

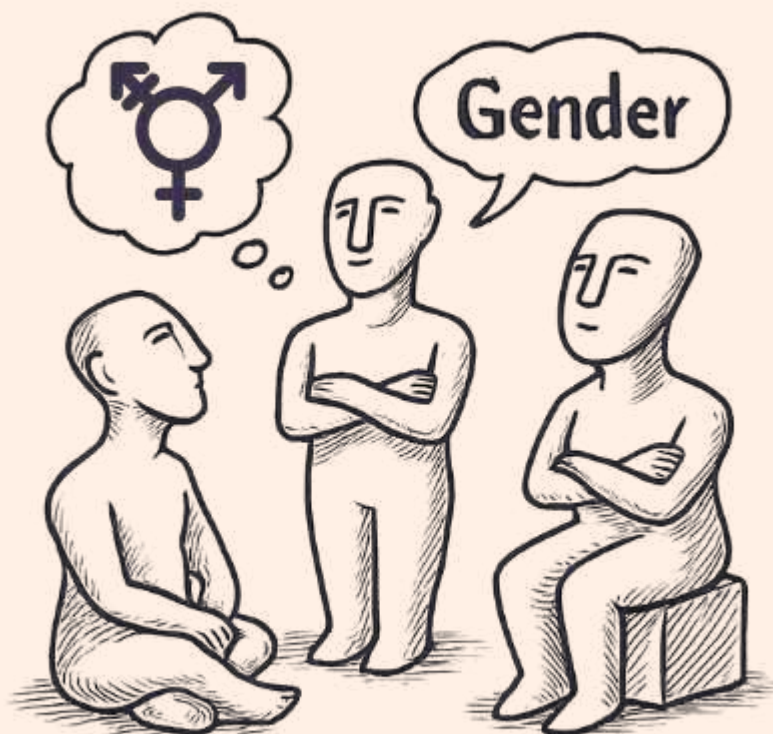


EcoFemSkills Learning Course

Addressing gender-based biases

A guide on understanding social constructs, privileges, feminist waves, inclusiveness and diversity to support non-violent communication and enhance critical thinking

Developed by Erifyli Center



Developed by the EcoFemSkills Erasmus+ Partnership as follows

- **Plastic waste processing** - Asociación Ecologica Precious Plastic Canarias hacia una economía circular
- **Create a small business** – Asociación para la participación e integración social FACTORÍA SOCIAL
- **Addressing the gender-based biases** – Erifyli Center
- **Developing an ecological mindset** – Dafni Kek

This document has been produced by its respective partner and is part of a 4-part series. You can access the other three documents or the complete publication through the EcoFemSkills Erasmus+ Partnership [platform](#).



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Introduction

This handbook has been developed within the EcoFemSkills project, which aims to provide an intersectional approach to women and femininities' empowerment and proactive stance in relation to climate change.

The project has identified women and femininities as the main target group, as a way to deal with gender-based stereotypes around green practices, especially those that are of a more technical nature. This choice has not been made as a way to limit the involvement on non-female identifying persons, but rather to support the mainstreaming of a gender-neutral approach towards technical and decision-making activities.

Our course has been developed around 4 individual units, for everyone using this handbook to be able to choose which one seems more interesting and follow it independently of the other units if they wish so. The 4 units are:

Plastic waste processing (Unit 1)

An experiential guide with practical workshops suggestions to allow for a comprehensive understanding and knowledge gaining around small-scale plastic recycling, from recollection to final products. Plastic recycling is the practical ecological practice we suggest in the EcoFemSkills project as it combines a tangible example of what recycling looks like in practice (not just collection), understanding the science behind plastic and becoming more conscious in its use. For the case of the EcoFemSkills project, the partners implemented a series of workshops where these activities were implemented for learners to actually learn the whole process.

Developing a small business (Unit 2)

Through this unit you get to know the structural elements that make a small business run, from initial idea and design to actual everyday challenges and realities. The small business can be a very helpful "tool" in combating climate change in a meaningful, sustainable and motivating way, especially when it is a conscious choice and an example of a paradigm shift driven by intersectionality. This part can be studied either in a group or by oneself. For the case of the EcoFemSkills project, the content of the unit was implemented in a group setting.

Addressing gender biases (Unit 3)

This unit, as its name suggests, aims to go deep into the issue of gender identity, address traditional perceptions and expectations from the traditional gender binary and challenge beliefs and mentalities that dictate who can/should do something and who cannot/should not do it. As learners you will be able to gain knowledge on terminology, ideas and philosophical “test” that allow you to become more inquisitive on biases and stereotypes and thus address them within yourselves and the people around you. The content has been implemented in group settings, as with all the previous units.

Developing an ecological mindset (Unit 4)

This final unit addresses the notion of ecology and environmentalism in relation to the individual, the collective and the wider societal levels. This chapter follows a holistic approach to ecological mentalities, meaning that it doesn’t analyse only individual responsibility and practices, but goes a step further into how it is at its core a rather intersectional issue that reflects on the natural environment. As a chapter it integrates elements from all previous ones in terms of mentality related to them, without repeating information that has already been addressed. As was the case with all previous units, this one was also implemented in a group setting which helped refine its content and overall approach.

In this document you can access the content related to “Addressing gender-based biases”. For the additional thematics, please visit [here](#) to access the other 3 parts as individual publications or as part of the complete publication.

The handbook has been designed (as much as possible) to be used both in “classroom” setting, as well as for self-study.

As it is published under creative commons license, you are free to use, adapt and remix it as much as you wish and depending on the needs of your communities and yourselves, as long as you use it under the same conditions.

This course intentionally blends theoretical, practical, and case-based approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles. The document emerged from the expertise of four different organisations’ practitioners—we’ve preserved their unique voices to reflect the richness of the field.

Unit 3 |

Addressing the Gender-based biases

3.1 Introduction

Introduction to the concept of privilege within societal frameworks.

Privilege is receiving unearned advantages that an individual or group may receive based on just being part of particular social identities, such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, ability, sexuality, age, education level and more.

In the context of gender, the male privilege offers men unrecognised advantages and opportunities in various aspects of life, such as occupation, education and politics. These privileges create significant discrimination between those who hold them and those who do not. Privilege can be passed on from generation to generation by powerful stereotypes that shape societal expectations and norms. For example gender stereotypes, i.e., about men being dominant decision-makers and women passive caregivers, are even today deeply embedded in social structures perpetuating unjust inequalities over time. In many societies, gender-based biases as such, become normalised to the extent that they are perceived as natural or inevitable, making them very difficult to change (McIntosh, 1988; hooks, 2000). Recognizing and addressing privilege may play a crucial role in challenging these biases, since it may help to deconstruct the invisible power structures that sustain gender inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989). To that end critical thinking about how advantages are distributed and maintained across different social groups.

How stereotypes are socially constructed and perpetuated

Stereotypes are socially constructed through cultural narratives, media portrayals, and historical contexts that assign specific roles and attributes to groups based on characteristics like gender, race, or class. Gender stereotypes, for instance, often depict women as nurturing and passive, while men are seen as strong and authoritative. These ideas are perpetuated over time through repeated representation in education, family structures, and media, making them seem natural

or fixed. As Simone de Beauvoir famously stated, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," highlighting that these roles are not inherent but socially imposed (de Beauvoir, 1949). The constant reinforcement of these stereotypes through everyday interactions and societal institutions sustains their power, making it difficult to challenge or escape them (Hooks, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

How do stereotypes shape interactions and influence women's roles and everyday lives?

Stereotypes deeply influence how women are perceived and treated in daily interactions, shaping expectations for their behaviour and limiting their roles in both public and private spheres. For instance, women are often expected to fulfil nurturing roles and prioritise family over career, while assertive behaviour in professional settings may be seen as "unfeminine" or "inappropriate". As Simone de Beauvoir noted in *The Second Sex*, women are often "Othered," reduced to societal roles that constrain their autonomy and identity. These stereotypes impact decisions about work, relationships, and self-worth, perpetuating a cycle of inequality, where women's contributions are undervalued and their potential is restricted.

But, should we reverse roles with men? Is that what feminism is all about?

Feminism isn't about reversing roles or enforcing a single set of expectations on men and women; it's about creating a society where individuals can make choices free from restrictive gender-based norms. There's nothing inherently wrong with women carrying and nurturing babies—these are valuable and meaningful roles. The issue arises when society expects all women to prioritise motherhood and caregiving, while limiting their opportunities in other areas such as education, work, or leadership roles. Similarly, men are often discouraged from being primary caregivers or expressing vulnerability because of rigid gender expectations.

Feminism, as Simone de Beauvoir, Gloria Steinem, Angela Davis, Judith Butler, Bell Hooks and other feminists have argued, is about freedom of choice and the dismantling of stereotypes that confine both women and men to traditional roles. It seeks to challenge the idea that caregiving or military service should be gender-specific and instead advocates for people to pursue what aligns with their skills, interests, and circumstances, regardless of gender. It's not about forcing women into traditionally male roles or vice versa, but about allowing everyone to define their own roles without societal pressure or judgement.

Experiential part

Mapping biases

Ask participants to brainstorm examples of gender-based stereotypes they've encountered in daily life. Create a collective mind map that connects stereotypes with their origins and impacts on personal and professional lives.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** In this session we explored the concept of privilege within societal frameworks, particularly gender-based privilege and biases. We discussed how stereotypes are socially constructed and perpetuated, shaping societal roles and limiting opportunities for women. Feminism is emphasized as a movement striving for freedom of choice rather than role reversal, advocating for dismantling restrictive norms to allow individuals to define their own identities and roles. Experiential learning was encouraged through activities such as mapping biases.

 **Reflection:** How can recognizing and addressing privilege in your community contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society?

 **Keywords:** Privilege, Gender-based bias, Stereotypes, Feminism, Freedom of choice, Societal norms, Equity, Mapping biases

3.2 Reflecting on Womanhood & Feminism

Objective: Walking through the historical and ongoing role of feminism in challenging gender-based biases.

The history of feminism and its evolution in global and local context

A short trip around the long “History of Feminism”

- **Early Advocacy (17th-18th Centuries)**
- Pioneers like Mary Wollstonecraft, a major enlightenment thinker involved in the debate about the “women’s question” Her book, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), was one of the first to call for women’s education and rights. Her work was unique in suggesting that the betterment of women’s status be incited through real political change. In general during that period, enlightenment ideas of reason and individualism inspired early calls for gender equality.
- **First Wave (19th - early 20th centuries):**
 - In the late 19th century, women in the U.S. and Europe started organising to demand the right to vote, led by figures like Susan B. Anthony.
 - The early 20th century saw major victories for women gaining the right to vote in countries like the U.S. (1920) and the U.K. (1918, fully by 1928), although other European countries significantly delayed to change their legislation (France-1944, Greece 1952, Switzerland-1971). It is impressive that women have voted in New Zealand since 1893.
 - women fought for better working conditions, labour rights, and access to education, gradually expanding their role in society.
- **Second Wave (1960s-1980s):**
 - The second wave of feminism (1960s-1980s) focused on reproductive rights, workplace equality, family law reform and challenging patriarchal norms. Key laws, like the Equal Pay Act, were enacted to protect women's rights.

- Key goals: equal pay, reproductive autonomy and breaking traditional gender roles (Freedman, 2003).
- **Third Wave (1990s-present):**
 - Introduced intersectionality, emphasising that gender issues intersect with race, class and sexuality.
 - Focused on individual empowerment and diversity of women's experiences (Hooks, 2000).
- **Fourth Wave (2010s-present):**
 - The movement became global, addressing issues like violence against women, education, and healthcare. The concept of intersectionality highlighted how different identities intersect to shape women's experiences. Digital activism, such as the #MeToo movement brought attention to ongoing struggles, while progress continues against persistent challenges like the gender pay gap and violence against women.
 - Addresses also issues such as sexual harassment, cyber gender-based violence and body positivity/neutrality.

The history of feminism and its evolution in global and local context

Feminist movements have been pivotal in driving significant legal changes that challenge gender-based biases and promote equality. Feminist advocacy has led to the establishment of equal pay laws, reproductive rights, and anti-discrimination legislation, ensuring that women have greater control over their economic and personal lives. Feminists have also pushed for domestic violence protections, providing legal recourse and support for women facing abuse. In Greece, the influence of feminist movements became evident with the 1983 family law reforms, which transformed women's legal rights within marriage. These reforms introduced equal decision-making power between spouses, redefined parental responsibilities as shared, and modernised divorce laws, all of which reflected the feminist push for gender equality within the family (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000). These legal advancements demonstrate how feminism has been a crucial force in reshaping laws to promote women's rights and challenge patriarchal structures globally and locally.

Feminist Activism in Contemporary Movements

Feminist movements have evolved to address a wide range of new issues, adapting to the complexities of modern society. One prominent example is the rise of digital activism, particularly seen in the #MeToo movement, which brought global attention to sexual harassment and assault, empowering women to share their stories and hold abusers accountable. This online-based activism has connected women across borders, amplifying voices that were often silenced by societal and institutional barriers. Contemporary feminism also focuses on campaigns against gender-based violence, advocating for stronger protections and support for survivors, as seen in movements pushing for legislation and public awareness around domestic abuse, sexual violence, and workplace harassment. These efforts demonstrate how feminism today continues to tackle both visible biases, such as legal inequalities and invisible forms of discrimination embedded in cultural norms and everyday interactions. Feminist activism remains dynamic, addressing intersectional issues of race, class and sexuality while striving for comprehensive social justice.

The Role of Men in Feminism

Feminism has increasingly recognized the importance of engaging men as allies in dismantling gender biases and challenging patriarchal structures. Modern feminist thought encourages men to participate in the fight for gender equality, not just for women's benefit but for their own as well. By addressing toxic masculinity (i.e., the societal expectations that pressure men to suppress emotions, avoid caregiving roles and assert dominance) feminism advocates for healthier, more inclusive gender roles. Shared responsibilities in caregiving, such as men taking active roles in parenting and household duties, challenge traditional norms and promote more equitable relationships. Men's involvement in feminist causes, whether through activism or by confronting sexism in their personal lives, is seen as essential in creating lasting social change. Feminist thinkers such as Bell Hooks have emphasised that the liberation from oppressive gender roles benefits all individuals, making men crucial partners in the journey toward gender justice (Hooks, 2004).

Feminism in Greece: Key Figures and Movements

Feminism in Greece has a rich history marked by pivotal figures and significant achievements. One of the key figures was Avra Theodoropoulou, a pioneer of the Greek women's movement and a musician, critic and activist. She became best known for her struggles to obtain women's right to vote. She was the founder and president of the Association for women's Rights. Her efforts, along with other activists,

culminated in the granting of women's suffrage in 1952, a major milestone in Greek feminist history. In the following decades, feminist movements gained momentum, particularly in the 1970s, as women campaigned for reproductive rights, workplace equality, and family law reforms. The 1983 family law reform was another critical victory, granting women equal rights in marriage and divorce. More recent campaigns in Greece have focused on combating gender-based violence and advocating for equal pay, reflecting the ongoing struggle for gender equality in both legal and social spheres.

Feminism in Spain: Key Figures and Movements

Feminism in Spain has a long and rich history, characterised by significant figures and landmark achievements. One of the key figures was **Clara Campoamor**, a trailblazer for women's rights and a prominent politician, lawyer, and suffragist. She is best known for her efforts in securing women's right to vote, which was achieved in 1931 during the Second Spanish Republic. Campoamor's relentless advocacy for gender equality made her a pivotal figure in Spain's feminist history.

After the Spanish Civil War and during the Franco dictatorship, feminist movements were suppressed, but underground networks of women continued to fight for equality. Following Franco's death in 1975, Spain saw a resurgence of feminist activism during the transition to democracy. The **1978 Constitution** was a significant victory for gender equality, recognizing the legal equality of men and women.

In the decades that followed, feminist movements gained momentum, focusing on issues such as reproductive rights, workplace equality, and combating domestic violence. In 2004, Spain passed the **Comprehensive Law on Gender-Based Violence**, a groundbreaking piece of legislation aimed at protecting women from domestic violence. More recently, campaigns like "**La Manada**" protests in 2018 highlighted the ongoing struggle against sexual violence and gender-based discrimination. Spain continues to witness strong feminist activism, with movements advocating for equal pay, reproductive rights, and the fight against gender-based violence, reflecting the ongoing efforts toward gender equality.

Experiential part

Personal reflection journal

Ask participants to write a short reflection on what feminism means to them, do they have any experiences in the past(?) and how it has influenced them (either positively or negatively). Encourage sharing and discussion.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** Feminism seeks to dismantle gender-based stereotypes and empower individuals to define their roles without societal constraints. Historical movements, from the early advocacy for education and suffrage to contemporary digital activism, have driven significant legal and social changes globally. Feminist thinkers emphasize the importance of freedom of choice, intersectionality, and shared responsibilities, challenging traditional norms for both women and men.

 **Reflection:** How have societal expectations based on gender influenced your personal choices and perceptions in life?

 **Keywords:** Gender stereotypes, Intersectionality, Freedom of choice, Equal pay, Toxic masculinity, Digital activism, Reproductive rights, Historical feminist figures

3.3 Fostering Inclusiveness in Local Context

Objective: To explore how we can foster gender inclusiveness in local communities, focusing on Western Greece, Greece and Tenerife,

Analysis of local challenges and opportunities related to gender equality in Patras and Western Greece

In Achaia and Western Greece, gender equality faces both persistent challenges and emerging opportunities. Traditional gender roles remain deeply rooted, especially in rural areas where cultural expectations often limit women's participation in the workforce and decision-making processes. The agricultural economy in these regions is still dominated by men, and women's roles are frequently confined to unpaid or underpaid labour within the household. Additionally, access to education and employment opportunities is uneven, with women in more remote areas facing greater barriers to economic independence and political representation (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000). However, recent initiatives, including EU-funded programs focused on rural development and gender equality, have started to create spaces for women to engage in entrepreneurship and leadership roles, particularly in sectors like eco-tourism and agri-business (Koutsou et al., 2014). Local women's cooperatives and networks, such as those promoting traditional crafts and eco-friendly products, are emerging as platforms that empower women economically and socially, contributing to a gradual shift towards greater gender equality in Western Greece.

In Greece, the gender gap in employment remains significant. Women face higher unemployment rates compared to men, with the female unemployment rate standing at 16.8% in 2023, compared to 10.7% for men (Eurostat, 2023). Additionally, the gender pay gap persists, with women earning on average 14.1% less than men for equivalent work (European Commission, 2023). These disparities are exacerbated in rural areas like Achaia, where traditional gender roles further limit women's access to employment and economic independence.

Cultural and social structures that may hinder or foster inclusivity.

Inclusivity in Greece

In urban areas of Greece, such as Athens and Thessaloniki, cultural and social structures often present more opportunities for inclusivity compared to rural regions. Cities tend to be more diverse, with greater exposure to global ideas and movements related to gender equality and social justice. Urban populations are generally more receptive to feminist and LGBTQ+ rights, which are supported by a broader network of NGOs, educational institutions, and advocacy groups that challenge traditional gender roles and promote inclusivity (Sotiropoulos & Karamessini, 2013). The presence of universities and international organisations in cities fosters a more progressive social environment, where issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and the inclusion of minority groups are more openly discussed. However, despite these advances, challenges remain, particularly in combating workplace discrimination and achieving gender parity in leadership roles.

Analysis of local challenges and opportunities related to gender equality in Spain & Tenerife

Spain is widely recognized as one of the most progressive European countries regarding gender and LGBTQIA+ rights, having enacted pivotal laws such as the Equal Marriage Law (2005) and the Trans Law (2021) that affirms gender self-determination (Euro Mirada, 2025). These legal advances, however, do not always translate into lived equality, especially for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals in rural and island regions, including the Canary Islands.

In Tenerife, public institutions and grassroots movements have collaborated to promote inclusiveness. The Canarian Strategy for Gender Equality and Diversity 2022–2026 incorporates specific plans for LGBTQIA+ support, decentralizing services to smaller islands such as La Palma and Lanzarote (Euro Mirada, 2025). Local associations like Diversas and GAMÁ have played a critical role in increasing visibility, providing psychosocial support, and empowering rural and island youth.

A remarkable example of gender-responsive rural innovation is La Jaira de Ana, a social farming initiative in Gran Canaria that supports women survivors of gender-based violence and their children through agroecological workshops, therapy sessions, and community events (EU CAP Network, 2022). Established with LEADER funding and supported by regional and academic partners such as the University of Agrotourism of Tenerife, the project demonstrates how gender equity, sustainability, and social cohesion can converge in rural settings.

Despite these advances, challenges persist. Findings from the YW-MED Project (Euro Mirada, 2025) reveal that young LGBTQIA+ people in rural areas of Southern Spain

and the Canary Islands face compounded exclusion: limited mental health services, lack of trained professionals, and social stigma, especially in conservative communities. In Andalusia, for instance, over 32% of LGBTQIA+ individuals report suicidal ideation, significantly higher than the national average (Euro Mirada, 2025).

These patterns are mirrored in the broader context of rural depopulation in Spain, where gender plays a crucial role. According to Martínez-Vérez et al. (2025), while men in rural Castilla y León often view depopulation as an economic threat, women interpret it as the loss of social cohesion, care networks, and belonging. Their research highlights how men tend to prioritize land and tradition, whereas women emphasize emotional connection and collective memory—a distinction that is essential for designing gender-sensitive rural revitalization strategies.

Furthermore, the La Jaira de Ana farm directly addresses the intersection of rural exclusion and gender-based violence. In 2021 alone, it supported 79 women and 99 children through its OCIRIF project, offering safe space, psychosocial support, and community integration (EU CAP Network, 2022). Its success underscores the importance of multi-level cooperation, combining local governance, academic research, and feminist rural practice.

In conclusion, Spain's trajectory toward gender inclusiveness is shaped by legislative progress, grassroots innovation, and regional strategies—but gaps remain. Rural women and LGBTQIA+ youth continue to face barriers that require intersectional, place-sensitive policy responses. As research and practice from Tenerife and the broader Spanish context show, sustainable development and gender equality must be addressed together to build resilient and inclusive rural communities.

Experiential part

Community action plan

Group participants to develop an action plan to promote gender inclusiveness in a local context. This could involve initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, workshops, advocacy or other. A canvas to assist them for this activity could include the following:

Action Plan Canvas

Title of the Initiative

.....

Objective/Purpose (e.g., raising awareness, creating opportunities for women/girls or other for marginalised groups)?

.....
.....

Target Audience (e.g., women, immigrants, the elderly, etc.). How will you engage and involve this group?

.....
.....

Key Activities (e.g., public awareness campaigns, workshops, advocacy events, etc.)?

.....
.....

Resources Needed (e.g., budget, materials, venue, human resources)

.....
.....

Partners or collaborators (e.g., local organisations, NGOs, volunteers)

.....
.....

Timeline (e.g., key milestones)

.....

.....
Promotion & Communication Strategy (e.g., social media, local media, flyers, community outreach) Key message to the target audience
.....
.....

.....
Expected Outcomes (e.g., increased participation of women in local decision-making, greater public awareness of inclusivity issues)
.....
.....

.....
Measure success (e.g., surveys, participant feedback, attendance numbers)
.....
.....

.....
Challenges and Solutions (e.g., resistance from community, lack of funding)
.....
.....

.....
Sustainability (strategies to ensure long-term impact and keep the initiative going after your activities stop)
.....
.....

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** Gender inclusiveness in Greece faces challenges rooted in traditional roles, particularly in rural areas like Achaia and Western Greece. Urban regions, by contrast, offer more opportunities through diverse social structures and progressive advocacy networks. Efforts such as EU-funded programs and women's cooperatives are emerging as effective tools for empowerment, alongside broader movements addressing unemployment, pay gaps, and workplace discrimination.

 **Reflection:** How can local communities effectively balance traditional cultural values with progressive gender equality initiatives to foster inclusivity?

3.4 Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

Objective: To expand knowledge on non-violent communication and when it is applicable.

Non-Violent Communication principles

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) developed by Dr. Rosenberg, promotes compassionate communication by encouraging individuals to express themselves authentically while listening empathetically to others, helping to reduce conflict and create more harmonious relationships (Rosenberg, 2003). The key principles of NVC include:

Observation without judgement. Describing what is happening without evaluating or criticising. Instead of reacting emotionally to violent communication, start by calmly observing the behaviour without attaching judgments. For instance, instead of thinking, "They are being rude," notice, "They raised their voice during the meeting." This helps you to remain grounded and objective (Rosenberg, 2003).

Expressing feelings. Once you observe the situation, connect with your feelings. Violent communication often triggers strong emotions. Acknowledge these internally and express them honestly. For example: "When I hear this kind of language, I feel hurt and frustrated." This helps avoid escalation while communicating your emotional state.

Identifying needs. Recognizing the underlying needs behind emotions and actions. Connect your feelings to

unmet needs. If someone is speaking to you aggressively, ask yourself what unmet need you have in this situation. For example: "I feel frustrated because I need respect and understanding in our communication." Understanding your own needs makes it easier to address them.

Make a Clear and Non-Demanding Request. After identifying your needs, make a clear, specific, and non-demanding request to the other person. For example: "Would you be willing to discuss this in a calmer tone?" This allows the other person to choose to respond positively without feeling cornered or defensive.

Empathy (but in moderation!). Instead of immediately defending yourself, practice empathising with the other person. Ask yourself, "What might they be feeling or

needing right now?" Even in the face of aggressive communication, this pause allows you to diffuse tension by connecting to the underlying emotions or needs of the other person.

But bear in mind that there are cases where someone is simply mean, abusive or manipulative, empathy alone may not be enough, and it **can even put you at risk of tolerating ongoing abuse.**

Empathy should never be used to justify abusive behaviour. People can be frustrated or upset, but that doesn't give them a licence to be mean or hurtful. Recognizing abusive patterns and a combination of self-protection and boundary-setting is essential.

Setting Boundaries and protecting yourself. While it's valuable to try to understand someone's feelings, recognize that not all behaviour is justifiable and it's okay if empathy **doesn't** change the situation. If the person continues to be abusive or mean, your priority should be setting boundaries and protecting yourself.

- *Setting boundaries:* For example, you could say: "I understand you may be feeling frustrated, but I need this conversation to remain respectful."
- *Protect yourself:* If the conversation escalates, follow through with your boundary by stepping away. This shows that you are serious about maintaining respectful communication. If abusive behaviour continues despite your best efforts to communicate empathetically, it may be time to consider outside support, such as couples therapy or individual counselling to address the deeper issues or even address organisations/hotlines that support victims/survivors of abuse. If the behaviour becomes emotionally abusive or manipulative and persists even after you've set boundaries, it is important to recognize when the relationship may no longer be healthy. In some cases, prioritising your emotional safety might mean creating physical or emotional distance until the issues are resolved. In workplaces, if a boss or colleague's abusive behaviour continues despite your best efforts at empathetic communication, it may be time to involve a neutral third party (such as HR) or document the behaviour for your protection.

If you're planning to leave an abusive relationship, it's crucial to **have a safety plan in place first**. The **National Domestic Violence Hotline** (15900) and [Erifyli Center](#) in

Greece, and [Servicio telefónico de información, de asesoramiento jurídico y de atención psicosocial inmediata por personal especializado a todas las formas de violencia contra las mujeres](#)) in Spain (016) can help you craft a detailed plan, but here are some steps to consider:

1. **Safe place:** Know where you will go if you need to leave quickly (e.g., a friend's house or a family member that the abusive person does not know or a shelter).
2. **Emergency Contacts:** Have a list of trusted people you can contact if needed.
3. **Important Things:** Keep essential documents and other important stuff (ID, passport, bank information, cash, keys, medication) in an easily accessible place in case you need to leave quickly.
4. **Code Word:** Establish a code word with trusted friends or family that you can use if you need urgent help.
5. **Legal Steps:** Consider restraining orders or protective orders if applicable. A legal professional can help guide you through this process.

Important Note: Be careful! Setting boundaries in an abusive relationship can indeed escalate the abuse, which is why it's critical to have a support system and exit plan in place. Always prioritise your safety and well-being and don't hesitate to seek help from professionals who specialise in supporting victims of domestic violence.

References for Help:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline (Greece): +30 15900
- [Erifyli Center \(Greece\) forming a tailor-made escape plan](#)
- Telephone service for information, legal advice and immediate psychological attention by specialised personnel for all forms of violence against women ([Servicio telefónico de información, de asesoramiento jurídico y de atención psicosocial inmediata por personal especializado a todas las formas de violencia contra las mujeres](#)) (Spain): +34 016
- Island women's Services (S.I.A.M.): free legal, social and psychological counselling services for women and their children. No need for prior complaint. List of SIAM in Tenerife and contact details: [https://www.iass.es/listado-centros/centros-para-mujeres-victimas?types\[0\]=1](https://www.iass.es/listado-centros/centros-para-mujeres-victimas?types[0]=1)

- [List of Helplines in 46 European Countries](#)

Self-Compassion. If you're on the receiving end of violent communication, practising self-compassion is crucial. Acknowledge that it's okay to feel upset and give yourself space to process these emotions before responding. This prevents reacting in ways that contribute to the cycle of violence.

Practical examples of how NVC can be used to defuse confrontational situations

Customer Service Complaint

Situation: A customer is yelling at you about a product not working properly, saying, "This is the worst service ever!"

NVC Approach:

- Observation: "I understand that you're unhappy with the product."
- Feelings: "It sounds like you are feeling really frustrated."
- Needs: "I can see that you need reliable service and quality."
- Request: "Would you be open to discussing how we can fix this issue for you?"
- Result: By acknowledging the customer's frustration without taking it personally, the conversation is redirected towards finding a solution.

Family Disagreement About Responsibilities

Situation: A family member is upset because they feel you're not helping enough with household chores, saying, "You never help out and I'm tired of doing everything!"

NVC Approach:

- Observation: "It sounds like you've been doing a lot of the chores on your own."
- Feelings: "I hear that you're feeling overwhelmed."
- Needs: "It seems like you need more support with the household tasks."
- Request: "Would it help if we made a plan to divide the chores more evenly?"
- Result: This response helps ease the tension by focusing on shared responsibilities and seeking a cooperative solution.

To apply NVC, remember to:

- Acknowledge the other person's feelings and needs before presenting your own. This shows understanding and helps defuse the emotional intensity.
- Focus on what is happening rather than who is at fault and use observations instead of evaluations or blame. Make requests, not demands: Suggest solutions in a way that invites collaboration, rather than demanding change.
- Suggest solutions in a way that includes collaboration, rather than demanding change.

Is NVC always applicable?

To apply NVC effectively there has to be a genuine desire from both parties to resolve the situation rather than just escape or avoid it. NVC is rooted in empathy, active listening and a commitment to understanding both your own needs and the other person's. Here's why wanting to solve the situation is key:

- NVC is most effective when both parties are open to finding a mutually beneficial solution. If someone is only interested in "winning" or avoiding the conflict entirely, the process won't lead to meaningful resolution. The intention behind NVC is to foster connection and understanding, not simply to defuse tension temporarily.
- Using NVC requires engaging with the other person's emotions and needs, as well as your own. If the goal is simply to avoid conflict or escape the situation, you might not fully invest in this empathetic process. NVC often involves acknowledging difficult emotions—yours and others'. If someone is trying to escape the situation, they might avoid the emotional vulnerability required to communicate openly. Real conflict resolution through NVC requires facing those emotions and being honest about needs and feelings.
- The process of NVC builds trust and cooperation over time, which is essential for resolving conflicts. If the goal is simply to avoid conflict, this trust doesn't develop, and the underlying issues remain unresolved, likely leading to further conflict in the future.

Experiential part

Role-Playing

Participants may practise NVC in prepared scenarios involving NVC as the ones indicated above. They can suggest their own situations and role play analysing as indicated above.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** Non-Violent Communication (NVC) is a method designed to foster compassionate communication by promoting empathy, active listening, and understanding. Key principles include observation without judgment, expressing feelings, identifying needs, and making clear, non-demanding requests. NVC can defuse confrontational situations in diverse settings like customer service or family disagreements. However, its effectiveness depends on both parties genuinely seeking resolution rather than avoidance. Setting boundaries, practicing self-compassion, and seeking external support when necessary are also integral components, especially in cases of abusive communication.

 **Reflection:** How can you implement the principles of Non-Violent Communication in your daily interactions to improve understanding and reduce conflict?

 **Keywords:** Non-Violent Communication (NVC), Compassionate, Communication, Empathy, Active listening, Conflict resolution, Setting boundaries, Self-compassion, Abusive communication, Emotional safety, Mutual understanding

3.5 Understanding the diversity of identities

Objective: To understand the intersectionality of identities and how multiple discrimination can create cumulative disadvantage.

How gender biases intersect with other social identities such as race, age and socioeconomic status.

Gender biases often intersect with other social identities, such as race, age and socioeconomic status, creating layered forms of discrimination. This intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how women of colour, older women, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face compounded biases. For example, a woman of colour may face both racial and gender discrimination in the workplace, leading to fewer opportunities and wage disparities compared to her white female or, even more, male counterparts. Similarly, older women may encounter ageism in addition to sexism, while women from lower-income backgrounds often lack access to resources, amplifying gender inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989). Understanding these intersections is essential for addressing the full scope of inequality and fostering inclusivity across different identities.

Exploring specific identities such as LGBTQ+, women of different ethnic backgrounds and women with disabilities

Gender biases intersect with various social identities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, women of different ethnic backgrounds, and women with disabilities, leading to unique challenges for these groups. LGBTQ+ women often face dual discrimination based on both their gender and sexual orientation or gender identity, which can result in exclusion from both feminist and LGBTQ+ spaces. For instance, transgender women frequently encounter barriers to healthcare and legal protections, which can be compounded by societal expectations tied to traditional gender roles (Connell, 2012). Women from ethnic minority backgrounds, such as Roma women in Europe or African American women in the U.S., experience a combination of racism and sexism that results in limited access to education, higher unemployment rates, and disproportionate representation in lower-paying jobs (Crenshaw, 1989). For women

with disabilities, the intersection of ableism and sexism further restricts their access to resources such as education, employment, and reproductive rights. For example, women with disabilities often face assumptions about their ability to parent or engage in relationships, limiting their autonomy and opportunities (Garland-Thomson, 2005). These examples highlight the need for an intersectional approach to gender equality that recognizes and addresses the compounded effects of multiple identities.

Experiential part

Case Study Analysis

Analyse case studies of women from different identities experiencing gender bias. Encourage discussions about how intersectionality can amplify or mitigate these biases.

Session summary

 **Knowledge:** The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how gender biases intersect with other identities such as race, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability. These intersections create compounded forms of discrimination, which uniquely affect groups like women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities. Addressing these layered inequalities requires an inclusive, intersectional approach to gender equality.

 **Reflection:** How can understanding intersectionality transform strategies for promoting gender equality in diverse workplaces and communities?

 **Keywords:** Intersectionality, Gender bias, Social identities, Kimberlé Crenshaw, LGBTQ+, Women of color, Disability and gender, Inclusive approach

3.6 Enhancing Critical Thinking

Objective: To learn the importance of critical thinking skills for the deconstruction of gender-based biases and stereotypes.

Tools and techniques for identifying and challenging gender-based stereotypes

Enhancing critical thinking skills is essential for deconstructing gender biases and stereotypes. One effective tool is media literacy, which encourages individuals to critically analyse the ways gender is portrayed in advertisements, films, and news, questioning the underlying messages and assumptions. Another technique is Socratic questioning, which promotes deep inquiry by asking probing questions about the origins and effects of stereotypes, such as, “What evidence supports this stereotype?” and “How does this stereotype impact individuals and society?” (Paul & Elder, 2006). Additionally, role-playing activities can help individuals step into different perspectives, fostering empathy and allowing participants to experience how gender biases affect others. Lastly, case study analysis of real-life scenarios where gender biases are present provides practical examples and discussions on how to challenge these biases effectively.

Experiential part

Media analysis

Provide participants with a selection of advertisements, parts from TV shows, interviews or news articles. In groups, they can analyse and write down the content for gender bias, present and discuss it with the whole class.

Discussion on how to critically engage with media, advertising and social narratives that perpetuate gender biases.

3.7 Ecofeminism

Objective: To get acquainted with the concept of ecofeminism and explore connections between environmental and gender justice.

What is Ecofeminism?

Ecofeminism or ecological feminism is an ecological and feminist movement based on environmental and political philosophy, that recognises the interconnections between the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women. The term was first introduced by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in the 1970s, emphasising that patriarchal structures harm both women and the natural world, creating a mutual relationship between environmental degradation and gender-based inequality (d'Eaubonne, 1974). Ecofeminists suggest that just as women have historically been marginalised, the environment has been exploited, often through industries and practices dominated by male-driven agendas. This perspective urges a holistic approach to social and environmental justice, where liberating both women and the planet from oppression are seen as inherently linked goals.

Ecofeminism encompasses a range of perspectives, from cultural ecofeminism, which celebrates the feminine connection to nature, to social and political ecofeminism, which critiques how capitalism and patriarchy jointly exploit both women and the environment (Merchant, 1996). For example, in communities where industrialization has caused environmental harm, women are often the first to suffer its impacts, as they are typically responsible for household tasks that rely on clean water, fresh air, and safe resources. Therefore, ecofeminists argue that environmental policies must also consider social equity, particularly for women.

Gender & Environmental Justice

Environmental justice focuses on fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income concerning environmental laws, policies, and regulations. Ecofeminism expands this to include gender, asserting that women, especially in impoverished and rural communities, disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental degradation (Shiva, 1988). For instance, in many parts of the world, climate change-induced resource scarcity, like water shortages and deforestation, increases the burden on women who are traditionally responsible for gathering water, firewood, and food.

A vivid example of this connection can be seen in the work of ecofeminist Vandana Shiva, who has highlighted how industrial agriculture and resource privatisation in India have disproportionately affected rural women. Shiva argues that sustainable practices that support local women's rights to land and resources are crucial for true environmental justice (Shiva, 1988). Additionally, women tend to play a significant role in environmental preservation through traditional knowledge systems and sustainable practices, yet their contributions are often overlooked in policy-making.

Women & Climate Change

Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities, as women are often more vulnerable to its impacts. According to the UN, women and girls face greater risks during extreme weather events, natural disasters, and climate-induced migration. Women in developing countries are particularly affected due to limited access to resources, education, and economic opportunities, which restrict their ability to adapt to or recover from climate impacts (UN Women, 2020). For example, in many regions, women's dependence on natural resources for livelihoods, combined with restricted access to education, healthcare, and decision-making, puts them in a particularly vulnerable position.

In addition to being disproportionately affected, women are also at the forefront of grassroots environmental activism. From community-level conservation efforts to global movements, women often lead initiatives to protect ecosystems and promote sustainability. This activism reflects the ecofeminist belief that sustainable environmental practices are essential to achieving gender equity, making women key stakeholders in both environmental and gender justice.

Experiential part

Ecofeminist reflection

Have participants reflect on their relationship with the environment and how (if) environmental degradation impacts them in their community. Discuss ways to combine gender equality with environmental advocacy. Read parts from books and case studies and discuss.

Session Summary

 **Knowledge:** Ecofeminism highlights the interconnectedness between the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women, advocating for a holistic approach to justice that addresses both issues. Women, particularly in rural and impoverished communities, often bear the brunt of environmental challenges like climate change, resource scarcity, and deforestation.

 **Reflection:** How can ecofeminist principles be applied in your community to address both environmental and gender-based challenges effectively?

 **Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Environmental justice, Gender equity, Patriarchy, Climate change, Grassroots activism

Practical issues and pedagogical considerations

Formalities

- Content covered
- Objectives
- Learning outcomes - Relation to EQF levels
- Transferability aspect (if applicable)
- Promoting cooperative learning
- Related literacies (and/or life skills)

Implementation

- Trainer requirements
- Infrastructure requirements
- Base vs ideal number of sessions/hours
- Considerations about learners based on their specific needs/context
- Tips for self-study
- anything else that we come up with

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Annexes

Accessibility review - note

For each unit's content, ensure the following accessibility considerations are addressed:

- Provide materials in multiple formats (e.g., text, audio, video, braille, and large print) to accommodate various needs.
- Utilize high-contrast visuals and accessible color schemes for presentations, slides, and documents.
- Include closed captions and transcripts for all video and audio content.
- Ensure all digital resources are compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies.
- Offer alternative assignments or exercises for learners with sensory or physical limitations.
- Ensure physical spaces for in-person sessions are wheelchair accessible and equipped with assistive listening devices.

For the course as a whole:

- Incorporate flexibility in deadlines and participation requirements to accommodate learners with varying schedules and abilities.
- Provide clear navigational guidance for course platforms and tools, ensuring ease of use for all learners.
- Regularly audit materials and tools for compliance with accessibility standards such as WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).
- Include ongoing feedback mechanisms for learners to share accessibility challenges and to adapt the course accordingly.
- Train educators and facilitators on best practices for inclusive teaching and accessibility support.

Notes and Considerations Based on Specific Units

For technical units with diagrams or charts:

- Provide textual descriptions or audio explanations of visual elements to support learners with visual impairments.
- Ensure diagrams are labeled clearly and use accessible fonts and sizes.

For collaborative or interactive sessions:

- Offer alternative formats for participation (e.g., virtual discussions or asynchronous forums) to accommodate different learner needs.
- Provide clear instructions and expectations for group activities to minimize confusion.

Code of conduct

Code of Conduct for Learners

Engage actively with learning materials and exercises, striving to apply terms in practical contexts such as examples or case studies.

Respect the accessibility measures provided, utilizing glossaries, textual descriptions, audio explanations, and alternative formats as needed.

Participate in forums, discussions, or group activities with an open mind and respect for diverse perspectives and needs.

Follow clear instructions for collaborative sessions, ensuring equitable contribution and understanding.

Adhere to respectful communication practices, fostering a positive environment for all learners and educators.

Code of Conduct for Educators

Design learning materials that are accessible and inclusive, offering simplified explanations, glossaries, and accommodations for visual or other impairments.

Ensure all diagrams and charts are clearly labeled and utilize accessible fonts and sizes.

Provide alternative participation formats for collaborative or interactive sessions to accommodate diverse learner needs.

Set clear expectations and instructions for activities to reduce confusion and enhance learning outcomes.

Promote an environment of patience, respect, and encouragement, recognizing the varying needs and capabilities of each learner.

Code of Conduct for Collaboration Between Learners and Educators

Maintain a mutual respect for each other's roles, contributions, and perspectives in the learning process.

Communicate clearly and constructively, ensuring that all participants feel heard and valued.

Work collaboratively to address and accommodate diverse needs, utilizing available resources and alternative formats effectively.

Encourage curiosity and feedback to refine and improve learning materials and methods.

Prioritize inclusivity and accessibility, striving to create an equitable and engaging learning environment.



This document is part of the EcoFemSkills Learning Course, a set of thematic units for addressing issues of ecological transition from an intersectional perspective. The publication has been developed in the context of the Erasmus+ project EcoFemSkills: Rural Women Pioneering Sustainability, whose working team consists of the following organisations:

- Asociación Ecologica Precious Plastic Canarias hacia una economía circular (Spain) [[facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [website](#)]
- Asociación para la participación e integración social - FACTORÍA SOCIAL (Spain) [[website](#)]
- Erifyli Center (Greece) [[website](#)]
- Dafni Kek (Greece) [[website](#)]

Available at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2023-2-ES01-KA210-ADU-000181192>

Alternative sources: [EcoFemSkills minisite](#) + partners platforms



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