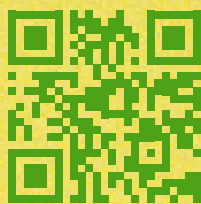


Contributing to creating **digital safe spaces**

WORKSHOP

MODULE B3



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the European Union



Module B

„Contributing to creating digital safe spaces“

Digital safe spaces, protecting oneself, boundaries

Overview

Topic	Digital safe spaces, protecting oneself, boundaries
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Purpose:» Empower participants to build, moderate and sustain safer digital environments for queer youth.» Objectives:» Define what digital safe spaces are and why they matter.» Identify online risks and harmful behaviors.» Recognize elements of inclusivity and protection.» Practice moderation and digital safety tools.» Design and present a concept for a queer-friendly digital space.
Duration	90–120 minutes (can be split into two 45–60 minute sessions)
Target Group	Youth (16–21 years old), especially those active on social media. Also adaptable for non-formal education settings.
Group Size	Up to 25 participants (optimal: small groups of 4–5 for design activity).
Complexity and Context	This activity is suitable for Levels 2–3, introducing foundational digital safety and inclusivity concepts while also engaging participants in practical applications such as designing and moderating queer-friendly digital spaces. It aligns with the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp 2.2) – particularly in areas of safety and online collaboration – and the Council of Europe’s Competences for Democratic Culture, emphasizing empathy, respect, and human rights. It is especially relevant in youth work, non-formal education, and digital rights contexts, supporting marginalized

communities and fostering inclusive online participation. identity (2.6). The proficiency level targeted is Foundation to Intermediate (Levels 2–3).

Triggers

Various triggers connected with previous experiences on social media can come out during the activity.

Online harassment examples may re-trigger participants.

Pressure to disclose personal experiences.

Discomfort with moderation role-plays (fear of conflict).

Fear of being judged for “not knowing enough” about digital safety.

How the facilitator can help prevent or respond to these triggers:

- » Provide clear content and trigger warnings before discussing online harassment, discrimination, or conflict scenarios.
- » Keep all sharing strictly voluntary — remind participants they never have to discuss personal experiences.
- » Offer alternatives to participation, such as observing instead of role-playing, or contributing in writing rather than out loud.
- » Create an opt-out or quiet space, where participants can step out without explanation.
- » Normalize different levels of knowledge, reinforcing that the workshop is a learning space, not a test.
- » Check in with participants periodically, especially after emotionally heavier parts (“How is everyone feeling? Do we need a pause?”).
- » Have a co-facilitator if possible, to support individual participants who may need attention or grounding.
- » Validate emotions without spotlighting, e.g., “It’s completely okay to feel uncomfortable — thank you for taking care of yourself.”
- » Redirect or soften discussions if the conversation becomes intense or starts leaning toward personal trauma disclosures.
- » Model calm and respectful behavior, showing how digital conflicts can be approached safely and without escalation.

Materials

- » Projector/Whiteboard
- » Internet-connected devices (laptops, tablets, or phones)
- » Handouts with definitions and case studies

Additional Recommendations

- » Sticky notes or collaborative online boards (Miro, Padlet, Jamboard etc.)
- » Handouts: Definitions, case studies, examples of community guidelines
- » Optional: Guest speaker from a queer online community or digital rights org

Safety Considerations:

- » Make sure all discussions are opt-in and never require participants to disclose personal identities, experiences, or trauma.
- » Moderate group discussions proactively to maintain emotional and psychological safety.
- » Provide opt-out options and create quiet spaces or breaks if the topic becomes emotionally challenging.
- » Include content and trigger warnings where needed, especially before discussing harassment or online violence.
- » Encourage inclusive communication practices such as pronoun sharing, using gender-neutral language, and avoiding assumptions about identities

Handling Triggers:

- » Always provide content warnings in advance of sensitive material
- » Remind participants that they may step out, turn cameras off (if online), or skip an activity at any time without explanation.
- » Check in regularly with the group to gauge emotional wellbeing.
- » Validate participants' feelings without putting them on the spot ("It's okay to pause or take space if needed.").

Digital Moderation Tips:

- » Establish clear community guidelines at the beginning of the session or activity.
- » Use available moderation, reporting, and blocking tools effectively and explain how they work to participants.
- » Have co-facilitators or support staff present when possible to help manage emotional load, questions, or conflicts.
- » Model calm, respectful digital communication and de-escalation strategies.

Promoting Inclusion:

- » Encourage participants to introduce themselves in the way they feel safest (name, pronouns, or neither).
- » Use gender-neutral and accessible language in all instructions and discussions.
- » Acknowledge and validate diverse experiences, especially those shaped by intersectional identities
- » Promote participation equity — invite quieter voices without pressuring anyone to speak.

Part 1:

Introduction (10–15 min) – Welcome, icebreaker, expectations.

Goals: Establish a welcoming environment.

Instructions:

Welcome and introduction:

Trainers notes:

Greet participants warmly and introduce yourself and any co-facilitators/trainers.

Encourage participants not to be afraid to ask questions during the session and to steer the discussion in a direction that interests them.

Icebreaker:

Quick activity to make everyone feel comfortable (e.g., share online platform they use most; share their name, pronoun and favourite baby animal; etc.). Then continue with these icebreaker questions, using either Mentimeter or a quick in-person round:

Setting expectations:

Trainer notes:

Display the agenda on a flipchart or slide.

Briefly explain each segment and its purpose.

Ask participants to share their expectations for the session and any emotions they have about the topic.

Note down key expectations on the flipchart.

Activity: “What makes you feel safe?” (10 min) – group brainstorm.

In pairs or small groups, participants list 3 things that make them feel safe online and offline. Debrief with a shared list on the board or digitally.

Mini-Lecture: What Is a Digital Safe Space? (15 mins) - Trainer input.**Cover the following:**

- » Definition of a digital safe space
- » Why safe spaces matter for marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ youth
- » Examples: moderated queer Discords, queer TikTok communities, forums like r/lgbt, or safer DMs policies on platforms
- » Concepts: Intersectionality, digital boundaries, identity safety, emotional labor, consent online

For more detailed theoretical background and an extended definition of digital safe spaces, see **Annex 1**.

Discussion: Dangers and Challenges Online (10 mins) – Guided questions.**Prompt questions:**

- » What kinds of harm do queer people face online?
- » Have you ever had to moderate or report online behavior?
- » What’s the difference between censorship and safety?

Optional Activity: Show 1–2 anonymized real-world examples of online harassment or community conflict, and discuss how it could have been better handled. See Annex 3 – Sample Scenarios for Discussion for prepared anonymized examples you can use during the session.

-Break- (5 min)

Part 2: Practical (45–60 mins)**Design Challenge: Build Your Digital Safe Space (30 mins) – groups create safe space concept.**

Activity: In small groups (3–4), participants design a concept for a digital queer-friendly space. This can be a:

- » Private Discord or Telegram group
- » Instagram/TikTok account/community
- » Blog or website for queer stories

- » Gaming space / server
- » Zine-style newsletter or anonymous support group

They must answer to 5 questions:

- » What platform will you use and why?
- » Who is your space for (e.g., queer youth, trans people of color, questioning folks)?
- » What are your community guidelines?
- » How will you keep people safe (moderation, reporting, consent tools, etc.)?
- » How will you promote inclusion and avoid gatekeeping?

Participants can use the template provided in Annex 2 to structure their digital safe space design (purpose, roles, guidelines, and safety tools).

Group Share + Feedback (10–15 mins) - Peer feedback.

Each group presents their digital safe space to the rest of the class.

Classmates can give supportive feedback:

One thing they liked

One suggestion for improvement

Wrap-Up & Reflection (10 mins) - Emotional impact, personal takeaways.

Prompt: What is one thing you'll do differently or more consciously online after this lesson?

Can be written or shared aloud. Encourage self-reflection and agency.

Optional: Share a curated list of queer-friendly online communities and digital safety resources (like GLAAD, Trevor Project, Digital Defense Fund, etc.) Additional recommended readings and digital rights resources can be found in Annex 4 – Further Resources.

Closing (5 min) – could be summary, resources, evaluation.

Annex 1 – Theoretical Background: Digital Safe Spaces

Definition:

Digital safe spaces are online environments where individuals – particularly those from marginalized communities such as LGBTQIA+ youth – can interact, share experiences, and express themselves without fear of harassment, discrimination, or harm. They provide not only protection but also opportunities for community building, empowerment, and activism¹.

Historical Context:

The concept of safe spaces originated in feminist and queer movements in the 1960s, where physical spaces were created to provide refuge from discrimination and violence².

In the digital age, these spaces have evolved into moderated online communities, private chat groups, Discord servers, queer TikTok communities, blogs, and forums such as r/lgbt³.

The notion of braver spaces has more recently emerged, emphasizing collective learning, embracing discomfort, and engaging in dialogue across diverse perspectives^{4,5}.

Key Principles:

Boundaries & Consent: Respect personal limits and require explicit consent in all interactions⁶.

Inclusivity & Accessibility: Ensure platforms are welcoming to diverse identities and accessible to people with disabilities⁷.

Moderation & Accountability: Active moderation to prevent harm and address issues promptly⁸.

Empowerment & Representation: Prioritize marginalized voices and ensure community members have a say in rules⁹.

Trauma-Informed Approach: Understand the potential for past trauma and avoid re-traumatizing content¹⁰.

Annex 2 – Template: Community Guidelines for Digital Safe Spaces

Purpose: To ensure respectful, inclusive, and empowering online interactions.

Sample Guidelines:

- Respect all identities and pronouns.
- Use content warnings for sensitive topics.
- No hate speech, harassment, or discrimination.
- Maintain confidentiality of shared stories.
- Use inclusive language and avoid assumptions.
- Support accountability – call in, not call out, when harm occurs.

Template Handout: Designing a Digital Safe Space

1. Purpose / Mission

What is the main purpose of your space? Example: a safe chat space for queer youth; peer support group; creative expression platform.

Answer: _____

2. Target Group

Who is this space for? Example: LGBTQ+ teenagers 16–19; trans youth; broader queer community.

Answer: _____

3. Platform / Tools

Which platform will you use and why?

Example: Discord, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, blog.

Answer: _____

Additional tools:

- Chat / messaging
- Video calls
- Content creation (memes, blog posts, stories)
- Moderation & reporting tools

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Who will take care of the space (moderators, admins)?

How will responsibilities be shared?

Example: one person moderates, another posts content, another shares resources.

Answer: _____

5. Community Guidelines

Write down at least 3–5 rules for your community.

Examples: ‚Respect all identities,‘ ‚No hate speech or discrimination,‘ ‚Use content warnings for sensitive topics.‘

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. Safety & Wellbeing

How will you ensure safety?

- Active moderation
- Reporting/flagging system
- Privacy settings
- Content/trigger warnings

What happens if someone breaks the rules?

Example: warning → temporary mute → removal from the group.

Answer: _____

7. Empowerment & Inclusion

How will you make sure all voices are heard?

Example: regular polls, suggestion channel, rotating moderation.

Answer: _____

8. Next Steps

What are the first 2–3 actions after this workshop?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Annex 3 – Sample Scenarios for Discussion (Anonymized Examples)

Example 1: Online Harassment in a Group Chat

A queer youth shares a photo of their new haircut in a mixed-interest group chat (Discord server).

Another member responds: “Wow, trying to look like a ‘real man’ now? ☐”

Several people react with laughing emojis.

The original poster goes silent and stops participating for the rest of the day.

Discussion questions:

- What went wrong here?
- Which community guideline(s) were violated?
- What could a moderator have done?
- How could bystanders support the targeted person?

Example 2: Conflict in a Queer Community Space

In a closed online community for LGBTQ+ youth, one participant posts a meme containing a stereotype about bisexual people (e.g., “Bi people are always confused”).

Several members comment that the meme feels invalidating.

The original poster becomes defensive, saying: “Relax, it’s just a joke—don’t be so sensitive.”

A heated exchange starts to develop.

Discussion questions:

- How can moderators address harm even if the poster “didn’t mean it”?
- What does accountability look like in this situation?
- What could a “call-in” response sound like?
- How might community guidelines help prevent conflicts like this?

List of references:

This input script is based on these studies. Feel free to look into the studies if you would like to have a deeper understanding of the subject matter before facilitating the workshop.

Digital Rights & Safety:

Digital Defense Fund - Explore digital security resources and guides aimed at supporting autonomy-focused movements. <https://digitaldefensefund.org/>

Access Now - Offers a 24/7 Digital Security Helpline, up-to-date guides, and campaigns defending digital rights worldwide. <https://www.accessnow.org/>

LGBTQIA+ Online Support:

Trevor Project - A leading nonprofit providing 24/7 crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and educational resources for LGBTQ+ youth. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

GLAAD - Works to enhance LGBTQ representation in media, promoting authentic stories and cultural inclusion. <https://glaad.org/>

Theory & Frameworks:

Adrienne Maree Brown – Emergent Strategy (2017). A groundbreaking book offering a visionary, nature-informed guide to organizing and transformative change. <https://adriennemareebrown.net/book/emergent-strategy/>

“6 Pillars of Brave Space” (University of Maryland). Framework emphasizing vulnerability, perspective-taking, mindfulness, and more as foundations for brave intergroup dialogue. <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/media/ssw/practicum-education/2---The-6-Pillars-of-Brave-Space.pdf>