for help to protect myself and feel safe doing so.
- There have been situations where I would have liked to go to an event, but I couldn't
  afford it financially.
- Before going out, I think about how I dress to minimise the risk of violence.
- I often get dodgy excuses why I'm not allowed in when I'm being checked in.
- Choosing a toilet is straightforward for me.
- Travelling to/departing from and moving around/staying at events is usually not a challenge for me.

#### Reflection questions:

- What does discrimination have to do with my own life? Where am I privileged? Where am I disadvantaged?
- What roles do I play at events? To what extent do I inadvertently promote discrimination in this context?
- What could I do to counteract discrimination and the exclusion of others?



#### A clear stance against discrimination at events through awareness work

Events should be places where diversity is valued, and all participants can feel safe and welcome. By providing the structures, event organisers are responsible for ensuring that everyone can attend their event safely and with as little discrimination as possible.

This includes clearly communicating expectations, rules, and consequences; raising awareness among staff and participants about various forms of discrimination and transgressive behaviour; and providing support structures for those who experience discrimination or assault.

This includes clearly communicating expectations, rules, and consequences; raising awareness among staff and participants about various forms of discrimination and transgressive behaviour; and providing support structures for those who experience discrimination or assault. To ensure a respectful, safe, and inclusive event, it is crucial that guests also take responsibility for their actions. This responsibility should not be assumed by the organizers but can be clearly outlined through a Code of Conduct, for example (see chapter 3.2).

By implementing awareness measures and teams, potentially discriminatory and violent situations can be recognised at an earlier stage and possibly prevented, leading to a safer and more supportive environment for everyone involved in an event.

# 3. Event planning

'Awareness' comes from political activism and strives to make different realities of life visible through education and sensitisation. It strives to equalise power imbalances, protect those affected, and prevent further experiences of discrimination.

#### The principles of awareness include:

- minimising discrimination,
- acting by consensus<sup>12</sup>,
- taking joint responsibility for each other,
- respect for personal boundaries,
- and the promotion of social change.



The aim is to create a safe atmosphere in which everyone feels comfortable, and their personal boundaries are respected. Especially in an event context, it is crucial that organisers and visitors develop an attitude and practice that counteracts discrimination and other forms of violence.

The main aim of awareness is to promote consensus-based action and dismantle structures of exclusion and inequality. Various measures can be taken to achieve this, such as educating employees and event participants, public relations work on the topics of awareness, diversity and inclusion measures, the provision of appropriate awareness infrastructure and the implementation of a set of rules that applies to all participants at an event. In addition, self-care (see chapter 4) and careful follow-ups of awareness measures (see chapter 5) at events are emphasised as important elements of systematic awareness work.

The implementation of *awareness* begins with the planning of events. To organise an event in an aware manner, the awareness concept and the associated strategies and measures should be developed at an early stage so that there is enough time to prepare them.

It can be helpful, for example, to establish awareness as a recurring agenda item in planning meetings for events, committing the organizing team to regularly reflect on and take seriously the issue. Also, the team should agree on rules for how this reflection should take place.

 $<sup>^{12}</sup>$  Consensus means the voluntary, informed, and reciprocal agreement of all participants to an interaction or action and the action and the ability to say no at any time without pressure or negative consequences. Consensus can be

revocable at any time and requires continuous communication with each other. The principle of consensus should ensure that power relations and social norms do not impair freedom of choice. For further reading: Gunnarsson, L. (2023). Consent, Gender, and Power. In: The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Sexuality Education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

#### Internal team reflection

To initiate a systematic awareness process, it is essential that the organisers and the organising team also reflect on internal dynamics. This includes making topics such as diversity of perspectives, reflection on privileges, and team dynamics visible and discussable.



The following questions can provide an initial impulse for internal reflection on your group dynamics, but they should only be the start of a more extensive process:

- Who makes up your team? Are people with different experiences represented (see Privilege Check)?
- Are the perspectives of your target group represented in your team? How can certain perspectives be obtained if they are not rep-

resented by individuals?

- Which people are present in public? For example, who manages the entrance at parties etc.? Who speaks in front of the audience, makes announcements, moderates?
- Who takes on which tasks? Who is in the awareness team? Who communicates with the security staff?
- Who takes on welfare tasks? For example, who in your team always puts the biscuits on the table? Who clears up afterwards? Who feels responsible for tidiness and cleanliness?
- Who takes on auxiliary tasks?
- How do you communicate and work together? What does your error culture look like?
- ...

#### Awareness at events

The question 'for how many participants and in which formats are awareness teams needed?' cannot be answered in general terms and depends on many factors.

However, it can be said that as soon as alcohol is served and/or a simple overview of the event is no longer possible due to the number of participants and/or the circumstances of the venue, an awareness team makes sense.

At the same time, however, we would also like to encourage you to consider awareness for all events, even outside of awareness teams.

#### The following questions should be answered and reflected upon in advance for all events:

- Is the venue accessible for everyone? For example, can people in wheelchairs take part? Is there a suitable toilet?
- What routes do participants have to take? Are they barrier-free?
- Are all-gender toilets available?
- Can a safe journey to and from the event be organised?
- Should a participation fee be charged for the event? Is this affordable for everyone? Can a solidarity contribution be made possible?



- How will access to the event be organised? Who accepts registrations? Who organises admission? How will a limited number of participants be selected?
- Are there rooms that can be used as a retreat? Who will accompany people to the retreat space if necessary?
- Are there signs for orientation (toilets, retreat area, exits)?
- Will there be alcohol at the event? Is there an attractive range of non-alcoholic drinks? Do they cost the same or are they even cheaper than alcoholic drinks (water should always be the cheapest drink at an event and ideally free of charge)?
- How are care activities such as room hygiene, catering, serving food, etc. distributed?
- How is the advertising organised (see Chapter 3.1)?
- Is there a way to contact the organising team before and during the event to ask questions and give feedback afterwards?
- Do we need an awareness team on site? How should it be composed and how should it work? How many people does it need?
- How do you want to deal with discriminatory behaviour by participants or team members?
- What materials need to be provided for an awareness team (see section 3.4)?
- How will participants receive information about the awareness concept of the event?
- Is information material on forms of discrimination available?
- How can participants approach you? Are you recognisable as organisers?
- How are other representative persons recognisable? (speakers, awareness team etc.)
- ...
- •

There are different needs depending on the type of event. We would like to take a closer look at some typical event formats that student initiatives often offer.

#### Additional event-specific questions:

#### • At lectures, events, talks etc.

- o Who are the speakers?
- o Are diverse perspectives represented on the panel?
- o Who is moderating the event?
- o Are certain rules of dialogue defined and made transparent, e.g. through a Code of Conduct and/or a declaration of commitment (see sections 3.2 and 3.3)?
- O Do the participants have the opportunity to participate in the organisation of the event? If so, how are participants informed of their opportunities to participate?
- o Should there be contributions from participants?
- o How will these be accompanied or structured?
- o How will dominant speech behaviour be limited?
- o How is it ensured that everyone who wants to have their say?
- o Is sensitive content dealt with? If so, how and where can this be pointed out in advance (see handout on dealing with sensitive content in teaching<sup>13</sup>)?

#### For parties/barbecues



- o What music is played and by whom?
- o Is there security staff? How do they work?
- How can cooperation between the awareness team and security personnel be organised?
- o Is there a specific admission/door policy for the venue?
- Will 'outsiders' also have access to the event?How will this be ensured?
- o Will there be drinks in glass bottles?
- o Will there be strobe effects?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Guidance on dealing with sensitive content in teaching, 2024.

#### • For (first year) trips and excursions

- o Can gender-segregated rooms as well as all-gender rooms and all-gender sanitary facilities be provided? How is this communicated? How are these distributed with
  - out creating forced outings and/or other unpleasant situations?
- o Who will be travelling as a caregiver?
- o What rules apply? How are these communicated?
- How are violations and misbehaviour dealt with?



- o How can awareness work be facilitated and maintained over the entire period?
- o Are sufficient food options and non-alcoholic drinks provided?
- O How is the programme structured? Are there compulsory programme items? Are there sufficient rest periods?
- 0 ...

This list of questions is of course not exhaustive and should be adapted to the specific circumstances of your event.

It can also be useful to create your **own checklist** for event formats that you offer again and again. However, awareness also thrives on practical experience and requires a constructive error culture: **even if you have taken everything into account, undesirable situations may still arise.** 

Maintain a certain openness and flexibility and take time to reflect on and evaluate your awareness efforts, particularly after events (see chapter 5). It's more effective to plan one or two

awareness initiatives per event rather than becoming frustrated by unrealistic expectations.

## 3.1 Public relations

Already in the promotion of your event, you can consider awareness and highlight specific event details. This involves not only the content of the promotional materials themselves but also their graphic design. For example, do you consider that some people may not be able to read red colours on a green background? And that it can be important how long an event lasts due to caring responsibilities? Or that perhaps not everyone knows where your student council room or the venue is located?



This, as well as points relating to general accessibility, should be taken into consideration, as you never know whether people with (in)visible disabilities will want to attend your event. For many people, this information can be very important.

Therefore, the application for your event should contain as much relevant information as possible. For example:

- Type of event (party, plenary meeting of the student council, etc.), date, time, exact location, admission price, catering (food and drinks) and its prices
- Potential barriers on the way to and at the venue (e.g. X steps, no barrier-free WC, strobe light, etc.)
- Possible notes on sensitive content
- Contact persons before, during and after the event and their telephone/personal availability.
- Your rules and regulations for the event (see chapter 3.2)

#### You can also reflect on your advertising with the following questions:

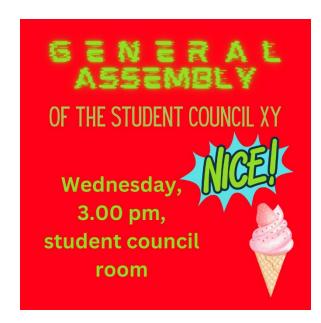
- Is our advertising designed to be accessible (e.g. is all information easy to read)? Is the colour scheme barrier-free (websites such as barrier-free design<sup>14</sup> can also help here)? Do the graphic elements make it clear what kind of event it is?
- Are people depicted on the promotional material? If so, which people are depicted and represented and how (consider diversity, possible reproduction of stereotypes and potentially problematic symbols)?

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Website <u>Barrierefreies Design</u>

#### Example of event advertising

As the design of the advertisement is rather practical, we list a negative and a positive example here:



#### Instead of ...

- No barrier-free colour design
- Hard to read font
- Missing information (Date, exact location, accessibility, conditions of participation)
- Misleading clip art



You can take part if you are enrolled at our faculty. You do not have to be a member of the student council.

An agenda will be announced on site, we plan to be ready by 4.30 pm at the latest.

The venue of the event is barrier-free.

Drinks (water & tea) are provided. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us!

#### ... Maybe like this?

- Barrier-free colour design
- Clearly legible font
- Inclusive, discrimination-sensitive language and images/photos
- Complete information about the event (When and where is the event taking place? Who is eligible to attend etc.)?
- Clip art that supports the design and nature of the event

# 3.2 Code of Conduct for the participants of an event

A Code of Conduct (CoC) is the "set of rules" for your event, through which participants commit, or are committed, to contributing to an environment where all individuals, regardless of their identity characteristics, can participate safely and free from discrimination.

In a CoC, you define, among other things, what behaviour you would like to see at your event, what can lead to the exclusion of participants and what your guidelines are regarding alcohol consumption, for example. A CoC can and should cover all areas of the event in which interpersonal communication and interaction takes place.

Publicly communicating your Code of Conduct and awareness structures is an important step towards creating a transparent and trustworthy environment. If the rules and support structures of an event are communicated transparently and widely, you increase the likelihood that all participants will feel safe and know where to find help and support if needed. This allows you, as the organiser, to intervene promptly if certain predefined boundaries are crossed.

It is important to make sure that the visitors of your event have taken note of the Code of Conduct and are prepared to abide by it. Ideally, this could happen by signing the Code of Conduct.

As it can be difficult to get everyone to sign the CoC at events such as barbecues or parties, it is a good idea to display the CoC visibly and repeatedly and to state on the CoC that you agree to it by entering and participating in the event. In the case of trips or excursions, for example, it makes sense to attach the CoC to the registration form and point out that you agree to it when you register. The CoC can be based on the declaration of commitment for event organisers (see section 3.3). Below you will find some possible aspects that can be included in your Code of Conduct:

- We expect respect, understanding and tolerance from everyone involved in our interactions, regardless of cultural and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender identity and other identity characteristics. All people are welcome and accepted, regardless of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, religious orientation, economic status, etc.
- Any form of discrimination, be it political, religious, social, racist, sexist or related to physical characteristics etc., will not be tolerated and will lead to consequences.
- Any form of (sexualised) violence will result in immediate exclusion from the event.
   Unwanted intrusive behaviour and attempted or actual (sexual) assault will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in immediate exclusion from the event as well as possible legal consequences.
- In interpersonal behaviour and interactions, consensus should always be sought.
- The photo policy will be adhered to:
  - 1. the verbal consent of all persons depicted in photos/videos will be obtained in advance:
  - 2. images/videos will be deleted in the event of subsequent objections;
  - 3. booked photographers etc. are instructed to also only create image material with material with consent;
  - 4. anyone who does not wish to be photographed/recorded may and should say so honestly.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the event can be a safer space<sup>15</sup> for everyone.
   This intention is supported by the behaviour of every person involved in the organisation.
- Anyone who does not act in accordance with the above points may be excluded from the event.

• ...

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Safer spaces are (analogue or digital) spaces where people can feel safe to share their experiences of discrimination and empower each other. The concept of safer spaces assumes that there are no completely safe spaces and promotes the right to self-determination by recognising historical and structural injustices. Safer spaces help to reduce social inequalities and promote a more inclusive community.

# 3.3 Declaration of commitment for the organisers

If organisers, e.g. your student council, draw up a Code of Conduct, they should also adhere to it themselves. To ensure that you not only assume this within your organising group, but also have a written basis to protect you in the event of a breach of the awareness concept, some organisers now work with so-called self-commitment declarations. As mentioned above, these are particularly useful in the event of rule breaches by the organisers.

External persons of trust are essential to ensure that cases of violence or discriminatory behaviour can be addressed within a group's own structures. They offer an additional point of contact for those affected and can provide further support or interventions if necessary.

The points you commit to in the declaration of commitment also depend on your awareness concept.

A declaration of commitment can include the following aspects:

#### With this self-commitment I commit myself to the following points:

- I will not tolerate any form of derogatory behaviour towards other participants at the event.
- It is my goal to contribute to avoiding any kind of boundary-crossing behaviour. If I observe unsafe behaviour, I will report it to the awareness team.
- I will respect the privacy and intimacy of all event participants.
- · I take care to act in a consensual manner.
- It is important to me to respect the individual boundaries of all participants and to adhere to the principle of 'only yes means yes'.
- I will not use my role and position at the event to disadvantage others.
- I am aware that violations of these rules can and will have consequences.
- I acknowledge this commitment and will endeavour to comply with it to the best of my knowledge and belief.

[ ] Yes.

[] No (we will not question this, but by doing so you renounce your participation).

Depending on the event format, further points should be added.

## 3.4 Awareness-Team

At student-organised events, the awareness team plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive environment. By raising awareness, intervening and working together, the awareness team can ensure that the event is as non-discriminatory as possible for all participants.



#### Composition

The size and structure of the team should depend on the size and nature of the event. Larger and more diverse events require a larger and more diverse team to adequately address the different needs and challenges. It is desirable that diverse perspectives are represented in the team so that it is easier for more participants to address awareness-raising individuals.

#### Working method

The way the awareness team works should be based on empathy, understanding and professionalism. Raising awareness among team members on topics such as sexualised harassment, discrimination, mental health, de-escalative intervention and much more is crucial as they should develop an understanding of the diverse challenges and needs within an event community. The members of the awareness team intervene discreetly to de-escalate potentially problematic situations and support participants. In doing so, they maintain confidentiality and data protection. A clear division of responsibilities within the team is also crucial. Each member should know exactly what their tasks are and what decision-making powers they must be able to act effectively and in a coordinated manner.

#### Presence and approachability

It is important that the awareness team is easily accessible and clearly recognisable to be able to offer support and be approachable. Awareness teams should be permanently present during an event to recognise potential problems at an early stage and be able to respond appropriately.

#### Cooperation with security personnel

As awareness work is primarily focussed on supporting those affected, it differs significantly from the work of security personnel. If security personnel will also be on site, the cooperation between security personnel and the awareness team should be discussed before the event begins. For example, it must be clarified when and how the security personnel will intervene and when they will inform and/or involve the awareness team. It is also crucial to determine who is responsible for admission and to establish the admission conditions from both perspectives.

Although security staff are always available, they should contact the awareness team as soon as possible in the event of awareness issues.

In situations that exceed the (personal) limits of the awareness team or require specialised knowledge, the awareness team should respond appropriately and in turn involve the security staff. In situations that exceed the (personal) boundaries of the awareness team or require specific expertise, the awareness team should respond appropriately and involve the security personnel as needed. Following the direction of the awareness team and in the spirit of impartiality, the security personnel may then implement consequences (see sections 3.2 and 3.3) towards individuals who overstep boundaries or engage in violence.

During the event planning phase, the organising team should also agree on whether persons who are already known to be violent should be excluded from events. This not only serves to protect those potentially affected, but also sends a clear message that violent or discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated.



#### Care work vs. awareness work

We refer to the care and support of people who feel unwell due to personal problems, excessive consumption, etc. as care work. As awareness teams often also take on this task, care work is distinguished once again from awareness work. In practice, this distinction is certainly not always easy to make, but the resources of the awareness team should always be available to support those affected by discrimination and violence. All members of the awareness team, as

well as the guests, are of course required to be helpful to people who feel uncomfortable and to actively look after the well-being of everyone.

#### Materials check for the awareness team

The materials check is intended to give you an initial overview of what you should have with you at an awareness point and/or as an awareness team.

Complete the list with other materials that you consider important for your event.

# First aid and health

- Water
- First aid equipment (especially important if there are no paramedics on site)
- Retreat room for event participants (ideally with space to lie down)
- Hygiene products, menstrual products
- Condoms/ lick cloths
- · Hot water bottle
- Magnesium, dextrose

• ...

# Information and education

(ideally multilingual)

- List of contact and advice centres
- List of places to stay overnight
- Telephone numbers for (trustworthy) taxi services
- Information material on awareness and consensus
- Factual information about the effects of drugs

• ...

#### Stress reduction

- Earplugs
- Stress balls or similar
- Tea
- Games
- ..

# 4. Awareness work in practice



First of all, we would like to point out that practical awareness work in particular is challenging in many ways and it is important that you take your own competences and limitations into account.

Above all, student awareness work should create a discrimination-sensitive and inclusive framework and provide an initial support structure at your events for people affected by discrimination or harassment.

Intervening in physical altercations, providing more in-depth counselling to affected individuals, or implementing an impractical awareness concept can have detrimental effects on all involved. Refer people to counselling centres on campus and in the Bochum area, get security personnel involved before situations escalate, and prioritise your wellbeing and your boundaries. Consider planning one or two measures for each event rather than overwhelming yourselves with an overly extensive plan of action.

Below we present some of the principles of awareness work in more detail.

#### Self-care

First, you should make sure that you take care of yourself. Self-care is extremely important when supporting those affected. You should know your own limits and not put yourself in danger in tricky situations. It is therefore advisable to always work in pairs so that you can support each other and call-in security staff if necessary.

#### Being victim-centred

The task of the awareness team is to offer support to people who experience or have experienced transgressive behaviour or discrimination at the event and to intervene in situations that are potentially abusive or discriminatory.

An initial measure can be to seek out a low-stress environment and create a physical separation from the stress-inducing situation or person. An awareness room can serve as a place of retreat.

Those affected are experts in their own experience and know best what they need and what can help them. It is therefore important to ask them (several times if necessary) and to offer various options if they are visibly overwhelmed.

The perception of the person(s) concerned should not be questioned. When a person perceives something as violence, discrimination or overstepping boundaries, then that perception is valid.

Discrimination can also take place even if no visible effects on people present are recognisable.

The avoidance of diagnoses, judgements, and attributions, as well as communication at eye level, are of great importance. The aim should be to strengthen the self-determination of the person(s) affected.

#### Intervention in conflict situations and dealing with boundary-crossing persons

Dealing with transgressing persons also requires clear agreements with the person concerned. Intervention in boundary-crossing behaviour is aimed at supporting the person concerned and is characterised by confidentiality and impartiality. The aim of any intervention during or after a particular situation is not to punish the transgressing person(s), but rather to create an understanding of the consequences of their own behaviour. If a transgressive person refuses to change their perspective, it is necessary to consistently set boundaries. Consider in advance which sanctions you would like to impose for which behaviour and how you will enforce them, for example whether you will issue warnings, stop serving alcohol to people, etc. and write these down transparently in your CoC or declaration of commitment.

In some cases, the extent of the behaviour of the transgressing person(s) may be so serious that a solution-oriented discussion is not sufficient; in such situations, the person may be expelled from the event - possibly in cooperation with the security staff, a long-term ban from the premises may be issued or a call to the police may be necessary consequently.

#### Examples of awareness work

Various situations can arise in the context of awareness work, which depend heavily on the individual circumstances of the people involved and the overall context of the event and should always be handled individually.

Here we outline four situations that could arise at an event and provide examples of possible courses of action:

#### 1. A person seeks your support:

- Consider whether you are the right person or whether you should involve someone else, especially if your relationship with the person concerned or the person crossing the boundary does not allow for impartial support.
- Ask if the person would like to have a trusted person with them.
- Find a quiet place to talk, such as a secluded corner or the awareness room.
- Explain that all decisions will be made in consultation with them and that nothing will be done without their consent.
- Listen carefully to the person and take them seriously.
- Be cautious with physical contact and obtain the person's consent beforehand.
   Ask e.g. 'Would you like me to put an arm around you?'
- Ask about the person's needs (What do you need? What do you want now?).
- Consider the person's wishes and needs and put your own ideas aside. The person should remain in control of the situation.
- Listen when the person wants to talk and be careful with questions so as not to put them on the defensive.
- Give yourself and the person plenty of time, especially in crisis situations.
   Pauses and silence can help to organise thoughts. Decisions should not be made hastily.
- Offer concrete support options and later reflection.

# 2. You identify a potentially problematic situation:

- Consider whether you are the appropriate person to intervene in the situation or whether you should approach someone else for support.
- Ask the person concerned how they are feeling (e.g. 'Is everything OK?' or 'Are you comfortable with the situation?'). It is advisable to ask the person to talk briefly a few metres away to defuse the situation and talk in a calmer environment.
- Briefly explain to the person concerned why you perceived the situation as problematic, but without imposing your perception. The person may perceive the situation differently.
- Listen carefully to the person concerned and take them seriously.
- Consider the wishes and needs of the person concerned and put your own aside.
   It is important that the person remains in control of the situation.
- Offer support, such as a conversation or a way to get out of the situation. Ask if the person wants to withdraw.
- Respect it if the person concerned does not want support and offer them a point of contact where they can get support later if they want it.

# 3. You are informed by another person about about a situation:

- Consider whether you are the appropriate person to intervene in the situation or whether you should approach someone else for support.
- Take action yourself and don't shift the responsibility back to the person observing.
- If you approach the person who is supposedly affected, see situation 2.

# 4. You notice that a person is behaving in an abusive manner:

- Consider whether you are the appropriate person to intervene in the situation or whether you should approach someone else for support.
- Approach the person in a de-escalating and calm manner and try to have the conversation in a quiet place.
- Explain to the person why you are approaching them and how you perceived their behaviour.
- Make the event policy clear to them and point out how they too can contribute to a more pleasant atmosphere.
- Offer the person the opportunity to reflect on their own behaviour.
- Keep an eye on the person and share the incident with other members of the awareness team and, if necessary, with security staff. Document the situation if necessary.
- If the person reacts dismissively or aggressively, get reinforcement and call security personnel in an emergency.

#### Principles of counselling and helpful phrases

Below you will find a few principles for the initial support of people as part of your awareness work:

- Strictly confidential, possibly anonymous,
- introduce yourself (and awareness work, if applicable),
- obtain consensus,
- allow those affected to talk freely and express themselves,
- ask questions,
- Acceptance and no Victim Blaming<sup>16</sup>,
- ask about the person's wishes and needs,
- Transparency: Seek advice in case of uncertainty and do not make false promises,
- act according to urgency.



Here are some helpful phrases to illustrate how the principles of counselling can be implemented verbally.

- 'I'm sorry that this happened. / I understand that this upsets you."
- 'May I ask you again? Did I correctly understand that...?"
- 'What exactly are you hoping for from me/us?'
- 'Do you just want to talk about it? Or would you like specific help? If so, with what?"
- 'I can offer you that...'
- 'Unfortunately, I can't promise you anything.'
- 'You have the following options...'
- 'Unfortunately, I can't / we can't do that...'
- 'This shows the limits of my options...'
- 'I can refer you to...'
- 'I must be honest and say that I don't know exactly what options there are in this case / how best to deal with the situation. Would it be okay for you if I talked to XY about it? Anonymously, of course."
- 'I would like to talk to XY about how to proceed or whether similar cases are known and how they have been dealt with.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Victim blaming stands for a perpetrator-victim reversal. The person concerned is (partly) blamed for a (discriminatory) incident or criminal offence. For example, the behaviour, the clothing, or the Alcohol consumption of the person concerned is instrumentalised. Victim blaming exacerbates the negative experience for those affected and can lead to shame and self-doubt. One structural consequence is that (other) victims no longer have the courage to report cases. Victim blaming is also relevant in law if, for example, the perpetrator's alcohol consumption mitigates the punishment, while the victim's credibility is called into question.

#### Awareness on the day of the event

There are many things to consider on the day of the event. The points that were discussed during the event planning should be checked again on site. In addition, all persons involved should be aware of their tasks and respective roles at the event. Certain responsibilities should be clearly allocated, e.g. who is the contact person for any staff on the premises (rental manager, bar staff, security staff), but also who is the contact person for the police in



the event of police interventions and who will accompany an intervention if necessary. A folder with important information for the organisation team, which is stored in a central location, and flyers with information are also an essential part of systemic awareness work on site. If you have an awareness team on site, you should also allow enough time for a handover at shift changes. During such a handover, information should be exchanged on whether everyone is aware of their task and feels up to it, whether there have already been incidents, whether special attention should be paid to certain people (groups) or rooms, etc.

# 5. Reflecting an event

Continuous reflection on your own awareness work is crucial in order to make events more inclusive and safer.

Gathering and considering feedback from event participants and collaborating with other groups, such as student councils and student initiatives, can improve the quality of events and ensure that they are accessible and safe for all.



A constructive and positive error culture forms the basis for continuous learning and avoiding frustration. It makes it possible to address mistakes openly and view them as learning opportunities instead of concealing them. This promotes an appreciative atmosphere in which the organisation team comes together to find solutions and thus improves from event to event.

Below we have compiled a few reflection impulses (the list is not exhaustive; it is only intended to provide an initial orientation) with which you can evaluate your awareness work before, during and after an event.

#### Awareness strategies:

- Which awareness strategies were implemented?
- Were the awareness strategies recognised and appreciated by the participants?
- How effective were these strategies? Are there areas where improvements are needed?

#### Awareness team:

- How was the awareness team assembled and trained to respond appropriately to different situations?
- What was the experience of the awareness team at the last event? What worked well? What could work better next time?

#### Co-operation between the teams:

- How was the collaboration among the teams involved (awareness team, organisation team and, if applicable, security staff)?
- Were there clear lines of communication and responsibilities between the teams?

• Were problems or incidents resolved effectively and quickly?

#### Accessibility and inclusion:

- What measures were taken to ensure that the event was accessible and inclusive?
- Were there any challenges or issues that made access to the event difficult?
- What further measures could be taken to make our events accessible to all, regardless of their personal circumstances?

#### Develop strategies for action:

- How can we use feedback from guests to improve our awareness strategies and safety concepts?
- What concrete measures can be implemented at the next event based on the experiences of the teams and guests?
- What steps can be taken to strengthen collaboration between all teams and create a safer and more inclusive environment?





- establishing adequate support structures,
- avoiding the reproduction of disadvantageous socio-political dynamics,
  - and fostering a sense of solidarity.

We invite you to join us in the rewarding and challenging endeavour of promoting awareness at events. Stay curious and patient – it's a worth it!

# 6. Contact points and counselling services at Ruhr-University Bochum and in the Bochum area

The following is a selection of contact and counselling centres at Ruhr-University Bochum and in the surrounding area. An extended list of contact and counselling centres can be found on the UNSER CAMPUS website. If you know of contact and counselling centres that we have not yet listed online, please send a short email to: unsercampus@rub.de.



#### Ruhr-University Bochum

#### Anti-Discrimination Centre of Ruhr-University Bochum

- o What advice is available?
  - The Anti-Discrimination Office of Ruhr-University Bochum serves as the primary advisory, mediation, and information hub for students, staff, and other university members who have encountered or witnessed discrimination, offering guidance, support, and information on the matter.
- In which languages do you offer counselling?
   German and English. The counsellors are bound to confidentiality.
- Making an appointment
   Please register in advance at: <a href="mailto:antidiskriminierung@rub.de">antidiskriminierung@rub.de</a>

#### Accompanying Service

The Accompanying Service of Ruhr-University Bochum is a free service for situations in which you feel unsafe and/or do not want to be alone on campus. You can reach the accompanying service on 0234/32 27001. The control centre (0234/32 23333) is responsible for all emergencies, including first aid! The accompanying service is also available at 24/7 and will accompany you to the underground or bus station.

#### • The Psychological Counselling Service

- What is the counselling for?
   The Psychological Counselling Service serves as the primary support for students experiencing crises and provides informational events focused on promoting mental well-being while studying.
- In which languages do you offer counselling?
   German, English & Spanish (please specify the desired language when making an appointment). The counsellors are bound to confidentiality.
- o Make an appointment by e-mail at: <a href="mailto:psychberatung@rub.de">psychberatung@rub.de</a>

#### Central Equal Opportunities Officer & Central Equal Opportunities Office

O What advice is available?

The Central Gender Equality Office and the Central Gender Equality Officer(s) are the points of contact at Ruhr-University Bochum for all issues relating to gender equality and equal opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Office is also the point of contact for advice on experiences of discrimination based on gender and sexual identity.

- In which languages do you offer counselling?
   German & English. The counsellors are bound to confidentiality.
- Making an appointment
   Individual appointments by e-mail to gleichstellungsbuero@rub.de. Further information here. Consultation via ZOOM is also possible!

#### Bochum and surrounding area

#### • Anonymous forensics Bochum

Anonymous forensic evidence preservation offers the possibility of an anonymous medical examination after a rape without having to report it directly to the police. As a victim, you can contact the hospitals listed here. The hospitals are in Bochum, Herne and Witten. For commuters from NRW: The project also exists in the Bonn, Bottrop/Gladbeck, Düsseldorf, Düren, Ennepe-Ruhr, Gütersloh, Herford, Paderborn, Cologne, Leverkusen, Münster, Oberbergischer Kreis, Ostwestfalen-Lippe, Steinfurt, Wesel and Wuppertal regions.

#### Back Up NRW - Counselling centre for victims of right-wing extremist, racist and anti-Semitic violence

Back Up offers counselling for victims, relatives and witnesses of racist, right-wing extremist and antisemitic violence in NRW. The website is available in many different languages.

#### The term violence refers exclusively to physical violence!

The advice centre can be contacted by telephone on 0231/52484 and 0172/1045432 and by email at contact@backup-nrw.org or via the <u>contact form</u> on the website.

## Federal association of women's helplines and women's counselling centres (BFF)

On the <u>website</u> you will find information and nationwide counselling services. The website is available in German, English, Turkish and Arabic.

#### Umbrella organisation of autonomous women's advice centres in NRW

The umbrella organisation of autonomous women's advice centres in NRW provides a list of support services and advice centres in NRW on its <u>website</u>.

The topics include sexualised and domestic violence, stalking, digital violence, eating disorders and forced marriage. You can find counselling centres nationwide here.

#### • Violence against women helpline

You can call the women's helpline around the clock on 08000 116 016. All information is treated confidentially. A chat function and counselling in 17 different languages (including sign language, English, Turkish, Russian, French, and Spanish) are also available. You can find more information <u>here</u>.

#### • Violence against men helpline

The men's helpline is aimed exclusively at men affected by violence. The helpline can be reached on 0800 1239900 and counselling is available in German, English and Turkish. You can find more information <a href="helpline">here</a>.

- Rosa Strippe e.V. Psychosocial counselling centre for LGBTQI+ people in Bochum Rosa Strippe e.V. offers psychosocial counselling for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, inter and queer people. You can reach the helpline on 0234/19446 and find further information and offers here.
- Wildwasser Bochum Counselling centre for victims of sexualised violence and prevention-Wildwasser Bochum is a specialist counselling centre for victims of sexualised violence, primarily for girls aged 16 and over, women, and accompanying persons.
   Counselling is low-threshold, anonymous, and confidential.
   Wildwasser Bochum can be contacted by telephone on 0234/7945652 and by email at wildwasserbochum@web.de. You can find more information here.

## 7. Further materials

Below you will find lots of exciting ideas and reflection questions for planning, organising, and reflecting on events.

The anti-discrimination directive of Ruhr-University Bochum (2023) creates the framework conditions for ensuring that people's personal rights and their individual personal boundaries are respected and upheld in accordance with the German Basic Law, including in the university context. With this policy, Ruhr-University Bochum expressly emphasises that it does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, violence, stalking and bullying.



https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/antidiskriminierungsrichtlinie-der-ruhr-universitaet<u>-bochum</u> (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

The handout on dealing with sensitive content in teaching (2024) is a source of information for students, teaching staff, and interested parties. It is intended to provide guidance on how to deal consciously with sensitive content in teaching and to encourage all readers to develop an informed and independent approach to these topics.



https://inhaltshinweise.blogs.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/handreichungen/ (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

The handout for gender-inclusive language (2023) is an official recommendation of the Ruhr-University Bochum for the use of gender-inclusive language and offers practical examples.



https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/handreichung-fuer-eine-genderinklusivesprache (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

The Code of Freedom and Diversity at Ruhr-University Bochum (2022) represents a voluntary commitment to a discrimination-sensitive and inclusive campus.



https://uni.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/kodex-freiheit-und-vielfalt-der-rub (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

The Gender & Diversity Centre of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), for example, has created a detailed overview for mindful event planning: How to be aware? Impulses for mindful event planning from the NRW Gender & Diversity Centre



https://www.gender-nrw.de/wp content/uploads/2020/11/FUMA Awarnes Leitfaden RZ Okt2020 print.pdf (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

#### Initiative Awareness e.V.

The association is committed to combating sexualised violence and discrimination in the event context from an intersectional perspective. The initiative advises and supports event venues in the implementation of awareness strategies, trains staff and awareness teams nationwide, organises further training, conferences, and nationwide networking days. The organisation also looks beyond the event context and develops ways in which the idea of awareness can also be applied in other areas of society. A wide range of free awareness materials can be found on the website.



https://www.initiative-awareness.de/ (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

#### Safe the Dance e.V.

An initiative of creative artists that offers conferences focused on awareness and diversity, awareness concepts, workshops and lectures, process support, low-threshold educational formats, and numerous free materials on awareness. They train and provide awareness teams and have published an awareness handbook for organisers, collectives, networks, and organisations.



https://safethedance.de/ (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

#### Campaign GEMEINSAM.SICHER.FEIERN.

GEMEINSAM.SICHER.FEIERN. has been a campaign for more awareness in the club and cultural scene since November 2018. Organisers and staff at music venues have been trained to intervene and act in situations that are hurtful, abusive, violent, or discriminatory. The website provides information for visitors, organisers, and awareness- teams.



http://www.awareness-bremen.de/de (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

#### AStA University Paderborn: Awareness-Concept for events



https://asta.uni-paderborn.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AStA-AwarenessKonzept deutsch.pdf (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

#### AStA University Lüneburg: Awareness Concept



https://www.asta-lueneburg.de/wp-content/uploads/AwarenessKonzeptdeutsch.pdf (last accessed on 29.05.2024)

## • AStA University Duisburg Essen: AStA Awareness-Concept



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