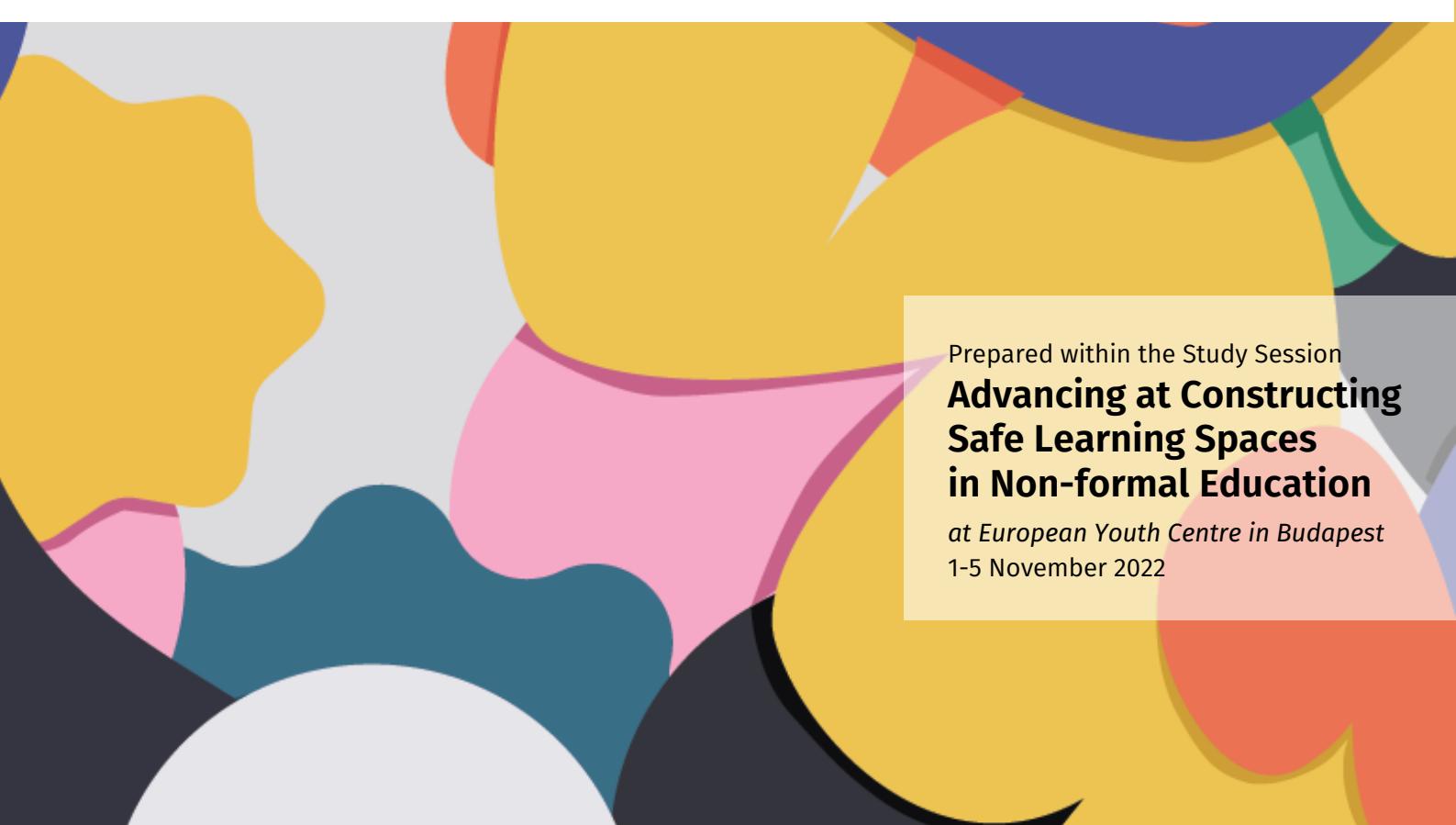




A Reader of

# **TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

**to support the creation and maintenance of safe learning spaces in their educational activities**



Prepared within the Study Session  
**Advancing at Constructing  
Safe Learning Spaces  
in Non-formal Education**

*at European Youth Centre in Budapest*  
1-5 November 2022



## About this reader

This reader was prepared by the participants of the study session "Advancing at Constructing Safe Learning Spaces in Non-formal Education" to collect their learning points and offer some tips and suggestions to practitioners like themselves, for them to create and maintain safe learning spaces within the non-formal educational settings. Target group for this reader are youth workers, educators, trainers, facilitators, project coordinators, organisational decision makers, and others involved in implementing educational activities.

This document has been produced by and is the responsibility of the participants of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe or the organisations HREYN and WOSM.

## About the study session

Human Rights Education Youth Network and World Organisation of Scouts Movement, in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, implemented a study session "Advancing at Constructing Safe Learning Spaces in Non-formal Education" during 1-5 November of 2022 at the European Youth Center in Budapest.

The aim of this study session was to increase the quality of non-formal education and human rights education in participating organisations, by raising awareness, sharing practises and increasing competencies of trainers, educators and youth workers for safe space development.

More information about the study session, the program, outcomes, findings and conclusions can be found in the report published on our website [www.hreyn.net](http://www.hreyn.net) and the website of the [Council of Europe](http://councilofeurope.eu).

## About the topic

Human rights education and youth work brings participants from various backgrounds in the field where they challenge and question self and society. In the group building and learning process, natural differences and various perspectives between the learners (and trainers) manifest, which can potentially lead to unresolved conflict or suppression of expression. How to develop the space which ensures learning, critical thinking, respect, safety, equality, and equity of learners is the task of the human rights educators, participants themselves, and youth workers.

A safe space can describe a physical space where people feel that there is no risk, they are sheltered and at ease. But this expression also describes a state of mind and mood where people feel comfortable, same from harm, trusting and willing to open themselves.

Human rights education and non-formal education should be a safe space for people to learn without risk, be fully present, surface their assumptions, and to question their previous perceptions and judgments. It can ensure participants do their best to suspend their judgments and take the risk out of sharing their feelings and perceptions, while creating space to surface their deeper questions, without losing sight of the aim of learning. In a safe space, we learn and adapt, we fully engage with each other, thus increasing our mutual trust. When these changes are mutual, it transforms the relations between the parties from adversarial to respectful, opening the way to create stronger relationships.

## Content

This reader is divided into 3 sections: Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation, which also have sub-sections. Each part lists several suggestions and tips for safe space maintenance on the specific stage of the project.

# 1. Preparation

## 1.1. Program design

- Ensure a balanced program structure between working time and breaks, between formal activities and informal time outside the sessions.
- Prepare some guidelines/ideas of ways to spend the informal evenings so that everyone is included and welcomed. At the same time, leave space for participants to contribute to the planning of the evenings. Make it clear that participation is voluntary.
- Leave slots on the content part of the program so that the participants can offer activities for the groups related to the topic, which is also relatable and accessible for the group.
- Prepare some semi-formal activities in order to know the city and its culture, such as field visits, city tours, etc.



## 1.2. Mental health tips

- If participants want, they can put their triggering points / what they can't stand in the application form.
- Allocate capacity within the team for a "listening ear" and remind the participants that it is available. A "listening ear" is a person who could be approached in case a participant wants to share and/or discuss any thoughts, emotions, concerns, etc. regarding the training process.



- Prepare some ways how participants can support each other. For example, Look / Listen / Link approach or the idea of "safe container" (people among participants whom you can approach during the exercise if you feel a need to talk or share smth. Be aware of the capacity of the participants who are creating a "safe container" (they want to do it and they have a relevant background).
- Include some mindfulness / meditation exercises in the program.
- Encourage open communication of the needs.
- When someone is silent do not push them to share in the group or to say their opinion.
- Create emotion / feelings map where participants can indicate their mood/energy level and change it whenever it changed.



## 2. Implementation

### 2.1. Ground rules

- Set common guidelines with participants to make the meeting more productive, enjoyable, and safer.
- Make the rules/guidelines specific, or use examples when general terms are needed. Base these rules on the needs that the participants expressed before the session as well. Discuss if necessary.
- Find fun or encouraging ways for participants to adhere to the ground rules. Believe in the power of Memes. The reminder can be a meme, an inspiring quote placed in a noticeable space, or a song or dance emphasizing its expression's diversity and inclusion.



## 2.2. Energizers & Activities

### *Energizers*

- Energizers and icebreakers are great for team building, getting to know each other, getting people to think about a specific topic, or simply waking up a sleepy and tired group.
- Instructions must be clear and simple, with some reminders; rephrase the instructions if required.

### *Activities*

- Try to avoid the standard name circles at the very beginning of the meeting, rather use individual introductions between participants (like Name Bingo, etc). After participants made a one-to-one introductions, circle introductions and name reminders might feel more comfortable
- People learn in different ways and at different paces! Although the specific method is more convenient than others for delivering or facilitating the content, participants could need different ways for meaningful learning. Have a set of activities based on different methodologies and adapt them if needed.
- Team works! Teamwork fosters fruitful discussions, creativity, giving and receiving feedback, and mostly remembering more.
- Dividing the participants into groups could be tricky; therefore, trainers must assign the participants to the groups based on their will or randomly considering the activity and group. Before the teamwork, ensure that the participants know each other and safe space has been built.
- Check-ins! Wrap-up is quite helpful to link the sessions, monitor participants' learnings, improvement, and motivation, and adapt where necessary.



- Alongside those, for the learning to occur, participants also need to be challenged; create opportunities for participants to move the stretch zone in a safe space. Some hint that it will be beneficial to remind participants that the activity can be disturbing or triggering.
- The energizers and activities should be revised based on the needs of participants to ensure meaningful participation and a safe space, such as allocating more time and space for people having difficulties and opening up a room for the ones who want to contribute differently.



## 3. Evaluation

### 3.1. Safe reflection

- Make it clear to the participants that sharing their personal reflection is voluntary.
- If you use a group reflection, make sure that the facilitator of the group is aware of what was going on during the day/process.
- Make it clear to the participants if they supposed to share their personal writing reflections or not.

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