



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026

Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group

Wageningen
University & Research

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1 Introduction and context

Over the past two years (2023-2024), the Social Safety Programme drove the initiation of a number of interventions and activities that have led to improvements and increased awareness of this topic at WUR – also aided by the social developments and urgency surrounding this issue.

The first part of the Social Safety Programme (2022-2023) focused on the following elements:

- Initiate dialogue: Mindlab performances for employees with follow-up within the units
- Establish a Social Safety Contact Point
- Develop a Social Safety Code of Conduct and Relationships at Work Code of Conduct
- Develop a protocol for complex cases
- Make an inventory of training courses and workshops on social safety and create a pilot aimed at training managers
- Develop and roll out an ongoing recognisable Looking Out for Each Other campaign for students and staff, aimed at supporting various activities and interventions around social safety
- Identify blind spots, based among others on reports and recommendations by WUR support professionals, the 2023 Employee Monitor, national reports (by Hamer), and workshops that identified bottlenecks/priorities in dependency relationships.

Our work on social safety is therefore not yet 'done', also in light of the recent results of the 2023 Employee Monitor, in which 30% of WUR employees report witnessing some form of undesirable behaviour, and 19% report experiencing it themselves. In the 2023 PhD Survey, 24% of PhD candidates reported having experienced undesirable behaviour, as did no less than 36% of researchers with a scholarship. The recent report of the Dutch Labour Authority (Arbeidsinspectie) also underlines the need to further improve social safety. Among students, we see a similar picture emerge, and reports of sexual harassment and violence are on the rise.

In drawing up this follow-up programme, the Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group based itself on the 2022 KNAW report on Social Safety in Dutch Academia. This report makes it clear that working towards social safety requires an integrated approach: a **culture change** anchored in **structures** and **systems**, involving every actor, and addressing all forms of undesirable behaviour.

The report states that a socially safe environment is never complete, and that it stands out precisely through the ongoing attention within an organisation – at various levels – for the issue of what is desirable and undesirable behaviour. An integrated approach to working towards improvements in this area is therefore the shared responsibility of the organisation as a whole, and this means that we need, among other things, to review step by step both our workplace culture and our organisational structures and reporting systems.

Based on an analysis of documents, collected input from employees and students, and the experience gained from the first Social Safety Programme, the Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group has put forward the following follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026, aimed at further strengthening the cultural change underway and realising concrete improvements in culture, structures and systems. Although the KNAW report focuses on academic organisations, the focus points in the follow-up Social Safety Programme also explicitly target Wageningen Research.

2 Work plan for Follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026

With the first Social Safety Programme, we initiated a culture change, delivered a number of concrete documents, worked on lowering the reporting threshold, focused on proper referral to the right support structure, and worked on raising awareness of what undesirable behaviour is and the skills required for addressing undesirable behaviour when it occurs. In practice, we too have experienced how hard it is to change systems, structures and culture. It is a process that requires a longer period than two years (the scope of the initial programme). That is why the Integrity and Social Safety Steering Group has produced a follow-up programme.

The following documents were used in drafting a new work plan for the follow-up of the Social Safety Programme 2025-2026:

- KNAW advisory report on Social Safety in Dutch Academia*
- 2023 Employee Monitor
- Hamer's advisory report on how to address sexual transgressive behaviour and sexual violence in higher education and science
- Evaluation report by the Ombudsperson, and the elaboration of the recommendations of the Ombudsperson's evaluation report
- Annual reports by the Ombudsperson, confidential counsellors (for students and employees), the occupational social work team, and Zorg van de Zaak (company doctors)
- Evaluation and experiences of Social Safety Contact Point
- WUR PhD Survey 2023
- The outcome of working sessions organised by the Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group around dependency relationships:
 - Manager – employees
 - PhD candidate – supervisor / PhD supervisor
 - Lecturer – student
 - Students among themselves

*Explanation of KNAW system: system, culture and structure

*"Workplace **culture** is formed by the interplay of all the unwritten rules, habits and assumptions that guide everyday behaviour. This is supported by defining experiences at work, such as stories about role models and symbols of success. These are embedded in the **structures** the organisation uses to develop, assess and reward behaviour. Because the unwritten rules in the workplace also reflect the criteria that may or may not be used in recruitment and promotion procedures. The culture is also maintained by the **systems** deployed to correct and redirect undesirable behaviour. These are insufficiently effective as long as managers do not visibly take action, officers are not well placed to help with reports, and repair concerns take precedence in the handling of complaints. An integrated approach therefore means addressing workplace culture as well as organisational structures and reporting systems."* (From KNAW Report, Elaboration)

Based on the above-mentioned documents, the Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group formulated the following programme, which reinforces the cultural change underway and focuses on three factors that are crucial in shaping social safety for both employees and students: culture, leadership and systemic improvements.

The aforementioned focus points within the programme reinforce the existing initiatives and areas for improvement that are already being addressed within ESA, HR, and Legal, as well as all other initiatives within the organisation.

Initiatives and areas for improvement derived from the above documents, such as the recommendations of the evaluation report of the Ombudsperson and the evaluation of the Contact Point, that are not reflected in the follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026, have been

delegated and are being addressed outside the context of the Social Safety Programme. The Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group remains in charge of these issues.

3 Follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026

3.1 Culture

The KNAW report states that an organisational culture largely determines how colleagues interact with each other. Culture is apparent in the attitudes, actions, beliefs, processes, procedures, rituals and stories that are valued by the employees and the organisation.

The initial Social Safety Programme focused on initiating a culture change to learn to talk about desirable and undesirable behaviour. We did so by initiating the dialogue about Social Safety with the Mindlab performances, by actively steering the implementation of the Social Safety Code of Conduct and the Relationships at Work Code of Conduct towards engaging in this dialogue, and by keeping the topic alive with the Looking Out for Each Other campaign.

A culture change is not something you achieve in two years. That is why in the follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026, we continue to focus on this culture change. We will do so by focusing on engaging in **dialogue** (about undesirable behaviour) and by promoting a **learning culture**.

3.1.1 The dialogue about desirable and undesirable behaviour

Engaging in dialogue about desirable and undesirable behaviour is at the heart of all internal and external recommendations and research reports published in recent years on social safety. How do we get together to talk about behaviour, and what do we find desirable and acceptable? Who actually decides what that is? In the follow-up Social Safety Programme, we will proceed with our Looking Out for Each Other campaign, monitor current developments and use them to promote these topics of conversation.

The KNAW report on social safety states that initiating a dialogue around behaviour is at the heart of culture change. *"It is naïve to believe that a safe environment for learning and scientific debate will naturally develop if only people are smart enough. The organisation has a role in naming and developing skills in relationships, emotions, and communication. These help lecturers to create a safe learning environment, researchers to engage in constructive debate with room for dissent, and support staff to bring their expertise to the fore. In fact, these competencies are part of the basic set of professional and academic skills that are also indispensable to shape other ambitions around impact and to shape Open Science. For monitoring scientific integrity, it is also crucial that people have the skill to express doubts and ask difficult questions without provoking defensive reactions."*

Working on social safety is not a stand-alone issue; good dialogue and consultation skills are general skills that help strengthen aspects like openness, dissent, and knowledge sharing, all values that are also important in change programmes such as Recognition & Rewards, Strategic Housing, Open Science, Diversity & Inclusion, work pressure, and development interviews. The follow-up Social Safety programme is explicitly linked to these programmes.

An important element in the initial Social Safety Programme were the Mindlab performances for employees. These performances aimed to launch a dialogue about behaviour and its consequences. The responsibility for following up on Mindlab lay with the Sciences Groups, helped by the attention devoted to the performances in the Looking Out for Each Other campaign.

In the follow-up Social Safety Programme, we plan to focus on students. The available documents and the follow-up session revealed that students represent a large and vulnerable target group that are at the same time the potential employees of the future, within and beyond WUR.

We want to offer them a safe learning environment in which they can discuss, practise and learn from concrete behaviour. We will do so by creating a structure in which we help students, under guidance, to address behaviours or topics themselves within their own group. By embedding this

process in the culture and student organisations, we will ensure that this intervention has a lasting effect. For further details, see 3.1.3.

3.1.2 Towards a learning culture

The KNAW report indicates that there is as yet no open accountability culture within Dutch academia that aims at developing common ground rules that guarantee that everyone can work in a safe environment. The ability to talk constructively about behaviour is a professional skill that every employee should develop. It is part of a healthy workplace culture and needed to create good academic practise. The purpose of dialogue is to substantiate principles or tenets of good academic practice and shared codes for desirable behaviour. It is naïve to believe that a safe environment for learning and scientific debate will naturally develop if only people are smart enough. The organisation has a role in naming and developing skills in relationships, emotions and communication.

This requires creating a learning culture in which people experience the space and appreciation required to reflect on their work and work circumstances through a different lens and are able to freely discuss ideas, dilemmas and mistakes with each other. This does not happen automatically, and it needs to be actively promoted.

3.1.3 Concrete approach to culture change at WUR

Active promotion is achieved by calling on everyone to work together to create a safe environment, inviting other perspectives to come forward, and putting the topic on the agenda at management meetings. The Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group will encourage this where possible. In the context of the programme, we can offer concrete interventions in three areas: encouraging good dialogue, setting up a 'social playground' for students, and fostering a learning culture.

- *Let's Talk:*
We will draw more and more explicit attention to the importance of having good conversations about social safety in the Let's Talk dialogues. In consultation with C-HR, we will provide general training programmes for employees (including PhD candidates and lecturers) on how to talk about behaviour and social safety. We will also develop and offer training programmes for managers on social safety and behaviour through the regular channels (MyDevelopment, Edubookers, menu for managers, and the Sciences Groups).
- *The Social Playground:*
As part of the initial Social Safety Programme, Mindlab performances were offered to employees to initiate the dialogue around behaviour. In this follow-up programme, we want to initiate the dialogue about social safety among students in a way that resonates with them. This will allow them to practise and learn to talk about social norms. Our aim in this context is to create a safe environment, a 'social playground', in which students are aware that they are sometimes not yet sufficiently able to shape social interactions in a good way, and in which they can practise social norms, have space to be awkward and can resolve problems themselves, so that they can learn from experience.

Our approach involves identifying various subcultures (student associations, study associations, country groups, interest groups, student departments) and within each of these subcultures, implementing a tailor-made plan according to the format below so that this is not a one-time intervention, but a long-term embedded process:

1. Recruiting and training ambassador(s)/confidential contact persons within the subgroup
2. Collecting stories or questions about social situations and failure under the guidance of an expert
3. The social playground as a 'safe space' for discussion and experimentation:
 - a. Sharing stories. Preferably one's own stories, and otherwise, generic stories
 - b. Initiating the dialogue in safe groups (peer-to-peer) with the help of tools
 - c. Experimenting and trying things out
 - d. Reflecting in safe groups and peer consultations with ambassadors

4. Aftercare through existing support structure where needed.

This will be launched in January 2025, and an interim review will be held in December 2025.

- *Learning culture:*
 - In the follow-up Social Safety Programme, our **Looking Out for Each Other campaign** will highlight learning behaviour and being open to other perspectives.
 - There are many training courses and workshops that focus on social safety, sometimes from a slightly different perspective or for a different target group. In fact, there may be so much on offer that people sometimes miss cohesion and overview. We will **collect, organise, publish and promote** these workshops and training courses as part of our programme. Access to these offerings will be provided at central level through the social safety intranet and internet pages.
 - An essential element in creating a safe learning culture is giving feedback and feedforward. In practice, asking for and accepting feedback remains difficult. And yet, it is something we have to continue doing and encourage in each other. **Exemplary behaviour** should be encouraged in contexts such as lectures and meetings. From the programme, we will support this through communications as part of the Looking Out for Each Other campaign, so that we can work towards a culture that makes it easier to give and receive feedback.

3.2 Structure

3.2.1 Introduction: Attention to leadership

The KNAW report on Social Safety in Dutch Academia identifies three main elements in an organisational structure that form a breeding ground for undesirable behaviour: scarcity of resources and positions and high work pressure, the complexity of the academic organisation, and power relations. Power relations refer to both formal and informal power relations. Differences in status and the dependencies they create can have a significant impact.

Research shows what this kind of power imbalances does to people. It literally makes them perceive, think and act differently. This alone can lead to misunderstanding and mutual irritation. Anyone who depends on another person tries to understand the other person's motives and desires and focuses mainly on concrete details. This makes people more cautious about making decisions, disagreeing or expressing criticism. Those who end up in positions of power focus on achieving objectives and are more aware of the big picture. This makes it easy for them to forget that other people's apparent compliance can be traced back to the difference in power positions and need not say anything about the quality of their own ideas or decisions. Those in power also have less need to take into account the other person's perspective and feelings, so that they tend to forget about it.

People are not always adequately protected from these power imbalances. Moreover, the complexity of the organisation means that people can go about their business unnoticed, and makes it difficult for those in charge to see what is going on.

Adjustments in organisational structure can neutralise the pressure on social safety. This can be done by investing in improving collaborative relationships, clearly positioning managers in their responsibility for their people's wellbeing, and identifying risks.

In the recommendations of confidential counsellors, company social workers, the Ombudsperson, and the WUR occupational health and safety department, as well as in many external reports, quality of leadership is consistently mentioned as a key point of focus when it comes to creating a socially safe work and study environment. In this follow-up to the social safety programme, we want to explicitly prioritise leadership in relation to social safety.

3.2.2 Leadership: competencies and the role of the manager in social safety

WUR has a [leadership profile](#) that states that a WUR leader focuses on people and collaboration. The leadership profile also speaks of empowering people and helping them develop, engaging in dialogue with clarity and empathy, devoting attention to the wellbeing of people and teams, as well as to diversity and inclusion, and creating a safe environment. At their core, these are good and clear principles and values.

In practice, managers indicate that they find it difficult to translate these principles and values into concrete behaviour around social safety. The various evaluations and external reports (see list of sources) also show that there is sometimes an ambiguity of roles / division of responsibilities when it comes to social safety. Managers need clarity and concrete help in dealing with a report or a question about a socially unsafe situation.

3.2.3 Concrete approach to WUR structure

Social safety as part of leadership competencies

- *Basic training*

The Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group believes that a **basic social safety training course** (e.g. in the form of an e-learning course), covering topics such as (i) what is social safety (context and frameworks), (ii) giving and receiving feedback, (iii) dealing with cultural differences, and (iv) working from a hierarchical position, should be made compulsory for all managers, including current managers.

The Social Safety Programme will formulate a proposal for such a basic social safety training course, in consultation with WGS (PhD supervision), CHR (L&D), and ESA (TLC).

- As part of our **refresher course and continuing education** offerings, we will partner with CHR Learning & Development to offer courses in the context of Leadership Development to help managers develop the required competencies, and we will continue to actively promote these offerings. These training courses can also be offered to informal managers or project leaders.

The role of the manager in social safety

- In the initial Social Safety programme, we developed a protocol for handling complex cases aimed at senior management. In the follow-up programme, we will elaborate on the role of managers when it comes to social safety in terms of concrete behaviour and create a **10-phase plan on how to deal with transgressive behaviour** for all managers and HR professionals. In the implementation phase, we will also involve the support structure available to managers to support them in their important and often complex task.
- To practice using the 10-phase plan, we will offer optional **workshops** for formal managers and team leaders. At a later stage, these workshops can also be offered to informal managers, such as project leaders, based on the need for such training and the capacity available for providing it.

3.3 System

3.3.1 Introduction

According to the KNAW report, the organisation is therefore tasked with guaranteeing a safe working environment for everyone. This includes having provisions for reporting and handling complaints related to social safety. These procedures focus primarily on handling formal complaints and not so much on early detection or the actual resolution of key problems regarding social safety. The procedural approach often proves counterproductive. There is a reluctance to intervene, which actually causes problems to escalate and undermines trust in the organisation's genuine commitment to social safety.

According to the committee that drafted the KNAW report, a systematic approach aimed at prevention and timely adjustment of behaviour is more effective. This can be achieved by bringing codes of conduct to life by discussing them regularly, correcting undesirable behaviour at an early stage, responding to informal signals and reports, taking action at an early stage, and creating safety nets in the support structure in which officers and experts are united, so that reports, whether of minor or major incidents, do not go untreated.

The initial Social Safety Programme led to the creation of codes of conduct and the establishment of the Social Safety Contact Point. To strengthen the systematic approach within WUR, we will focus on further developing the Contact Point and improving the signalling structure.

3.3.2 Social Safety Contact Point and signalling structure

As part of the Social Safety programme, the Social Safety Contact Point (hereafter: "Contact Point") was launched as a pilot in late October 2022, for a period of one year. The Contact Point was evaluated at the end of 2023, including an evaluation of whether the Contact Point had added value, and if so, whether the Contact Point was adequate in its current form, or whether improvements were needed in terms of design, positioning and approach.

The evaluation revealed the following:

- The Contact Point is an easily accessible facility that employees, students and PhD candidates are able to find. It is striking that bystanders also contact the Contact Point, and that people contact the Contact Point for less severe issues.
- The Contact Point staff are able to refer those who contact them for advice to the right people within the support structure. This is done correctly and in a timely fashion.
- Information about the tasks of the Contact Point is not always clear. This could potentially lead to a lack of clarity among people who contact the Contact Point when it comes to their expectations of what the Contact Point can do for them.
- The Contact Point is currently manned by a mix of people who do and do not work within the support structure, with different backgrounds. This is in line with the Contact Point's referral task. If consideration was to be given to assigning also heavier tasks to the Contact Point, such as a directive and/or expertise role, it would require changing the composition of the Contact Point.
- There is insufficient coordination with certain bodies within the support structure. This does raise some concerns. If there are multiple entry points where reports can come in, coordination is necessary to identify trends and signals in time.

Overall, the evaluation was positive about the existence and functioning of the Contact Point, and it provided sufficient leads to further develop the Social Safety Contact Point. This is in line with the provisions of the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities 2024-2025. This agreement includes a package of agreed measures around social safety, including an agreement on establishing a central reporting point for each university:

"parties agree that, in addition to the already existing reporting structure, there will be a central reporting point per university for all complaints and reports around social safety. This reporting

point will have an information desk/referral function that meets the quality requirements to be adopted, including at least the aspects of safety and confidentiality. This is to guarantee that reporters always go to the same place, from which they can then be referred to the right support or procedure.”

The agreements made in the context of the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities were included in the Wageningen Research 2024-2025 CLA.

Signalling structure

In addition to improvements in the reporting structure, there is a need for early detection and preventive measures when it comes to undesirable behaviour. This requires a more fine-grained and organisation-wide signalling structure, in which signals and reports of lack of social safety are collected from various channels (HR, confidential counsellors, contact point, Ombudsperson, etc.) and there is better exchange and cooperation. With due respect for confidentiality and privacy regulations, we need to regularly share with each other our knowledge and experiences with addressing and resolving problems, so that we also create a learning culture in the support structure, and based on this expertise, are able to provide sound advice about a coherent and timely approach to combating undesirable behaviour.

3.3.3 Concrete approach to WUR system

Further developing the Social Safety Contact Point

Specifically, the 2025-2026 programme will proceed with the current Social Safety Contact Point and help it take the next development step based on the recommendations from the Contact Point evaluation listed below.

1. Encourage and facilitate dialogue within the support structure around coordination and cooperation. Map out where the hesitation and obstacles are, and explore whether and how these can be removed.
2. Maintain short lines of communication with the Ombudsperson, but do not make the Ombudsperson part of the Contact Point itself.
3. Consider a smaller composition for the daily staff of the Contact Point (with more available hours per person), and only or mainly include people from within the support structure.
4. In case of a change in composition, as recommended above, additional tasks could be assigned to the Contact Point, such as managing complex issues and acting as an enquiry point for more general questions around social safety. In this situation, a dialogue with other organisations that already have a more comprehensive task description for their Contact Point may be of added value.
5. Ensure consistent information on the internet and the intranet about the Contact Point, and improve the findability of the Contact Point on the intranet.
6. Describe the role of the Contact Point clearly on the internet and the intranet, so that reporters come to the Contact Point with the right expectations.
7. Have the Contact Point draw up internal regulations describing tasks that will and will not be taken up, and the procedure within the Contact Point (including how to register reports, warm transfer).
8. Continue to offer the option for reports via telephone, email and web form, but remove the walk-in consultation option. This facility is not much used and it may create false expectations concerning the handling of reports.

Recommendations 2 and 8 have already been implemented. The further implementation of the remaining recommendations requires further research, which we will elaborate with a short business case that will include at least the following aspects:

- A smaller composition for the **daily staff** of the Contact Point, i.e. the people who receive the reports, may require paid staff, rather than people who do this alongside their regular work.

- The **tasks of** the Contact Point now consist of conducting brief interviews in response to questions/reports, and advising and referring reporters to the right people, preferably providing these people with the relevant information in advance. Managing complex issues and acting as an enquiry point for more general questions around social safety are not yet included among the tasks of the current Contact Point, nor does the Contact Point function as a help desk for immediate assistance. The Contact Point is open on weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm.

In the sector, we see that some universities have more developed forms of a contact/reporting point than our current Contact Point, usually also with a wider range of duties. From the Social Safety programme, we will explore whether the tasks of the Contact Point should be extended, and if so, how this can be given shape, for example with an **expert group** that meets on a weekly basis to discuss the reports.

Signalling and reporting structure

A first step towards a good signalling structure is the structural gathering of data (anonymised and confidential, of course) on undesirable behaviour per Sciences Group. This data will be collated and regularly and selectively shared by the relevant professionals. This not only creates an organisation-wide overall picture or signalling structure that puts patterns of undesirable behaviour on the radar, but it also provides Sciences Groups' management boards with more help and a sense of urgency to come into action proactively. In this, we are following up on the recommendation of the KNAW report: "The main objective is to have a structure that allows you to identify at an early stage the sections of the organisation where extra care is needed, so that proactive action can be taken to promote professional behaviour."

3.4 Special target groups: students and PhD candidates

Internal and external reports repeatedly show that students and PhD candidates are extra vulnerable when it comes to social safety. The factors involved include age, cultural diversity, and dependency relations.

Within the programme, in collaboration with ESA and WGS, we intend to devote extra attention to these two target groups, in addition to the actions already mentioned in the previous chapters that partly or indirectly apply to them.

3.4.1 Students

Two relationships play a key role in social safety for students: the dependency relationship with lecturers and relationships between students. On both counts, we want to take some concrete preventive measures:

Student-lecturer relationship:

- Students embarking on thesis research, internships or collaborative projects such as the ACT are confronted, often for the first time, with the university hierarchy and the dependent position in which they find themselves. At the same time, these students are also the employees of the future (and perhaps even the managers of the future) and it is important, in line with the Hamer Committee's proposals, to inform this group of what they may expect and how they can contribute to a socially safe working environment.

As part of the programme, we plan to organise an annual **information session** that addresses these aspects for students who are preparing to write a thesis, go on an internship, or work on a collaborative project. In this context, we will join forces with ESA.

- Strengthening managers' skills regarding social safety is part of the Social Safety programme. Specifically for lecturers, this means that social safety could be included as a point of focus in the **UTQ**. Opportunities for doing so will be discussed in the context of the follow-up programme.
- In the current geopolitical climate, which involves international conflicts, lecturers can be faced with complex and sensitive topics that can evoke strong emotions and opinions. For lecturers, it is essential to approach these topics with care and empathy and create an environment that feels safe to both students and lecturers. Discussions may arise at unplanned, and even inopportune, times. To help lecturers deal with this adequately, one of the other Dutch universities has developed a **hot topics teachers' guideline**. With input from ESA/TLC, the follow-up programme will make sure that a similar guideline is introduced within WUR.

Students among themselves:

- **Duty of care to students** – We find that it is hard to define a boundary with regard to where our duty of care to students as a university stops. Incidents regularly occur off-campus that greatly affect students on campus and their study results. Together with ESA and other universities, we want to explore where the limits of the university's duty of care for students lie, and initiate a dialogue around this within WUR.
- **Relational and sex education** should have a permanent place in higher education¹. In June 2021, Amnesty International and I&O Research concluded after representative research that 1 in 10 female students in the Netherlands is a victim of rape during their studies. The 2023 annual report of the confidential student counsellors (WUR) shows that

¹ Recommendation from the report by Mariëtte Hamer

sexual harassment and violence are in the top three types of incidents reported. The number of reported incidents in this area has also increased by 30% since 2021. Depending on the outcome of the study into the scope of the duty of care to students, we want to include a workshop, for example by Stichting Gelijkspel or Ben je Oké? (Rutgers Stichting) in the AID introduction programme for 2025.

3.4.2 PhD candidates

PhD candidates are dependent on their supervisors and PhD supervisors, inexperienced in the labour market, and often financially vulnerable, which places them in a vulnerable position. Many of our PhD candidates moreover come from abroad, which brings extra risks of lack of social safety as a result of differences in knowledge and culture. From the Social Safety Programme, we want to make the following concrete contributions to improving social safety for PhD candidates:

- *Improve understanding of the performance of supervisors of PhD candidates*
Our PhD candidates' supervisors play an important role in the perceived social safety of this vulnerable target group. We do not at present have a sufficient overview of the performance of this group's supervisors. To improve understanding of the performance of supervisors of PhD candidates, the Steering Group proposes introducing exit interviews and feedback systems (such as 360-degree feedback). The results should be included in the evaluation of indicator R6 (supervision) of the Academic Career Framework.
- *Renewed PhD supervision course*
Some points of interest emerged from the sessions organised by the Steering Group with regard to PhD candidates, such as this group's dependent position and the accompanying risk of abuse of power, and the cross-cultural competencies and soft skills required in this context. In the follow-up programme, the programme team will think and work in consultation with WGS, ESA (TLC), and CHR (L&D) to better articulate our course in this area.
- *Mandatory PhD supervision course*
In collaboration with the graduate schools, the follow-up programme will explore options for making the three-day course on [Professional in Supervision of PhD candidates](#) mandatory for all supervisors of PhD candidates.

4 Decision requested

The Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group is asking the Executive Board to take cognizance of the proposed follow-up Social Safety Programme 2025-2026, and to commission the Integrity & Social Safety Steering Group to implement this programme.

The budget required for this in 2025 and 2026 is as follows:

<u>Culture change:</u>	
Training development	€15,000
Culture intervention for students:	
- Developing materials	€15,000
- Training and coaching ambassadors	€35,000
Supporting campaign communications	€10,000
<u>Structure:</u>	
Developing pilot training courses and protocol	€7,500
<u>System</u> (further development)	€2,500
Miscellaneous	€5,000
Total	€100,000

We will try as much as possible to obtain grants through the Social Safety in Higher Education and Science Steering Group, the MDIEU grant, and where possible make use of the quality agreement funds. Any additional sources of financing will lead to reduced spending for the follow-up programme and not result in additional activities.